

**Blossom Park School Council**  
**Meeting Minutes – December 15, 2021**

**In Attendance:**

Susan Fattal: Chair

Ayan Haji Egeh: Secretary

Nabi Habibi: Treasurer

Naoko Nakamura: (Parent Member)

Caroline Theriault: Principal

Carmelina Falcucci: Vice Principal

Denise Natyshak: Library Technician

Seynab Hersi, Zeina Hosny, Masa Alfarawati, and Sedra Alrajab: Student Representatives

And Two more parents.

**1. Welcome and Approval of Agenda and Minutes:**

- Susan welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- The agenda and minutes from the last meeting were approved.
- Susan thanked Naoko for all her support and active role as a treasurer/secretary of the school council.
- Susan welcomed Denise to the meeting. Denise will be discussing items related to the library.
- Manal, a new parent, has joined the meeting.

**2. Chair's Update**

- On December 10<sup>th</sup>, we had the Teacher and Staff Appreciation Day. It was the outcome of teamwork. Susan thanked the student representative – Sedra, Seynab, Zeina and Masa for their incredible job, creativity, hard work and commitment. Susan thanked Carmelina for her help and support, and Joel Gibson for his amazing work with the Kahoot.
- Susan contacted Ashley Calberry, the previous school council member, regarding the Facebook page that was created two years ago; the page was inactive. Susan asked Ashley to delete the page to avoid confusion with the new Facebook group that we intend to create. There is still another School Council Facebook page created by a previous School Council team; Susan will try to contact the administrator of the page.

- Chair contacted the Sports and Entertainment Group regarding the fundraising option they suggested for purchasing 67's game tickets; a minimum purchase of 50 tickets is required. Last meeting Caroline suggested asking them for donation instead, and Susan is still waiting to hear from them regarding the possibility.
- Susan sent the school two documents for Classroom Use of Technology Rules. The documents are written in simplified English for kids (K-3) and (4-6) and are based on the Board's technology consent forms.
- OCDSB sent an email to recommend the move to Micharity portal. The "Charitable Impact" page was closed today, and the money was withdrawn. The money will be transferred to our school, and the school administrator will send an email to the Board to request a check payable to the school council. The money is expected to be transferred to the school around mid-January. The total amount raised is \$290. However, as we have a 2.8% service fee, the total amount after deduction is \$281.88.
- On Micharity, the donor will be given the option to pay the service fee of their credit card.

### **3. Treasurer's Update**

- Nabi and Susan have been working on transferring the signing authority of the TD bank account. The appointment is scheduled for Thursday December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021.
- The total balance available up-to-date is \$4048.56. \$200 is still set aside for the outdoor project.

### **4. Principal's Update**

- Staff changes are coming up. Mrs. Christina Gluch, the office administrator, is leaving the school, as she has taken a new position in a nearby school. Friday is her last day.
- Caroline has conducted some interviews, and Mrs. Sara El Zayed, a community member, was hired into the office administrator position. She has office administration experience and speaks three languages – English, French and Arabic. She will start her new role as of January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.
- There are a few people still on leave. Teacher Asheeqa Khan in grade one, who has been doing a fabulous job, is now ending her LTO. Katie Young is returning on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022. Another teacher is also coming back from maternity leave.
- Caroline is interviewing for an educational assistant position by Friday.
- Before Omicron hit, the school heard from Ridgemont High School and another high school that students are interested in doing co-op placements at Blossom School. Currently, we have four students who can start their co-op term in February.
- We also have intermediate sports for grades seven and eight starting in January. Mr. Allen is spearheading the sports program, and the school is proceeding cautiously and maintaining the cohort structure. So, there will be one class from grade seven

competing with another class from grade seven. There will be very strict rules to maintain the safety of the students.

- Staff will be receiving coaching support to improve instructional practice. The school will receive a complement of four essential coaches coming to the school, and working with the staff. There are literacy and numeracy coaches in both English and French and they will be in the building supporting the school staff in meeting their own goals to improve instructions in these areas.

#### **5. Vice Principal's update**

- The appreciation day and assembly were received very well by the staff. It was a great success. The superintendent visited the school on that day, and he took a picture of the bulletin board, as he liked it immensely.
- This past Monday, we had school photo day. Every student had the opportunity to have their photo taken. We didn't have full class photos. The company has sent the school proofs of a class composite of all individual photos. Our school was one of the less than five schools in our district that has had photo day. There is a retake day at one point in January for students who missed the photo day.
- Sedra asked what would happen to the photo retake date if the province moved to remote learning. Carmelina mentioned that there will be no photo retake day in the event of remote learning. The school will continue to reschedule the day until staff and students are back in person.
- Susan suggested asking students who were absent on photo day to send their pictures to school to be part of the class photo composite in case the retake day got cancelled.
- Carmelina is waiting to hear from the school district regarding the graduation photo day. In the even of remote learning, the school can ask the company to photoshop graduation robes on the students' personalized photos.
- Lately, there has been cold weather, which has created slippery ground in areas around the schoolyard. The students have not been permitted to play in the yard, especially in the grassy area, because of the amount of water collected from the first snowfall, which was resulted in slippery ice. All students are now permitted to be playing in the asphalt area of the yard.
- Concerning the pathway to Kiss and Ride, which is an area established due to COVID-19, Caroline, Carmelina, and the custodian put a lot of effort into salt and grid the path leading to the area of Kiss and Ride for students' safety. Unfortunately, the Kiss and Ride is not part of the school's property. Caroline and Carmelina called Ottawa City regarding the safety issues in the area. The Ottawa City plows the location on Bloomington Avenue, but that still wasn't enough. Because the Kiss and Ride is not a designated area on school property, the city has told the school that they can't do much more than what they've done in terms of plowing the area. The school will investigate and advocate for the students' safety in that area.

