

**WATERDOWN DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL
PARENT COUNCIL**

Meeting Minutes – October 26, 2021, 6:00 pm

1. Welcome and Introduction

In attendance Alison Morris (co-chair), Lianne Broughton (co-chair), Theresa Sgambato (Principal), Jonathan Schinkel (Vice-Principal), David Delville (Teacher Representative), Michael Colette (Community Representative), Jennifer Vince, Kelly Taylor, Suzie Larochelle, Tracey Hood, Ellie Millard

Regrets: Cheryl Gaspar, Sudan Cashin

2. Approve minutes of prior meeting

Minutes were approved by Tracey Hood and seconded by Lianne Broughton.

3. Elections – secretary

No volunteers currently. Still seeking secretary for 2021/2022 year. Asked members to consider stepping forward to take on role for remaining meetings, or to possibly share role and responsibilities.

4. Members voting/non-voting and set quorum

7 voting members have submitted forms, so quorum set at 4 for the 2021/2022 year.

5. Community Representative – Michael Collette

- Food for Kids program is doing well
- 50/50 draw was a success, winner from Burlington - approx. \$7200
- Trying to organize a drive through Santa at Joe Sam's park, unsure due to construction, may be last weekend of Nov.
- wanted to make sure students know if they need consideration from funding to give time so it can be processed. Always happy to help students.

6. Principal's Report

Students invited to speak first on the topic of the dress code

Sophie Vivian and Taylor Riopelle - presented dress code updates from Board meeting.

- these students were organizers of dress code protest
- believe dress code is severely outdated, not reflecting current fashion and gender identity

- they understand some students push the boundaries and should follow the code, however just want to update and change wording and reflect all gender identities
- Board wants to provide a safe and inclusive environment.
- strict dress code can imply blame for sexual assault.
- just want to be involved with actions to come

Theresa Sgambato spoke to then take opportunity to explain a little more about what is happening at school. People have likely seen lots in social media.

Sexual assaults - take very seriously, and fully investigate. Unfortunately, staff made an announcement and they were unaware of investigation (due to privacy). What happened afterwards was very unfortunate, as it resulted in Theresa being personally vilified, and the victims were also affected and it made them feel unsafe.

There was another incident with was “a threat” at the school, and people thought it involved a gun. School procedure is that usually one admin contacts police right away, while other 2 admin are trying to apprehend the student. There was no need to lock down in this case. There was a delay to release information, but this is due to police restrictions around what can and cannot be released.

With regards to sexual assault: Theresa has been working with Penny since spring, 2021 about the Ally Program to help have healthy relationships. SACHA - Sexual Assault Centre for Hamilton and Area will be coming to the school, all classes will participate, the topic will be Consent. An education piece for staff will be provided as well - how to deal with this topic better.

Most frustrated by how things were distorted and how they turned ugly. Unfortunately this may have jeopardized trust with the students. Some students did feel enough trust to come forward, and the school has got them the help they needed outside of school. Worry that students may not feel comfortable in the future. Theresa and admin have worked with staff and student parliament, and have had discussions so they have a good understanding if they do need help. The admin has no issue if students want to advocate for themselves or a topic, but would prefer it be done respectfully. A discussion with admin would make these initiatives more powerful to work together, more united.

To clarify, not everyone in protest had ill intentions. Board gives strict direction. Some are passionate and have good intentions, but some also just looking to create trouble.

Message to students: let's do things in a respectful way. Theresa would like students to come to the office to get support, but just in a respectful way.

One member commented: thank you for going to classrooms and clarifying the situation - made her student feel better and appreciated Theresa doing this.

Mr. Schinkel discussed Student Parliament - mimics Canadian Parliament. Unfortunately there have been some conflicts with students, and therefore Parliament has been dissolved for this year. This was just announced today, but the school is looking to present new and different

opportunities for students in the near future. It is uncertain what will happen with this group in future years.

Theresa is aiming to start a Principal's Council – students will submit their application to participate, and the intent is to give students a regular voice. Want it to be diverse, meet with the Principal regularly, as it is felt that students are more accepting if they understand why things can or cannot happen. So another Leadership opportunity for students if interested.

Mr. Schinkel advised that they have been hearing an increased number of complaints from school neighbours and local businesses about behaviour during lunch. Complaints include loitering, throwing garbage, jay-walking and poor language. The school is closely monitoring the situation, but looking for suggestions.

A member asked if the cafeteria could possibly be opened now that restrictions are easing, to offer a place for students to go during lunch? Unfortunately this is not yet possible – advice must come from public health.

Likely that the increase in complaints is due to the fact that the entire school population has the same lunch with the quadmester schedule; however again this can't be changed at present.

