

# WESTMOUNT SCHOOL COUNCIL

## Minutes

*7pm Room 1087 Thursday, March 21, 2019*

---

### Attendance

---

Kathy Long, Kirsten Patterson, Reasa Diab, Mohammad Najmi, Mike Armstrong, Kim Kolpin, Susan Millman, Kailyn Reny, Becky Buck, Paul Denomme, Geeta Malhotra and Denise Haggar and many other Staff, students and Cindy Rees's family members were in attendance. Regrets – Angela Murchie

---

### Approval of Minutes

---

The February Minutes were approved with one change to the Graduation time from 6:00 to 4:00pm, Reasa has made this change.

---

### Presentation : 1. Becky Buck (School Trustee) & Paul Denomme (School Superintendent) 2. Naming of School In Part – Delegation Presentation

---

Paul Denomme, Superintendent introduced himself and explained his role as Superintendent. He works closely with school administrators and trustee regarding issues that may come up.

Becky Buck, Trustee introduced herself and explained her roles as Trustee. Her roles include community issues, governance ex: Snow days, works collaboratively with Superintendent Paul Denomme too.

Discussion took place with regards to the process of School naming in part and Superintendent Denomme explained the process and passed out the Naming of Schools packet of information for those that did not get it at last month's meeting. Our role as a Council is to support and then Mr. Denomme puts the recommendation forward to the trustees, then 45 day consultation takes place. Other options of memorializing was also discussed: Yearly scholarship, and Director's Chair with the quote "Show Must Go On".

A very touching and beautiful presentation took place by Ms. Denise Haggar, Westmount Learning Resource Team.

I'd like to thank the members of School Council for allowing us to speak to you tonight and also to Paul Denomme, our Superintendent and Becky Buck, our Trustee, for taking the time to be here with us. It is my privilege to represent the staff of Westmount this evening and put forward our request to name our auditorium in memory of our colleague, Cynthia Rees, who was taken from us far too soon after a very brave battle with cancer. I'd like to start by recognizing that not all of you will have had the opportunity to meet Cindy, and so I'd like to take a minute or two to tell you about her and why we wish to honour her in this way. As I do, please feel free to look through these photographs and testimonials.

Cindy Rees was an educator and mentor at Westmount Secondary School for over 20 years, and it is difficult to think of another, single individual who had such a positive, profound and widespread influence on students, staff and our school culture as a whole.

Cindy's mission was to support her students and colleagues in every way possible to help them to achieve success. Many students chose Westmount not primarily for the self-directed program but because of the excellent reputation of our musical theatre and drama department as led by Cindy; she brought the arts to life for her students and the entire school community. In her years at Westmount, she directed 15 full Broadway musicals, each involving over 100 students and staff. She directed and staged 16 Sears Drama Festival entries and was the coach and advisor to 18 Sketch Comedy teams. She produced and directed 20 Remembrance Day ceremonies and 20 student Talent Showcases, and coached multiple winners at the English Speaking Union of Canada's "Shakespeare on the Platform" competition. She knew that for students to learn their craft they needed to experience professional theatrical productions, so she went beyond the classroom to run amazing Dramatic Arts focused trips. Cindy took students to performances in New York City, Toronto, the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford and at Theatre Aquarius here at home, giving them first hand exposure to some of the greatest theatre in North America. She also served as a feeder school liaison and coordinated the visits of hundreds of elementary school students to watch Westmount's theatrical productions and start them on their own journeys to discover the magic of theatre.

As the producer/director of "Westwing Productions" – Westmount's theatre company – Cindy was an exceptional educator, mentoring hundreds of students on stage performance, lighting, sound, set and costume design. Cast reps and dance captains were mentored and took on leadership roles in every production. Students were introduced to the role of stage manager and given the responsibility of calling the show once dress rehearsals began. One student who had this opportunity, Deanna Allain, said, "That was the first time anyone ever trusted me to lead and assist in such a huge way on such an incredible project. It gave me the confidence I needed to continue asking for more opportunities and ultimately to take on some larger scale leadership in the city and province." Currently, several members of Ms. Rees' last classes are pursuing studies of different aspects of theatre in prestigious post-secondary programs, including Musical Theatre Performance at Sheridan College, St. Lawrence College and Randolph School of Performing Arts. Many more have graduated from such programs and have gone on to various careers in the theatre arts. Among them are Debbie Blair, a professional theatre technician; Colin Palangio, a member of Soul Pepper Theatre and previous Hamilton Arts award recipient; Kathy Zaborsky, actor/director with Storybook Theatre; Michael Kras, an award winning Hamilton playwright; and Kaleigh Gorka, an accomplished

