



Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Red Deer Catholic Separate School Division, held September 24, 2024.

- Present: S. Heistad
C. Leyson
D. Lonsdale
A. Watson, Trustees
K. Finnigan, Superintendent of Schools
L. Latka, Secretary-Treasurer
R. Ledene, Associate Superintendent - System Services
R. Sawula, Associate Superintendent - Curriculum
J. Smith, Associate Superintendent - Human Resources
M. St. Pierre, Executive Assistant
- Present via Zoom: K. Pasula, Trustee
- Not in Attendance: M. Hollman, Trustee

*Vice-Chair Watson called the meeting to order at 3:37 P.M.
Trustee Lonsdale read an opening prayer aloud.*

09/24/24-01-Heistad

**THAT THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MOVE IN CAMERA
AT 3:37 P.M.**

CARRIED.

09/24/24-02-Leyson

THAT THE BOARD MOVE OUT OF CAMERA AT 4:58 P.M.

CARRIED.

*Vice-Chair Watson called for a recess at 4:58 p.m.
Vice-Chair Watson called the meeting back to order at 5:35 p.m.
Trustee Heistad read an opening prayer aloud.
Associate Superintendent Ledene read the Land Acknowledgement aloud.*

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

09/24/24-03-Lonsdale

THAT THE AGENDA BE ACCEPTED AS PRESENTED.

CARRIED.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

09/24/24-04-Leyson

**THAT THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF
AUGUST 27, 2024 BE ADOPTED AS PRESENTED.**

CARRIED.

Trustee Pasula made a motion resulting from the approval of the minutes and requested that the vote be recorded.

**WHEREAS, THE DIVISION IS CONFRONTING SERIOUS
FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGING CLASSROOM
CONDITIONS, AND,**

**WHEREAS, ANY AVAILABLE RESOURCES SHOULD BE
ALLOCATED TO CLASSROOM STAFF OR RESOURCES,**

**I, MOVE THAT WE DO NOT INCREASE AND INSTEAD
MAINTAIN TRUSTEE REMUNERATION AT LAST YEAR'S
LEVEL, AND DIRECT THE ADMINISTRATION TO SET ASIDE
THE POLICY RECOMMENDED 3% INCREASE
COMMUNICATED AT OUR LAST REGULAR BOARD MEETING.**

Vice-Chair Watson ruled the motion out of order because action has already been taken on this item based on the decision taken during the August Regular meeting. Trustee Pasula requested that the minutes reflect his disagreement with the ruling.

3. DELEGATIONS

ATA Local 80 President, Sara Lambert and ATA Local 80 Vice-President, Cyndie Desaulniers, provided the Board with an oral presentation. Lambert provided feedback on current classroom situations, the Trustee and Superintendent Listening Circles and information on three committees - Women in Leadership Mentoring and Advocacy

Committee, Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee and the ATA Local 80 Professional Development Committee. A suggestion was made to include an ATA Local 80 report as a regular information item in future board meetings.

4. ACTION ITEMS

4.1. 2025-2026 CALENDAR COMMITTEE REPORT

Associate Superintendent Ledene presented a written report outlining the need to recruit a Trustee member for the Calendar committee. He also reviewed the parameters related to the calendar committee. Trustee Pasula stated he would like to let his name stand unless Trustee Lonsdale was interested in staying on the committee for another year. Trustee Lonsdale indicated that she would like to stay on the committee.

09/24/24-05-Heistad

THAT THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ACCEPT THE APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEE LONSDALE TO THE CALENDAR COMMITTEE FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR.

CARRIED.

4.2 TRUSTEE ELECTION PROCESS REPORT

Superintendent Finnigan presented a written report on the Trustee Election Process. She informed Trustees that the process is managed by the city of Red Deer and asked Trustees for ways in which the Administration team can support the process.

Trustees requested information on potential cost saving opportunities and the workload involved if the Division were to manage the nominating process while the city handled the election. Trustees also requested further information regarding rural polling stations, noting that some may have incurred significant costs without being well utilized. They requested the administration to present a report at the October meeting, exploring a balanced approach to maintain accessible voting for all while ensuring fiscal responsibility, and to identify potential cost-saving measures for the election.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

5.1. CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY REVIEW - POLICY 4: TRUSTEE CODE OF CONDUCT

The policy will be reviewed during the October Board retreat. Trustees expressed a desire to receive a redlined copy from the administration to ensure the time is used productively. The Superintendent mentioned that other boards have recently completed

similar work, and sought permission to present that information. Permission was granted to proceed.

