



The Confederation of Parents' Advisory Councils of Saanich

## Meeting Minutes

Individual Learning Centre, 1649 Mt Newton Cross Rd, Saanichton, BC

November 21, 2019, 7 – 9 pm

### COPACS Executive

- *Monique Hiltz, President*
- *Ceilidh Fear, 1st Vice President*
- *James Taylor, 2nd Vice President*
- *Craig Morton, Treasurer*
- *Phil Molloy Recording Secretary; and voting member for Keating Elementary School*
- *Ashley Sonosky Past President*

### Education Partners

- *Dave Eberwein, Superintendent*
- *Jason Reid, Secretary Treasurer*
- *Elsie McMurphy, Board Vice Chair (Trustee North Zone)*
- *Teri VanWell, Trustee (South Zone)*
- *Vicki Martin, Board Chair (Trustee South Zone)*
- *Don Peterson, Saanich Teachers' Association (STA)*

### School PAC Representatives (Voting Members)

- *Shu Franey, Bayside Middle School*
- *Liz Keating, Kelset Elementary School*
- *Jen Verscheure, North Saanich Middle School*
- *Reet Dangerfield, Lochside Elementary*
- *Leanne Turple, Lochside Elementary*
- *Niki McIveen, Brentwood Bay Elementary School*
- *Kelly Hoffmann Stelly's Secondary School; Bayside Middle School*
- *Jason Mackenzie, Sidney Elementary School*
- *Wendy Bird, Prospect Lake Elementary School*
- *Heather Hopčock, Deep Cove Elementary School*
- *Lisa Gunderson, Royal Oak Middle School*

## 1 Introduction and Territorial Acknowledgement

Monique Hiltz welcomed attendees and recognized that the meeting is taking place on the unceded land of the Coast Salish Peoples and the traditional territory of the WSÁNEĆ peoples, whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

## 2 Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve proposed by: Monique Hiltz; seconded by: Craig Morton

Result: agenda approved

### **3 Approval of Last Meeting's Minutes**

Edit proposed to draft notes: Fix first subtitle under Executive Reports to read: "President's/Vice Presidents'" not "Presidents'/Co-Presidents'".

Motion to approve amended notes by: Phil Molloy; Seconded by: Craig Morton

Result: October minutes approved with described edits.

## **4 Reports from our Education Partners**

### *4.1 School Teachers' Association*

The report from the Saanich Teachers' Association (STA) was presented by Don Peterson. Don recognized that we have emerged from a very challenging period for everyone (referring to the recent CUPE job action strike). Don noted that CUPE have respected teachers' picket lines in the past and, as such, it was important to teachers that they reciprocated and respected CUPE's picket lines during the strike. Don expressed hope to see real benefits from the negotiations in the classrooms moving forwards.

Don also offered thanks to parents who had supported the rallies.

With regards to the possibility of future job action by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), Don noted that he anticipates a negotiated contract to avoid potential job action in future. He explained that current concerns relate to classroom sizes and, more specifically, 20 school districts in BC do not have maximum class size stipulations. The Province is pushing for, in some cases, over 30 students per class.

### *4.2 Superintendent*

Dave also recognized that, with regards to the recent job action, we have all been through a trying, emotional and disruptive period. Dave expressed thanks to have been able to reach an agreement with CUPE and to have students back in class. The focus now is on rebuilding an environment of togetherness and to be as communicative as possible about the ways that the District is striving to mitigate impacts of the strike (for example by offsetting lost class time by extending semester 1 in Secondary schools by a week and having a shortened assessment period). Report cards will be completed before Christmas albeit slightly differently to normal (Dave noted that parents should receive information on changes to the reporting formats directly from their schools). Finally, Dave expressed thanks to all parents and recognized the difficulties parents faced as a result of the strike, noting particularly the effects relating to childcare and both organizational and financial hardships.

#### **4.2.1 Questions for Dave Eberwein, and associated discussion topics**

Q: Hear that Christmas break might be shortened, is that the case?

A: No, that is not the case. The Christmas break remains untouched.

Q: Will there be changes to the timing/length of spring break:

A: While the board is considering changes to the scheduled break in the spring, the SBO does not anticipate any changes yet, recognizing that there are many challenges associated with introducing such changes

Q: During the strike, we were unsure about strike etiquette. Specifically, was it considered appropriate for children to play on schools' playground facilities (and, hence, cross picket lines with their parents).