singer, dancer and actor. Kaleigh says, "Cindy was fundamental in my development as a performer. She put everything she had into her drama classes and her direction of musicals. She took time to pay attention to me, help me and nurture my adoration for the arts. She was a mentor and a kindred spirit." It was no surprise to any of us that Cindy continued to support her students even after they graduated through writing letters of reference attesting to their potential, and attending the theatrical productions they were in.

Cindy supported her colleagues with as much energy as she did her students, serving as a mentor to young teachers and an incredible supporter to those of us with a few more years under our belts. Her integrity, sensitivity, intelligence, and irrepressible sense of humour enriched all of us lucky enough to work with her. In equal measure, she served her school by sitting on many committees over the years, including: the Westmount Reunion Committee (2012), Canadian Coalition of Self-Directed Learners Conference (2016), Graduation Committee (1997-2009); Safe Schools Committee, as well as serving as the Auditorium and Technical Lead on all school events requiring sound, light and technical support. She could be counted on always to work diligently, speak thoughtfully and keep people focused on the best interests of the school as a whole.

In short, Cynthia Rees wasn't just a beloved teacher – she was an incredibly gifted and dedicated educator who routinely went above and beyond the call of duty. She did so not only because she was highly competent, hard working and professional, but because she loved her job and she loved her students. Cindy impacted virtually all of Westmount's staff and students, including those who may never have had a personal conversation with her. During show season, many would buy tickets and bring along their friends or family to be blown away by one of her amazing productions, watching their students or friends perform beyond expectations under her guidance. Westmount's auditorium was Cindy's teaching space, rehearsal space and magic space for every performance she and her students gave. She spent more time there than she did in her own home, and she gave her all every minute she was there. Since her departure, it feels to us who worked with her and learned from her that a palpable part of Westmount is gone. Having her name above this space – her space – honouring her legacy of care, dedication and excellence, will help us to feel that she is still with us in spirit. And so, we respectfully request your support in naming our auditorium "The Cynthia Rees Auditorium."

Denise Hagger,

On behalf of the Auditorium Project Delegation

After all presentations, and discussions, Council agreed to support and continue with the Naming of School in Part after Cynthia Rees. Motion by Reasa Diab, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mohammad Najmi – All in Favour (6 Council members), 0 no's. Motion passed

---

### Student Council Report- Kailyn Reny

---

Indoor soccer & volleyball finished, Swimmers o OFFSAA, March 29<sup>th</sup> Splat Coffee house (\$2), Prom tickets sold April 9-12<sup>th</sup>, Spirit week April 15-18<sup>th</sup>, Monday – Disney, Tuesday – Twin, Wednesday – Jersey, Thursday – Throwback

---

### Teachers Report- Mike Armstrong

---

Grad info is online under quick links. Busy with students submitting electronic courses, moving forward with that. Many students are interested in seeing timetables. SHSM – Environment, Health & Wellness. McMaster University may grant you 3 credits towards university. March 27<sup>th</sup> – OSSLT – literacy test for Grade 10's, all other students will have flex day.

---

### Principals Report- Geeta Malhotra

---

- Follow up to last month's questions on naming process.
- Celebrations: Skills Canada – Westmount won in Video, Auto & Cabinetry
- 3 Star award for Phys Ed dept for daily active living
- Preliminaries went home on Friday before the break
- Practice test for OSSLT on Monday, Grade 10's will be written on Wednesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>
- We begin looking at Staffing lines next week but need to wait for direction as more Government direction is coming. Increase in class size to 28 students, 4 compulsory eLearning courses, and banning cell phones.

---

### Next Meeting

---

Motion to adjourn by Kim, seconded by Kathy.

7pm Room 1087 Monday, April 15th , 2019