

Mutchmor Public School Council

Meeting Wednesday, November 27, 2019

Present: Sheri Segal Glick (Co-chair), Elizabeth Nicholds (Co-chair and Pizza), Liane Wray, Kate Binnie (Treasurer), Rob Gottschalk (Community Rep), Zofia Olszowka, Kiersten Love (Outreach), Sandra Walker (Principal), Marie-Pierre Roure (Vice-Principal), Melanie Love (Playground), Alex Sjöman (OCASC rep), Kevin Smith (Engagement), Sarah Dingle (Secretary)

Guest: Lyra Evans, School Board Trustee

Regrets: Adrienne Annan (Book Sale), Kathy Cowan (Outreach), Ana Gonzalez (Fun Fair)

Approval of agenda

Agenda approved (moved by Kate, seconded by Sheri).

Approval of minutes from October meeting

Minutes approved (moved by Liane, seconded by Alex).

Co-Chair update

(Elizabeth Nicholds)

Parent-teacher interviews

-Council had a table set up during parent-teacher interviews. We recruited a volunteer (Colin Baril) to work with Alex as the second rep for OCASC (Ottawa-Carleton Association of School Councils), as well as some new volunteers for Fun Fair.

Donation to Fielding PS

-The donation to Fielding Public School's robotics team, which was approved at last meeting, has been made.

Discretionary Fund for office staff

-Office staff have been paying out of pocket for ad-hoc expenses like food for kids who come to school without lunches. It was proposed to give the office staff an allocation of \$300/year from the Council's discretionary fund, similar to that given to teachers and EAs, to cover these expenses; this amount to be revisited next year based on spending to ensure that it is sufficient. (See below for approval during budget discussion.)

Principal's report (Sandra Walker)

Valuing Voices survey from the School Board

-As reported last month, the Board is doing an online survey to help identify and respond to barriers to student learning and well-being. Parents of K-6 students are receiving emails from the Board requesting participation in the survey. It is voluntary and confidential.

Staffing change

-Pascale Larrivée (grade 3) will be retiring at the end of December. The school should know before the holidays who will be replacing her.

Labour relations

-Union action by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario started on Tuesday, November 26th. The action is a withdrawal of services, such as participation in any activity that is Board- or Ministry-initiated. It does not affect supervision. Children are not feeling an impact. No staff meetings will be taking place.

Octopus Books book fair

-During parent-teacher interviews, Octopus Books held a book fair where a portion of the book sales is being donated to the Mutchmor library. The sale this year raised a significant amount of funds. Sandra is very appreciative of this donation.

Mutchmor rink update

-Sandra provided a status update on the hockey rink which has been installed in the Junior Yard by the City of Ottawa for community use. During the school day the school will have access to the rink; the community will have access in the evenings and on the weekends. Teachers are excited about being able to use it during the school day for skating. Kids have been complaining about the reduced amount of play space at recess, especially for football and soccer games. The school will be observing how the season unfolds and will be collecting input from the students, parents and staff. Sandra recognizes that there are pros and cons to this situation. The students' voices will be included in the feedback Sandra will give to the Board and City at the end of the season to discuss the success of the initiative.

-One issue is that the rink appears to be bigger than was expected based by the photo provided by the Board. The yard is definitely crowded at recess as it is used by about 350 children.

- Parent question: are there Ministry or Board standards for size and population in school yards? Sandra will look into this. Typically the school follows the OPHEA guidelines (Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education).
- Parent question: do we need to think about equipment needs (skates, helmets) for children who might not have any? This is done class-by-class when the need arises and we've been able to find/borrow equipment in the past. Sandra will encourage the teachers to address this early so that we can fill any gaps.
- Parent question: any news about how snow removal will be handled? The agreement hasn't been signed yet between the Board and the City. The school is asking for the snow piles to go to the west and the north of the rink, where the kids don't play, but we also have to consider the neighbours who live to the north and the risk of flooding during freeze-thaw cycles.

- Parent question: could we request someone from the Board to come and measure the available yard space during February? This could be done. It could also be a math project for grade 5/6.

Parents voiced their concerns to Lyra Evans (School Board Trustee) about the process by which the decision to move forward with the rink was made. The school and the school council were not included in the process and did not have notice that this decision had been made.

- Parent question: How did the decision come about, and how we ensure that the school council is included in the future? Answer: residents lobbied the City Councilor, and the Councilor worked with the Board. The Trustee raised liability and safety concerns, and these were met.
- Parent question: we would like to know more about the next steps in the process. Who will be invited to the meeting(s) in the spring to evaluate success? What will the evaluation process and criteria be? How can the school and school council be included? Lyra Evans agreed to find out this information for the council.
- It was recommended that the Board and City provide the council with a clearer account of how the decision was made in order to build trust and support going forward.

Other parent questions/comments for Lyra Evans:

- The province is changing funding formula for parent engagement. Board will be given a pot of money and Board will distribute. This Council will want to be involved in this conversation.
- The Board recently undertook a study on barriers to access to French Immersion which received national press coverage including an [article](#) in the Globe and Mail.