A (by Don Peterson): Generally, this is OK as there is ultimately nothing to prevent anyone from doing so; however, if you have concerns, it's best to ask the Picket Captain.

Q: If teachers going on strike what would that look like and what would the impacts be?

A (by Don Peterson): The teachers are very much aware of the impact a strike would have on the community. Don noted that while teachers could move to a strike vote, he does not anticipate it happening. Instead, he expects to see issues being resolved via political action. Here, James Taylor (COPACS VP2) noted the challenge for parents is that we are so heavily affected by strikes but do not have a (formal) seat at the negotiating table. Further, he noted that the issue lies between the employer and the employees and, hence, should be resolved by these parties. As parents, it is important that we speak to our issues and hope that such communication will promote resolutions without any impacts on students and families. It was noted that it is very difficult (and hence unlikely) that schools can be formally classified as an 'essential service' (which would allow the Government to force schools to open) since schools would have to be closed for months before the threshold for an essential service would be reached.

It was noted that *everyone* at the table is acutely aware of the impacts felt by families during strikes. As such, there is a lot of good work happening at the bargaining table and absolutely no one wants another job action.

Finally, it was noted that (1) while the British Columbia Confederation of Parents' Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) does not have a *formal* say in employee/employer negotiations, they (and hence COPACS and thereby COPACS' constituent PACs) have a voice heard by the Minister of Education. Parents can also write to their MLAs.

Q: At high-school level, are parents automatically notified of absent students (like other school districts do)? If not, why not, and will that be introduced?

A: No, currently there is no automatic notification process. Nevertheless, the District is exploring how to manage automated communications through an online portal. The Assistant Superintendent has been tasked with moving this forward in January with a realistic goal of having something in place by fall 2020. The District does encourage teachers to call home when they observe students consistently missing class. Dave recognized that this functionality is important and implementing it *carefully and properly* needs to be a priority.

### 4.3 Trustees

The Trustee report was delivered by Elsie McMurphy. Elsie expressed appreciation for the work done by COPACS during strike, especially communicating correct information to parents. Elsie noted that the

Board is glad, relieved and thankful that the strike is over and that issues relating to staff retention, and wage parity will be addressed including across the Province.

Elsie invited all present to the Board's Annual General Meeting (December 2<sup>nd</sup> 7pm at the School Board Office, 2125 Keating Cross Road), when the Board will elect officers for the coming year. She noted that Victoria Martin will not be running again as chair.

Elsie also notified attendees of two other meetings: committee day (December 10<sup>th</sup>), and the next regular Board meeting (December 18<sup>th</sup>). For more information, see <https://www.sd63.bc.ca/leadership-and-governance/board-committee-meetings>.

Two big focal points in BC school communities right now are: (1) vaping and associated school-safety announcements; (2) forthcoming changes to the funding formula.

Finally, Elsie introduced Teri Vanwell, South Zone Trustee, to attendees.

## **5 Executive Reports**

### *5.1 President*

Monique Hiltz expressed her immense gratitude and appreciation to James Taylor for his support and all his work during the strike. This sentiment was echoed by many other attendees.

### *5.2 Vice-Presidents*

James Taylor explained that we are now focusing on moving forwards beyond the strike and regaining mutual trust among all parties, based on the common goal of doing right by our kids. He commented that everyone is working hard to mitigate the three weeks of education lost as a result of the strike, especially for Grade 11-12 students. James encouraged everyone to prioritize our kids' welfare, and noted that while we (parents) can and should voice challenges and issues we have, it is important that we allow the employer and employee to resolve differences. Our focus should be to remain non-partisan and focused on advocating for our kids.

James noted that a silver lining of the strike is that many parents have realized that they have a voice and a conduit to the Minister through their PACs, District PAC (i.e., COPACS) and ultimately the BCCPAC.

### *5.3 Treasurer*

Craig Morton presented a financial report and noted that, due to the strike, the only transaction of the month was a monthly fee of \$2.50.

Operating Account balance: \$4,633.11

Gaming Account balance: \$6,093.52

## **6 Moving Forwards**

Several voting members expressed their appreciation to COPACS for their help, support and communications during the job action strike. There was a broad discussion of the impacts felt by parents as a result of the strike, including the loss of 4 Stelly's students to neighbouring school districts or the tribal school.

