

# Millen Woods P.S. School Council

## Minutes for September 21, 2016

---

### **Dan called the meeting to order**

Attending: Dan, Joanne, James, Kim, Jill, Sarah, Jaime, Jana, Ashley, Andrea, Trish, Kendra, Reza, Susan, Renee.

Jana moved to approve the agenda, seconded by James.

Ashley moved to approve the June minutes, seconded by James.

### **Dan and Trish gave an overview of council**

Mission: "The Millen Woods School Council is a body of volunteers created to support and enhance learning for all students through the cooperative efforts of parents, students, staff members and others in the community." It's an advisory body to the school through Trish.

The Ministry of Education wants us to support learning opportunities for all students in our school. We spend most of our time communicating about activities in the school, and discussing concerns and questions. We also fundraise for projects not normally (or too slowly) covered by the school board, e.g. playground, musical instruments, Chromebooks, math tools, Lego Robotics kits, Scientists in the School, home reading books. Council provides funding for some tools that provide enhancement in the school.

Different stakeholders in the community come to Council with various proposals for the fundraising dollars. All meetings are open for anyone to attend. The next level of involvement is as a voting member, and generally anyone who wants to be a voting member is accepted. There are three special roles: Treasurer, Secretary (rotating usually) and two co-chairs. We aim to finalize membership in October, and meetings occur on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month.

Discussions that are undertaken are intended to support instruction of all students globally, as opposed to specific circumstances (specific circumstances should be taken directly to the Principal).

Andrea added: if you're intending to attend most meetings, might as well be a voting member, to give weight to your opinion.

### **Jana gave the finance report**

Last year, in fundraising we were over what we had budgeted. Pizza was significantly over. For expenses, we went over for two: general administration and Scientists in the School (slightly for both).

### **Meet the teacher night report**

Consensus: Went well with the pizza preordered. People trickled in so there was never a large line. Weather was extremely helpful. There was some confusion from people who hadn't read emails but luckily Lisa had ordered 3 pizzas extra of each, and people bought it for cash. Community picnic aspect was great. Feedback from new people was that they enjoyed the event. It was more peaceful/quiet when there were no generators from the food trucks, in addition to cost concerns. A few people voiced concerns that pizza and burgers were too "typical" and were looking forward to variety of the food trucks. Pizza was much more cost effective for large families. All went well in the school as well.

### **Joanne gave a PRO Grant and magazines fundraiser update**

Our proposal for a Lego robotics workshop has been approved by the Ministry.

The QSP magazines fundraiser will run on the same schedule and similar timing to last year, just before Thanksgiving.

### **Kim gave an update on spirit wear**

Kim is working on a proposal with the vendor we used before. There is an extensive catalogue with more options, but there is a smaller set of "best sellers". Major changes: removing hat and shorts, adding crew neck sweatshirt and short-sleeve athletic shirt, and switched up logo location a little. But according to Trish, Jeff Phillip has also been working on Spirit Wear and they have been working on mocks (seemingly from the same company). So they should investigate and join forces. There was a request for leggings for girls, if the sizing works. One member brought up some quality concerns in previous orders. Ours would probably be Gildan this time. There would be a table with example sizes for people to try. Generally this is run not as a fundraiser, but to promote spirit.

### **Trish gave the administration report**

Trish is currently in the midst of hiring. Can certainly appreciate the frustration expressed by parents. A challenge for all schools is that we're in the second year of 2 year teacher college, so we don't have a cohort of new teachers, and especially there is a shortage of French teachers (across the province).