School report

(Marie-Pierre Roure)

-Borden Ball is happening for grades 4-6. This is very popular with the kids.

-Choir is practicing for holiday concerts. The dress rehearsal will be on December 12th and the concert on the 13th. Students attend the dress rehearsal, and the concert is for parents.

-Marie-Pierre thanked the parents for their support of the gift-giving campaign. This runs until December 5th. The children are very interested and engaged in this campaign.

-There was a Mutchmor Families meeting on Friday, November 22nd.

-The school sold Mutchmor spirit wear throughout November. All JK and SK students received free Mutchmor mini-Mustangs t-shirts. In January we will start to have Mustang Fridays, when students will be encouraged to wear their Mutchmor spirit wear to school.

Treasurer

(Kate Binnie)

The Council discussed the relative merits of increasing the outreach budget versus saving for the cost of the playground replacement. Other options such as non-monetary contributions to outreach were

discussed. There are options for supporting other schools in need through OCASC, and/or the school council could coordinate a fundraiser through a business such as Whole Foods or Chapters that could benefit schools in need.

The budget for 2019-20 was approved with the following amendments:

- An additional \$300 in the school allocation for office staff.
- Any unused portion of the money allocated to the line item for speakers series (\$1000) will be donated to the [Education Foundation](#) at the end of the year.

Engagement Coordinator

(Kevin Smith)

The Council discussed the idea of a Mutchmor Instagram account. We are looking into this. There are some issues with an existing account.

It was decided that, going forward, draft School Council minutes would be posted on the Mutchmor website after an initial review by email. This will make the information accessible sooner to people who are unable to attend the meetings. Final versions will be posted once approved.

Book sale

(Sarah Dingle for Adrienne Annan)

The Book Sale Steering Committee held their first meeting on November 6th.

Fun Fair

(Elizabeth for Ana Gonzalez)

Ana will be meeting soon with Renee Lortie (previous Fun Fair rep) to go over Fun Fair planning. She has also been in touch with Full of Beans, a potential party rental company.

Outreach

(Kiersten Love)

-No updates at this time. See above re: non-monetary support to schools in need.

Pizza

(Elizabeth Nicholds)

-No updates at this time. By the way, the pizza is organic!

OCASC (Ottawa Carleton Association of School Councils)

(Alexandria Sjöman)

-Alex gave a short report as the agenda at the last OCASC meeting was pretty light. Mike Carson (Board CFO) reported on the lead in the water. In short, there is no concern about OCDSB school water.

-The School Board's [Parent Conference and School Council Training Day](#) was held on November 9th, and it was great. It is free and highly recommended.

-Mike Carson was also present at the Parent Conference and Alex was able to ask him questions about school council finances and fundraising that are relevant to our fundraising for the playground:

- He confirmed that there are no restrictions on investing for school councils.
- He also clarified the process for issuing tax receipts (relevant for playground fundraising): the Board can provide tax receipts for donations. The money can be paid to school council and then transferred to the school's account, or paid directly to the school's account. These funds can be segregated within the school's account for a specific purpose.
- Money donated in this way can be donated prior to the year in which the expense will be incurred. Tax receipts can still be issued. This is advantageous for fundraising as it means that large donors (eg corporate donors) can spread their donations over a number of tax years.
- Outright sponsorships are not permitted. However, you can put up a plaque recognizing donors, as long as logos are not included. Rob (Community Rep) is also familiar with these guidelines and can advise.

Playground committee

(Melanie Love)

-Melanie has been reviewing playground catalogues and thinking about ways to include the students in the choice/design of the eventual playground.

-There are several unknowns with respect to the playground, including the fact that we don't know when exactly the current structure will be declared unsafe to use. Sandra indicated that it would also be possible for us to proactively make a decision about which year we wanted to replace the play structure. This would make planning easier. She would be happy to be part of the discussions with Dan Fournier at the Board, to help with planning.

-It is not known exactly how much of the costs will be covered by the Board, but it is not expected to be very much. Lyra Evans indicated she thinks the Board will pay for removal. OCASC has asked for more clarity from the Board on playgrounds and outdoor greening, so there will be more information to come from that forum as well.

-Parent question: when was the primary yard structure put in? Sandra will follow up.

-The irrigation of the rink is a significant concern in terms of what landscaping will be needed.

-Melanie spoke recently to someone at BMO Nesbitt Burns for advice on investing. A high-interest savings account (eg. ING) was recommended.

-The council discussed developing a fundraising plan. Rob (Community Rep) provided advice for next steps and volunteered to help. He will bring templates for fundraising plans and some ideas to the next meeting.

-Sandra noted that it will be important to remember that there are already a lot of financial requirements of parents. The school could do a fundraiser in house but that might be all we would do in terms of requesting donations from parents.

Community rep

(Rob Gottschalk)

-Basketballs were received and are being enjoyed. We also got a pump. There was discussion of hockey nets. The City will be providing hockey nets for the outdoor rink but they will be locked up during school hours.

-Rob will forward to us the name of his contact at Carleton University who had agreed to help us to buy basketballs, for future reference.

Next meeting: **Wednesday, January 22nd, 2020.**