

## SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 23 – BOARD COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: General Affairs DATE: February 7, 2007

CHAIRPERSON: Trustee Moyra Baxter STAFF CONTACT: Mike Roberts, Superintendent

### **Attendees:**

Trustee M. Baxter, Committee Chairperson and Board Chairperson  
Trustee R. Cacchioni, Appointed Committee Member and member of the Finance and Legal Committee  
Trustee W. Horning, Committee Member and Chairperson of the Planning and Facilities Committee  
Trustee G. Scanlan, Committee Member and Chairperson of the Human Resources and Staff Services Committee  
Trustee C. Wiebe, Committee Member and Chairperson of the Education and Student Services Committee

Staff: M. Roberts, Superintendent of Schools  
M. Stolze, Executive Assistant (Recorder)

### **Partner Group Representation:**

COPAC	Deb Butler, Liz Therres
COTA	(absent)
COPVPA	Des Sjoquist
CUPE	Bill Zeman
DSC	(absent)

### **Query**

In response to a query from Trustee Horning, the Superintendent confirmed that the \$3,500 allocated to this Committee, annually, is tracked and recorded in the District's accounting system.

### **Item 1. Communication and Public Relations**

The Chairperson advised that the Board, under the new Committee Structure, refers issues of Communication and Public Relations to the General Affairs Committee. The Committee was provided with a list of communication planning tools and a sample of topics that are covered in communication conferences.

The Chairperson explained that she is the spokesperson for the Board on political and governance issues, that Board Committee Chairpersons may speak on matters before their respective Committees, and that the Superintendent is charged with communication with the media from the administration's perspective and represents the District by providing background information.

### **Communication**

The Chairperson and Superintendent provided an overview of current communication practices, internally and externally. There was general discussion and ideas were exchanged on ways to enhance communication, gather input and the need to try to involve a District representative in local talk shows when School District No. 23 or public education are the topics.

In response to questions from trustees, the partner groups agreed that, overall, the communications systems implemented at the Board level and through the Superintendent's Office are meeting the needs of employees and partner groups.

The Superintendent expressed his view that one relatively low-cost way to improve the information flow would be to allocate more staff time to District and school website maintenance. Website maintenance is somewhat "ad hoc", and it is an add-on to the responsibilities of a few employees. Staff are doing the best they can with the resources available to keep information current; however, more information could be provided at the District and school levels, input could be facilitated, and promotional opportunities could increase if website management were to be assigned to one staff member. The Committee agreed that, in today's world, the website is critical; it could be a more valuable communications tool for the District.

**Outcomes:**

- 1. It was agreed that the Superintendent should explore options for increased website maintenance.**
- 2. The Superintendent indicated that he will continue to explore options for increasing communication to the general public and for increasing the profile of the District in the community.**
- 3. It was also agreed that schools should include the District website address in newsletters to parents.**

**Relationships**

The partner groups felt that our trustees are visibly involved with District and community activities.

There was consensus that good working relationships exist between the Board and partner groups, and the Superintendent and partner groups.

**Item 2. Board Standing Committee and Partner Group Communication**

**PAC Input**

In attendance: Rosemary Phillip, George Elliot Secondary PAC

The Committee reviewed a letter from the George Elliot Secondary School PAC. Ms. Phillip clarified that there was a general feeling that the PAC had experienced fewer opportunities to provide input or address District issues. The Chairperson acknowledged the efforts of newly elected COPAC President Deb Butler and her executive to ensure timely communication with school PACs. The Superintendent advised that, after discussions with Ms. Butler, he had arranged for the COPAC Executive and all PAC Presidents to be able to converse through FirstClass e-mail. The system is now active and can be used as soon as individual Internet Agreements and passwords are in place. COPAC is organizing a training session for PAC Presidents. Ms. Phillip agreed that these new developments would likely resolve some of the past difficulties and she expressed her appreciation.

**Partner Group Representation**

The Superintendent explained that both attendance, and lack of consistency in attendance, are creating difficulties. In some cases there has been no representation, or a different representative at each meeting. The Board recognizes that attendance is voluntary; however, consistent attendance will help to facilitate communication at the Board Committee level.

There was discussion on the current Committee format. In response to a question from the Chairperson, the partner group representatives agreed that the new Board Committee format is useful, that conversation in a more informal setting is good, and that the Committees do provide useful venues when in depth discussion are needed on specific topics or major issues.

**Outcomes:**

- 1. To facilitate conversation within partner groups, Board committee reports will be forwarded to Association Presidents, as well as to partner group representatives. Whenever possible, the Reports will list future agenda topics. Committee Reports will continue to be posted on the District's Website.**
- 2. To ensure timely communication on Board committee matters, committee meeting agenda will be sent directly to PAC Presidents, through FirstClass. To help**

**identify issues of significant interest to partner groups and to facilitate dialogue, staff will also continue to send committee meeting agenda to Association Presidents.**

**3. COPAC will continue to remind its members that PACs and parents need to be hearing from school planning councils.**

## **Information Items**

### **1. Partner Group Liaison to Committees (Current Structure)**

The Chairperson advised that each Board Committee was being asked if the current structure is useful. She noted that it is not typical of other districts and it has created extra work for everyone involved. Additionally, partner groups continue to have access to comment and questions at Board meetings.

The representatives informed the Committee that they liked the opportunity for conversation in a more informal setting and that, from their perspective, the amount of time and effort is justified.

It was agreed that the General Affairs should continue to be a “catchall” Committee, but that meetings should only be held when there are issues referred from the Board, rather than creating items to form an agenda.

### **2. Reports/Minutes**

There has been ongoing discussion on ways to make the Committees less formal and reduce the paperwork. The Superintendent advised that trustees, by consensus at the recent liaison meeting, have agreed that the distribution of brief Committee Reports should continue, but have agreed that formal Minutes are no longer required for Committee Meetings.

### **3. Future General Affairs Committee Meeting Topics**

None at this time.

### **4. Meeting Schedule**

If issues arise for the Agenda, the next General Affairs Committee Meeting will be held:

Time: 4:30 PM                      Location: School Board Office, Board Room

Date: April 4, 2007

### **Questions: Please Contact:**

**Moyra Baxter, Chairperson                      Phone: 250 767-6153                      e-mail: mbaxter@sd23.bc.ca**

**Mike Roberts, Superintendent                      Phone: 250 470-4356                      e-mail: mroberts@sd23.bc.ca**