At MW, asked to look at qualifications on staff and fill needs from staff, so assigned French even if not taught in a while. If don't like assignment, can apply to open positions elsewhere. Contract positions appeared in August that were not properly accounted for, should have been LTO. Over 20 contracts came up, so teachers that had been in LTO positions in June applied to these positions, which created domino effect. So it became a waiting game. Had a number of people apply to our own LTO position, but had taken positions elsewhere. Got 2 LTOs filled with great fit. Regulations make hiring extremely difficult, waiting and seniority, becomes a placement instead of making the best fit. At that point, Learning Service positions were released in fall (usually released in spring). Funding from Ministry was not secured until September. Katie Brown and Stephanie Ringwood were looking for

these opportunities for growth in their career, looking for new experiences. A number of people at the Board were looking to them for these leadership positions. Great to staff a school with excellent teachers but sometimes these teachers aspire to more leadership, and this school is 5 years old. These positions are full time contract (LST School).

We have a position open, will interview as soon as there are qualified applicants. Superintendent and system are well aware of the churn at MW, and the sensitive situations where these teachers were placed. It is going to be a challenge to find people of similar caliber. Will be having an assembly on October 7, as they will be starting in their new roles right after Thanksgiving. Much of this is out of Trish's hands. Had to apply for these positions as they came up. Unfortunately Stephanie and Katie cannot be involved in interviewing for their replacements.

Also in discussions around class sizes and legislated caps. For Primary, there is a hard cap of 23. For Junior, hoping for average of 25. Regarding splits, 3/4 split is tough because it's between Primary and Junior. Trish is pushing back on further changes due to having had enough change already, but change could still be coming unfortunately. Because of the influx of citizens new to the Region, new classes are being added, which implies new teachers. More postings will come up as a result. This has a cascading effect in the system as different classes of teachers have preferential access to the postings, and we have several LTO teachers who could be interested. This is the worst year in a decade for staffing challenges, particularly qualified French teachers according to high demand.

Executive Superintendent Mark Chinkel and John Bryant Director of Education, are where to direct concerns around the timing of the funding releases.

There is not likely to be any shift in the kindergarten class sizes. Elsewhere in the system, there are even larger kindergarten classes. This is likely due to funding reasons.

Terry Fox kickoff assembly is on September 30. And goodbye assembly is October 7 (possibly combined with Oktoberfest celebration). The staff has signed up for Fun Fair to be happening in May – more news coming in October.

Feedback on the bullet point – what's coming up – format has been positive.

#### **Jana presented the 2016-2017 budget**

Jana presented the budget passed in June.

Of note, this year JungleSport is 0. See the budget for all details. We are intending to run a surplus of over \$10,000. Including WEFI, \$17,000. So we will hold discussions later in the year to decide how to spend the funds.

A requested topic for October meeting is an update on playground thinking (James and Dan).

### **Jana discussed using Survey Monkey**

Jana: It seems that in effect, a small group of parents are making the decisions on fundraising and expenditures. Proposal is to put together a small survey to solicit opinions from parents (5 minutes) to help gather data to inform Council decisions.

Dan: seems like a good idea, but depending on timing maybe we don't have all the choices to present? But there are topics that keep recurring, and there are also misconceptions that everything comes from Council.

Trish offered to send it out on School Day. Makes an effort to plot everything out on a calendar to avoid too much asking for money all at once.

James made the counterpoint that parents who complain should come to meetings. Renee reports that also, people can get frustrated if they provide survey feedback that they don't feel is listened to.

Trish provided an alternative idea, which is to publicize in the community when certain questions will be discussed at School Council, and to invite feedback/attendance on the topic (or use email as a medium for feedback).

There is some interest, but we will first try more proactively soliciting attendance at meetings of interest. Trish is also available to take feedback at anytime. Survey could be very useful when we have specific spending questions to ask.

### **Dan and Joanne presented an overview of council positions**

Overview of positions: two Co-chairs (largely procedural), Treasurer, and Secretary.

We will be leaving full time Secretary position unfilled due to a lack of interest, and will fill it on a rotating volunteer basis as in past years. October's secretary will be Renee.

Jana was appointed to the Treasurer role as the only candidate.

Dan will continue as co-chair, joined by Reza as co-chair. Both roles were filled without a vote as they were the only two candidates.

### **8:42pm: Meeting adjournment**

James motioned to adjourn, to unanimous agreement.