There was a discussion about the possibility of a PAC Presidents social mixer in the new year, to be organized by COPACS. James Taylor requested that voting members ask their PAC Presidents if they would be interested in such an event.

- **Voting Member to ask their respective PACs if they would be interested in a PAC Presidents social mixer in the New Year.**
- **Phil Molloy to set up a Doodle Poll to find a mutually convenient date, time for a PAC Presidents social mixer.**

Attendees were informed about the forthcoming Parents as Education and Career Coaches meeting at Stelly's Secondary School on January 30<sup>th</sup> (details available here:

<https://copacs.sd63.bc.ca/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=193#p196>).

There was a discussion about the potential for a teachers' strike. Ashley Sonosky commented that Rob Fleming (Minister of Education) is determined to get a contract agreed upon and encouraged attendees to stay informed on ongoing negotiations and any latest news relating to the revised funding formula (since we had already been expecting this to be released but it has not been).

Several interweaving discussions took place involving:

- The scope of the Provincial Framework Agreement and parties that are beholden to it
  - The organization of the teachers' union, support workers' unions and differences between these two union structures
  - The potential for SD63 parents to be reimbursed for expenses incurred as a result of the strike from the money not paid to CUPE and teachers' salaries, and it was noted that this had been posited to Rob Fleming by Adam Olsen (MLA Saanich North). It was suggested that parents write to both Adam Olsen and Lana Popham (MLA Saanich South) to enquire about this possibility
  - The varied and large impacts of the strike on SD63 parents, including financial, emotional and mental
  - The prospect of a forthcoming townhall event by Adam Olsen focused on education in the new year.
- **James Taylor to reach out to Adam Olsen and Lana Popham about such an event**
  - The current and pending funding model and the fact that private schools are partially funded by the Province
  - The role of COPACS during strike
  - Ways parents can communicate issues to COPACS, MLAs and other involved parties during strikes

There was a conversation about developing a list or resources to help parents in the event of a future strike; a "Strike Preparedness" dossier that provides links to and information on (among others):

- Local community groups
- Recreation centres
- Councilors
- Faith groups
- Rotating playdates

- Saanich Peninsula Local Action Team (SPLAT, which is focused on child and youth local wellness and wellbeing)
- Sources of information during strikes

COPACS would support anyone wishing to lead the development of such an initiative.

Finally, attendees were given a heads-up about several forthcoming parent education events (all dates and times to be communicated to COPACS once finalized):

- Erin Severs, Vaping and school safety. Hosted by Royal Oak Middle School, in partnership with Claremont Secondary School.
- Naloxone Education by a Pharmacist parent at Kelsey Elementary School
- How to Talk to Your Kids About Racial Issues by Lisa Gunderson, hosted by Royal Oak Middle School

## **7 Old Business**

### *7.1 Middle School Reporting talk*

Carly Hunter had been scheduled to talk at the current meeting about the forthcoming changes to assessment and reporting in middle schools; however, COPACS regretfully cancelled the presentation in light of the recent end to the job action strike. Carly will be presenting on this topic on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7 pm, at Bayside Middle School

### *7.2 Policy 1100 meeting*

We need to make sure that the voice of the parents is maintained, protected and heard. Policy 1100 is the policy that codifies this sentiment. Each year a meeting is held in the school district to focus on the topic of the parent voice and Policy 1100. This year there will be particular focus on indigenous reconciliation. The meeting had been arranged but got postponed due to the job action strike. Topic this year is indigenous reconciliation. There was a discussion about a date to which this meeting could be rescheduled; late January and early February were flagged.

### *7.3 BCCPAC Membership*

BCCPAC memberships cost \$75 and helps BCCPAC do a lot of work to give parents a voice at the Provincial level. It was requested that voting members make a plug to their PACs to get their BCCPAC Memberships, if they have not already done so. COPACS Presidents or Vice Presidents could also attend PAC Meetings to provide context and give a plug, if desired.

## **8 Next Meeting**

It was noted that there will be no COPACS meeting in December and that, as such, our next meeting will be January, 16<sup>th</sup> 2020. James Taylor offered to provide a debrief from his recent attendance at the BCCPAC meeting in Vancouver.

## **9 Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn proposed by: Phil Molloy; seconded by: Monique Hiltz.

Result: Meeting adjourned at 8:56 pm.