



**HALIFAX REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD
AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
February 18, 2015
5:30 p.m.**

An Audit Committee meeting was held this date in
Meeting Room 202 (2nd Floor)
33 Spectacle Lake Dr., Dartmouth, NS

PRESENT:

Christy Linders
Dave Wright
Cindy Littlefair
Cathie O'Toole – Left meeting at 6:15 p.m.
Bruce Densmore

BOARD MEMBERS:

Melinda Daye, Chair

REGRETS:

Nancy Jakeman
Selena Henderson, Corporate Secretary
Kathryn Burlton, Manager, Accounting & Purchasing

STAFF:

Elwin LeRoux, Superintendent
Gary Adams, Senior Staff Advisor
Tracy O'Kroneg, Director, Human Resources
Ron Heiman, Director, Operations Services
Danielle McNeil-Hessian, Director, School Administration
Alison King, Director, Program
Doug Hadley, Coordinator, Communications Services
Terri Thompson, Director, Financial Services
Karen Tucker, Administrative Assistant, Financial Services

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

Committee member Nancy Jakeman was the sole nomination for Audit Committee Chair. Ms. Jakeman was not present at the meeting but accepted the position via Ms. Linders.

It was moved and seconded (Linders/Wright) that Nancy Jakeman be appointed Chair of the Audit Committee.

(CARRIED)

3. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

Committee member Dave Wright was the sole nomination for Vice Chair of the Audit Committee. Dave Wright accepted the nomination.

It was moved and seconded (Linders/Daye) that Dave Wright be appointed Vice Chair of the Audit Committee.

(CARRIED)

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved and seconded (Linders/O'Toole) that the agenda be approved.

(CARRIED)

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES/BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

November 19, 2014

Under "REGRETS" for the November 19, 2014 Audit Committee meeting minutes the following names are to be added:

- Elwin LeRoux, Superintendent
- Alison King, Director, Program
- Ron Heiman, Director, Operations Services

The Committee members agreed that once the above revision has been made to the November 19, 2014 Audit Committee meeting minutes and the revision approved by Christy Linders, Audit Committee Chair at that time, the minutes be approved.

It was moved and seconded (Densmore/Linders) that the revised minutes of November 19, 2014 Audit Committee be approved.

(CARRIED)

During discussions of the Business Plan Priorities at the November 19 Audit Committee meeting, Ms. Linders inquired about the success of the credit recovery/rescue model being used by our high schools. In response to that inquiry Ms. King, on behalf of Ms. Syms, who was the Program representative at the November 19 meeting, presented statistics regarding the success of the program for the 2013-2014 school year. Of the 466 participants in the program, there were 440 students who successfully recovered 473 credits equaling a 94.4% success rate.

6. REPORT 15-02-05 – DECEMBER 31, 2014 – QUARTERLY BUSINESS PLAN AND FINANCIAL UPDATE

Terri Thompson, Director, Financial Services

Ms. Thompson opened the floor for any questions or comments on the Business Plan Priorities and their progress.

In reply to Mr. Wright's inquiry about the reasoning behind grades 4 and 7 being offered the services of the 4.5 FTE mathematics support teachers, Ms. King informed him that data indicated that students start to develop gaps in their understanding of mathematics in grades 2 and 3. We chose grade 4 as a starting point with the possibility of moving it to grade 3 next year.

Mr. Densmore expressed concern regarding the amount of professional development targeted toward principals. Staff explained that principals are requesting various training so that they may be of assistance to their teachers, who in turn, can help their students achieve success.

Ms. Linders inquired about the priority list for accessibility upgrades to schools that support students' needs. Mr. Heiman explained that they look at priorities from two different avenues: the schools' needs and the needs of the individual students. Priority lists are constantly being re-evaluated to accommodate the changing requirements of the schools and the students.

In regard to Ms. Linder's question concerning the expansion of the program being offered at the junior high level at Rocky Lake Junior High School, staff explained that the multi-disciplinary unit that looks at the principles of sustainability in relation to food is a Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) pilot program. This program will need to be evaluated by the EECD and then funding will play a large role in the future of the program.

Several members of the Audit Committee were interested in learning more about the Alternative High School model being offered at the Bedford and Forsyth Education Centres (BFEC). Mr. Adams noted that there is augmented counselling for the students. The main objective of the Alternative High School is to try to keep students in high school – to complete their credits. The program is building on former models such as Flexible Learning Education Centres (FLEC's), Youth, Pathways, and Transitions (YPT), etc. but it is based on a high school model. Mr. LeRoux explained that the success of the program will be achieved by working with students' strengths and trying to accommodate individual's timetables, whenever possible.

Mr. Densmore inquired about the re-assignment of a School Administration Supervisor, with expertise in cultural responsiveness, to the Program department. This Supervisor is working with both school-based and central office staff, helping them to understand culturally responsive instruction and assessment.

Ms. Linders asked how the communications with Stock Transportation was progressing. Mr. Heiman noted there are modifications in the RFP for student transportation which will provide more clarification to potential bidders regarding service requirements. Mr. Heiman continues to work with Stock on improving communications, which includes the use of Twitter and monthly reports from Stock to the Halifax Regional School Board.

In response to Mr. Densmore's inquiry about the status of the new HRSB website and their Twitter account, Mr. Hadley noted that although our new website is performing to expectation, it is difficult for some people to adjust to the new format as far as finding information in new locations.

Over 100 schools are participating in the use of Twitter. It is a good communication tool and the overall results are positive.

In response to inquiries regarding "HRSB Shout Outs," a communication plan that promotes internal communication and celebrates some of the great things students and staff accomplish on a daily basis, it was noted that it is sent out periodically to targeted people and people who subscribe to it. At present, there are approximately 600 subscribers.

Mr. Wright inquired about the possible expansion of the Options and Opportunities (O₂) program. Ms. King explained that the O₂ program is already offered in all high schools. The desired expansion of this program is in increasing the number/variety of opportunities in which students may participate.

Throughout the discussions on the various Business Plan Priorities updates to December 31, 2014, Mr. Densmore voiced very positive comments on several of the updates. Positive feedback is always valuable information for staff.

Ms. Thompson reviewed the financial report update, stating that it is anticipated that budget targets will be met by the fiscal year-end. It was noted that the budget cost pressures continue to be substitute teacher costs, utilities, and snow removal.

The floor was open to comments and questions during and after the review of the financial update. All questions and concerns were addressed.

The Audit Committee will forward Report 15-02-05 – December 31, 2014 – Quarterly Business Plan and Financial Update to the Board for information.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, April 15, 2015 at 5:30 p.m.
Meeting with Jamie O'Neill, CA - Partner, Audit - KPMG

9. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded (Linders/Densmore) that the meeting be adjourned.

(CARRIED)

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.



Dave Wright
Vice Chair, Audit Committee



Karen Tucker
Administrative Assistant, Financial Services