Admin would like parents to remind students to be good community members and address any safety concerns too.

7. Teacher's Report

David Delville circulated a couple of documents – one was a letter from district president regarding hybrid learning, and another from provincial office regarding mandatory vaccinations. The latter topic has been controversial, with letter providing more context.

Also mentioned a recent White Ribbon webinar about violence online – will try to find out if there is a recording of the webinar to make available.

Teachers are still managing the extra-curriculars, although it is a little tiring with the quadmester schedule.

8. Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) update

Lianne Broughton provided update from the last meeting – main topic of discussion was the Pro Grant and looking at how funds will be disbursed this year. PIC members were able to give input, but no decision yet.

9. Board update

Penny Deathe provided an update.

It has been a difficult last couple of weeks in helping address parents' concerns. Gave kudos to Theresa for dealing with a very difficult situation.

Penny attended the first rally, describing it as heartbreaking and horrendous. Student voice is important, but can cause backlash and trigger issues. It was very emotional and must continue to provide support.

Penny helped guide the students to present to the Board on the dress code matter. Penny felt it definitely needed to have updated guidelines. It was important to be a student-led initiative, and was supported from other schools. Penny said the students did an excellent job.

Penny attended another rally at Memorial Park with Judy Partridge. Many students attended again, but had taken time to reflect since the last protest. The students were very mature and responsible, condemned bad behaviour and did an excellent job.

The Board is also discussing the vaccine topic – again a very challenging and controversial issue. The Ministry will not mandate a vaccine for staff at this time.

Trustees made a motion for staff to report on mandatory process and what it would look like (legal issues, listening to concerns, etc). There was discussion around students as well. The Board is listening to unions and staff/ student concerns and discussing the challenges. Would ultimately have to go through public health, not school board. Recognized the need to look at this topic from all sides to make an informed decision.

Penny reiterated she is always open to receive questions or contact via email or phone, and is available to discuss topics of interest at future meetings. Can also address topics or questions via Theresa, Lianne or Alison.

10. Healthy Youth Network (Ally Program)

Penny presented about the new program being piloted at Waterdown; just received funding. PowerPoint was shared with more details – can also access more information on the Healthy Youth Network website: <https://healthyyouthnetwork.ca>

The Healthy Youth Network (HYN) is partnering with Interval House of Hamilton and Halton Women's Place to launch an ally program targeted toward young men in Flamborough.

The initiative was led by the HYN Youth Impact Team, in part due to increased violence against women due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also as a result of a 2015 student survey in Flamborough which showed only 39 per cent of Grade 7-12 girls feel safe and supported at home, school and in the neighbourhood.

The program, which will build upon existing initiatives from the two agencies, hopes to inspire men to be part of the solution to end gender-based violence, build healthy relationships and create a culture where all students feel they belong, said HYN founder and executive director Penny Deathe. They expect to utilize Interval House's MentorAction and Be More Than A

Bystander programs, as well as Halton Women's Place's engageMENT program at Waterdown District High School.

Deathe said through MentorAction they plan to train male leaders who will stand up and speak out in ending gender-based violence, while Be More Than A Bystander sees local athletes from the Tiger-Cats, Bulldogs and Forge FC lead conversations with youth about what healthy masculinity looks like.

Meanwhile, the engageMENT program is an eight-week school-based program aimed at starting a dialogue among young men which encourages them to self-reflect on their role in ending gender-based violence.

11. Academic Awards

A list was posted inside the school for students to check for the honour roll. Theresa looking into options to recognize students, since not able to hold usual assembly.

12. Parent/Teacher Interviews

Typical in-person interviews will not be taking place this fall due to public health measures. Parents are always encourage to reach out via phone or email to any teachers to have a discussion if needed.

13. Open Forum

Question about topic raised previously that it was being considered to perhaps shorten the lunch period and end the day sooner. There has been no decision so schedule will continue as-is for now. There have been some concerns raised by teachers, so will discuss options again as needed.

Jennifer Vince raised a topic of interest, to let members and the community know that Hamilton Out of the Cold has a new location in Waterdown, in Knox Presbyterian church on Mill St. The program offers a meal to anyone who needs one, every Wednesday from 3:30 to 4:30pm from November through to March.

Leanne Barlow asked if there had been any discussion about Prom yet? Wondered if it could take place off school property due to restrictions on gatherings having been lifted. Theresa said they are waiting to hear from the Board and have a discussion with public health. She commented that she hoped we are headed that way, and it seemed promising.

Meeting adjourned

Next meeting Tuesday, February 22, 2022 6pm via MS Teams

Future meeting dates: 2022: Mar. 22, Apr. 26, May 24