5.2. HOME EDUCATION REPORT

Secretary-Treasurer Latka presented a report on behalf of Senior Administration, highlighting the following points: The program began approximately 15 years ago and has grown from 600 to over 900 students. The students are fully under RDCRS supervision, with two visits conducted per student each school year. Staffing and contract types were discussed, confirming that all staff are RDCRS employees. The overall home education budget was reviewed, and the continuation of the Kindergarten pilot program was confirmed.

Trustees inquired about how the division audits the use of funds by parents to ensure they are spent on approved items. It was explained that a thorough process is in place, requiring parents to submit receipts for review and approval to ensure compliance with approved purchases. Trustees also asked who the staff report to, and it was clarified that they report to a coordinator who is under the Secretary-Treasurer. In response to a question about handling a potential deficit, it was noted that staffing adjustments would likely be necessary.

Administration noted that the program offers a valuable programming option for parents who wish to be associated with a Catholic board. It was clarified that the students are fully part of Red Deer Catholic and not a separate entity, and any decision to discontinue this type of program would be made by the division.

5.3. AGENDA ITEMS - TOWN OF INNISFAIL MEETING

Trustees were encouraged to provide agenda items for the joint Town of Innisfail meeting scheduled on October 22, 2024 to Executive Assistant St Pierre by October 15, 2024.

5.4. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION REPORT

Superintendent Finnigan presented the Stakeholder Engagement Session report recommending two stakeholder engagement sessions to be conducted online and in person. The first session was recommended to occur in November and would be open to School Councils. The second session would occur in April and would be open to the public. The Superintendent requested feedback from Trustees.

Trustees expressed support for involving school councils, and indicated that there is interest in participation based on their attendance at recent school council meetings. The idea of using a listening circle as a model was discussed, with a question raised about

the maximum number of participants for it to be effective. It was noted that care must be taken with group size to manage time effectively, and, if necessary, a large group could be divided into smaller circles. Trustees also emphasized a preference for creating opportunities for dialogue with them rather than formal presentations.

The direction was given to proceed with the plan as proposed, using the dates outlined in the report.

5.5. CATHOLIC EDUCATION SUNDAY - OCTOBER 20, 2024

Superintendent Finnigan presented the Catholic Education Sunday Report and noted that Catholic Education Week is earlier this year than in previous years. She shared that speaking notes are being prepared for trustees to use when attending masses. It was mentioned that there are only six trustees and additional support will be needed to cover all of the masses. In the past, senior administration and principals have assisted. The superintendent was asked to coordinate with others to ensure all spots are covered.

5.6. CLASS SIZE CONFIGURATION UPDATE

The Superintendent presented the Class Size Configuration report prepared by the Senior Administration team, noting that associates met with principals during the first two weeks of the school year to discuss the needs and complexities within schools. Associate Superintendent Sawula addressed class sizes, highlighting areas of growth and challenges faced in certain schools. He commended administrators for their creative approaches to managing these complexities. Secretary-Treasurer Latka stated that she has updated key indicators of the fall budget including revenues based on fall enrollments as well as average salary and benefit costs. She stated that each school was reviewed individually, exploring the feasibility of additional funding allocations. She indicated that there is capacity to use reserves from unfunded amortization, with the potential approval of a budget deficit of approximately \$900K if reserve funds are used.

Some Trustees expressed concern about the financial situation and asked for more detail on unfunded amortization. Secretary-Treasurer Latka explained that there will be an addition to reserves this year in the amount of the unfunded amortization of \$1.5M, and recommended moving forward with additional staffing allocations using those funds in reserves to cover the additional allocations. Latka explained that amortization is a non-cash transaction, and would add funds to reserves. It was decided to continue this conversation later in the meeting during the Secretary-Treasurer report section.

*Vice-Chair Watson called for a 10 minute break in the meeting at 7:10 pm.
Vice-Chair Watson called the meeting back to order at 7:22 pm.*

6. INFORMATION ITEMS

6.1. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Superintendent Finnigan presented the Superintendent Report as an information item. Trustees thanked the team for providing additional context and data on the staffing update provided in August but expressed concern about the overall reduction in staff numbers despite an increase in student enrollment. Trustees asked for further clarification on why the number of general staff has fluctuated significantly over the last four years and if there are any emerging themes from exit interviews that haven't been addressed.

Associate Superintendent Smith stated that bus drivers are a contributing factor, as the number of routes and drivers varies significantly throughout the year. Secretary-Treasurer Latka noted that a budget of this size has a lot of moving parts and that adjustments were made in the 2023-2024 period, including changes in areas such as computer systems, substitute costs, and other factors. She emphasized that these adjustments reflect a complex situation and represent a starting point for addressing budgetary concerns.

Associate Superintendent Smith confirmed a willingness to provide more detailed information at the December board retreat.

