



**HALIFAX REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD
AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
November 19, 2014
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, Chair
Nancy Jakeman, Vice Chair
Dave Wright
Gin Yee – Arrived 5:45 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS: Cindy Littlefair
Bridget Boutilier

REGRETS: Bruce Densmore
Cathie O'Toole
Elwin LeRoux, Superintendent
Alison King, Director, Program
Ron Heiman, Director, Operations Services

STAFF: Gary Adams, Senior Staff Advisor
Selena Henderson, Corporate Secretary
Tracy O'Kroneg, Director, Human Resources
Marie Fagan, Coordinator, Property Services - Custodial
Danielle McNeil-Hessian, Director, School Administration
Heather Syms, Coordinator, Programs
Terri Thompson, Director, Financial Services
Karen Tucker, Administrative Assistant, Financial Services

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved and seconded (Wright/Jakeman) that the agenda be approved.

(CARRIED)

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES / BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

September 17, 2014

It was moved and seconded (Jakeman/Linders) that the minutes of September 17, 2014 Audit Committee be approved.

(CARRIED)

4. REPORT 14-11-1492 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2014 – QUARTERLY BUSINESS PLAN AND FINANCIAL UPDATE

Terri Thompson, Director, Financial Services

Ms. Thompson reviewed the Business Plan Priorities update. Ms. Thompson noted that the priorities are being achieved as planned. She then opened the floor for any questions on the priorities and their progress.

In reply to Mr. Wright's question regarding the number of schools identified as requiring additional support, Mr. Adams noted 20 schools have been recognized at this time.

Mr. Wright asked for clarification on the priority regarding supporting schools to analyze, interpret and use student achievement results. Mr. Adams clarified that this information is used by staff for the school's self-assessment.

In regard to the same priority, Ms. Linders questioned the accuracy of the statistical information that was gathered regarding students from communities with a prevalence of low income. Staff informed the Committee that the information in question is based on Stats-Can data and clarified that the statistics are not used for identifying individuals in poverty but areas in poverty and therefore the information is helpful and useful for our purposes.

A question was also raised regarding the number of schools in the Continuous School Improvement (CSI) cycle. Staff noted that in any given year the number of schools in the CSI cycle is changing and therefore the number of schools at each stage of the cycle change on a constant basis.

In response to Ms. Linder's question regarding the availability of co-op opportunities for high school students, staff replied that this is the first year that the program is available in all high schools.

In reference to a question from Ms. Linders, Ms. McNeil-Hessian confirmed that the Discovering Opportunities program at Graham Creighton Junior High is still offered; however, it is not expanding to other schools at this time. School and Board staff feel this is a very successful program.

Ms. Syms answered Ms. Linders inquiry regarding advanced programming for high school students, and she will get back to Ms. Linders with an answer regarding the success of the credit recovery/rescue model being used by our high schools.

Regarding the priority of expanding the Skilled Trades program at Cole Harbour High School, Ms. McNeil-Hessian, in response to an inquiry from Ms. Linders, confirmed the program is presently only offered to the current students at Cole Harbour High; however, students from other high schools can apply for an out-of- area transfer if they wish to take advantage of the Skilled Trades program at Cole Harbour High School.

Mr. Wright asked if the *Best Practices in Instruction and Assessment* document has been published by the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). Staff informed the Committee that it has not been published to-date due to the change in staff at the EECD, priorities and focus shift with new administration and staff.

Ms. Jakeman and other committee members were interested in an update regarding expanding student ridership using public transit. Ron Heiman, Director of Operations Services, who could not be at the meeting, is involved with a committee regarding this topic. Stock Transportation has made adjustments to improve existing service without increasing the number of routes.

In conjunction with expanding the Communication Plan from 2013-2014, Mr. Wright requested that the Plan also be sent out to the Board members.

Ms. Thompson reviewed the Financial Update to September 30, 2014. The report indicates that results are generally in line with expected results for the second quarter of 2014-2015. There is a projected General Fund operating surplus of \$29,100. Results to-date project the Supplementary Fund will meet budget targets by year-end with no significant issues.

The floor was open to comments and questions during the review of the Financial Update. As in other years, it is anticipated that budget cost pressures will be substitute teacher costs, heating fuel, electricity, and snow removal. It is difficult to project exact amounts for these cost pressures at this point in time. Staff noted that as part of the Energy Management projects, schools are changing their heating sources to natural gas or pellets.

It was also noted that another budget issue is the change to the Provincial Teachers' Long Term Disability/Salary Continuation Plan coverage. Participation is now mandatory for all teachers and the cost increase places an added cost pressure on the Board. This pressure is expected to be funded by the province.

Audit Committee members and Board members requested discussion and clarification concerning the planned use of the accumulated surplus. Ms. Thompson and other staff explained and clarified the process.

The Audit Committee will forward Report 14-11-1492 – September 30, 2014 – Quarterly Business Plan and Financial Update to the Board for information.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

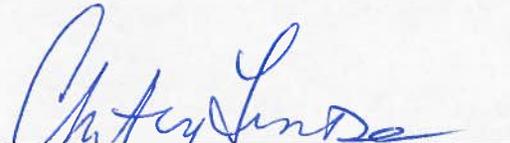
Wednesday, February 18, 2015 at 5:30 p.m.

7. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded (Wright/Jakeman) that the meeting be adjourned.

(CARRIED)

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.



Christy Linders
Chair, Audit Committee



Karen Tucker
Administrative Assistant, Financial Services

APPROVED