6.2. SECRETARY-TREASURER REPORT

Secretary-Treasurer Latka presented the Secretary-Treasurer report, highlighting that the transportation budgeted expenditures are over budget but the overall deficit is less than expected. The maintenance budgeted expenditures are also over budget, but the overall surplus is greater than budgeted. She presented an update on the St. Lorenzo Ruiz project, sharing that the project is \$452K over budget, with funds to be drawn from capital reserves. Latka provided an enrolment update for the 2024-2025 school year, with numbers expected to fluctuate until September 30. She shared an average salary update, showing salary expenses were slightly below budget. She also answered an earlier question about how unfunded amortization could be utilized to pay for additional staffing. Kudos and thank yous were shared to the Breakfast Club who donated \$50K in funding to three of our schools.

Trustee Pasula questioned why the St. Lorenzo Ruiz project was over budget. Secretary-Treasurer Latka reminded Trustees that the Board previously approved the addition of certain items, such as roller blinds and solar panels; change orders also contributed to the project's deficit.

Trustee Pasula asked the administration if they are aware of other school divisions facing financial challenges. Superintendent Finnigan confirmed that there are other divisions, including RDCRS, which are focusing on efficiencies. Trustee Pasula requested that Superintendent Finnigan provide trustees with a list of these divisions so they can explore

communication at the governance level.

The Board discussed a possible motion related to additional staffing. Trustee Pasula requested that the minutes reflect that he cannot support such a motion, based on the information provided in the Secretary-Treasurer's report.

09/24/24-04-Lonsdale

THAT THE BOARD APPROVE HIRING ADDITIONAL TEACHERS AND EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS TO ADDRESS STUDENT NEEDS ACROSS THE DIVISION, RESULTING IN A DEFICIT BUDGET OF UP TO \$900,000 FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR TO BE FUNDED FROM OPERATING RESERVES.

CARRIED.

6.3. SYSTEM SERVICES REPORT

Associate Superintendent Ledene presented the report as information. Trustees expressed appreciation for the information provided, noting that it offered valuable insights into Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal (IMR) and transportation budgetary processes. Trustees suggested that having this report as a regular agenda item would be helpful. Ledene also responded to Trustee questions about the cement blocks in the École Secondaire Notre Dame High School parking lot.

6.4. SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD EVALUATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Trustee Pasula reported that 20 individuals were identified for oral interviews related to the Superintendent's evaluation, all of which have been completed. Four written surveys have been completed with 12 remaining. For the Board surveys, five have been completed and one remains to come in. The deadline for all survey submissions is September 25, 2024.

6.5. TRUSTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

■ ALBERTA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION (ASBA)

Trustee Heistad reported that a meeting was held September 23, and the minutes have been distributed. She encouraged all trustees to review the circulated information, as it contains a lot of valuable details. She also reminded trustees that registration for the FGM is now open.

■ ALBERTA CATHOLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEES ASSOCIATION (ACSTA) - REPORT

Trustee Leyson submitted a written report as information.

■ RURAL CAUCUS OF ALBERTA SCHOOL BOARDS

Trustee Heistad indicated that she did not have any new information to report.

■ CATHOLIC EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Trustee Pasula informed Trustees that the next regular meeting will be held on a date to be confirmed next month and that the Education Foundation will hold an AGM in late October.

6.6. CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

- MINISTER OF EDUCATION BACK TO SCHOOL LETTER - ENGLISH
- MINISTER OF EDUCATION BACK TO SCHOOL LETTER - FRENCH
- TOWN OF SUNDRE MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Trustees reviewed the correspondence as information.

6.7. UPCOMING EVENTS:

- September 25, 2024 - Superintendent/Trustee School Visits
- September 27, 2024 - Superintendent/Trustee School Visits
- September 30, 2024 - Truth & Reconciliation Day
- October 4, 2024 - Archbishop Dinner
- October 17, 2024 - St. Veronica Catholic School Sod Turning Ceremony
- October 19-25, 2024 - Catholic Education Week
- October 20, 2024 - Catholic Education Sunday
- October 21, 2024 - Asba Zone 4 Meeting
- October 22, 2024 - Town Of Innisfail Meeting

Trustee Leyson read a closing prayer aloud.

Vice-Chair Watson called for a recess at 8:22 pm.

09/24/24-12-Heistad

THAT THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES GO INTO CAMERA AT 8:36 P.M.

CARRIED.

09/24/24-13-Lonsdale

THAT THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MOVE OUT OF CAMERA AT 9:34 P.M.

CARRIED.

09/24/24-14-Leyson

THAT THE MEETING ADJOURN, THE TIME BEING 9:34 P.M.

CARRIED.

(CHAIR)

(SECRETARY-TREASURER)