- In terms of the new variant and COVID-19, the school is preparing the staff and students for the possibility of remote learning following the winter break. Teachers will bring home their instructional materials and students will bring home their personal belongings.
- Should we move into remote learning, the school is putting together a plan to provide technology to all students.
- A parent expressed concern about the Kiss and Ride pick-up area as her child fell twice in the area. Carmelina suggested having the student picked up from the school's main entrance after the school buses move. The parent can come between 3:10 pm and 3:15 pm to pick up her child.

## **6. Teacher's Update**

- Tammy Draper, the teacher representative, could not join the meeting.

## **7. Matters for discussion**

### **School library:**

- The Ottawa Citizen article entitled: "Pandemic squeezes school libraries" sparked concern about the school library situation.
- Before the COVID-19 pandemic, scholastic bookfair held in schools generated income for school libraries. COVID-19 had impacted the school libraries and communities that are socio-economically disadvantaged. Blossom Park school was one of the schools that were affected the most among other schools. The school library has been shrinking as COVID lockdowns have resulted in numerous books not being returned after students move, graduate or due to loss or misplace. Almost \$800 worth of books are still on loan from last January's lockdown, while even more remain outstanding from the first lockdown in 2020.
- Denise mentioned that the OCDSB board and all the schools' libraries were affected by the sudden lockdowns and that Blossom Park School is not unique in that regard.
- Denise explained that there were various reasons for school library's situation.
  - Some students moved out from the school into a new school or high school and others moved out of our school board.
  - Although emails and many notices were sent out to the students and their families, the books weren't coming back to the library.
  - Some families cannot pay for some materials that might have been lost or damaged.
- Susan asked for more clarification about the school book loan process.
- Denise clarified that all books borrowed and returned are recorded and tracked in the library computer system. When a student doesn't return a book on time or damages a

book, the library computer generates a notice, which goes to the teachers to hand it over to the students to take it home. The notices include the book's title that needs to be returned, the status of the book and a \$5 fee for a damaged book. Denise added that notices also go out in the Arabic language.

- To avoid a similar situation from happening, Susan has suggested the following:
  - Following the winter break and in the event of in-person learning taking place, start a campaign by sending a written message to all parents in both English and Arabic, requesting the return of borrowed books even from previous years.
  - Find ways to contact students who left to other schools to send them the library notices for book returns.
  - Carmelina confirmed that some students can be contacted if they have an email address and are still on our school board. Some students have been approached in the past and can be contacted again for a follow-up.
  - Susan has suggested having the parents donate used and new books to the school library following the COVID-19 safety protocol. We can place boxes in the main school entrance for returned and donated books.
  - Caroline prefers that we accept books that target the students' interest to be in circulation and enjoyed by the students. We need to think carefully about how we're messaging that out and what we're going to accept or not.
  - Extra books can be donated to other places.
- Susan asked if the school has held a reading week before to encourage students to read. Students can present their favourite books during the reading week and read to each other. Susan suggested having parents who can volunteer to read books to students virtually. Students can pick a book and act out the story.
- Carmelina mentioned that Denise is doing more than behind the scenes. Denise is quite visible in many of the classrooms - in-person and virtually. For example, Denise reads to classes virtually and tries to do things with a variety of classes and students in the school. In addition, Denise circulates the library's books in containers to classes on a weekly basis.
- Carmelina indicated that students will be able to start visiting the library in a two-week cycle in the new year, where students will have more time to spend in the library every two-weeks. The school carefully tried to get back to normal as before COVID.
- Denise has shared the outcome of her newspaper article and the generosity of our community since the publication of those articles in the Ottawa Citizen.

The community has shown an outpour of support and generosity to the school. The school received just under \$7,000 in donations, which is incredible. We still have promises of some additional funds. One of the exciting things that happened today, was having a donor who has been speaking to her lawyer and has put together a long-term

plan that Blossom Park Elementary School will be on her annual donation. The donor has confirmed with Denise that she will contact her again in 2022.

We also have a local author who came forth to help the school. A downtown bookstore has donated to the school, and other people from the school neighbourhood also donated, which was heartwarming. The school received financial and emotional support from the community which is really inspiring.

- Ayan suggested sharing the heartwarming support and stories from the community in the school website and newsletters.
- Denise indicated that the school library needs to look after what is available now and continues to build moving forward. Denise is optimistic that 2022 will be a bright school year for the library and students.
- Susan suggested teaching students how to take care of books. Denise mentioned that teachers do a really good job of reminding students to take care of books, but we need more support from home. Parents need to remind their children to take care of their books and find a special place at home for books away from younger siblings. It's a team effort, and everyone is working together, the students, families and staff, to look after the books.
- With the help of Denise, Susan will draft a letter to the parents regarding book donation, returns and tips on how to take care of the library book.

#### **Ottawa tree planting program for schools**

- Susan shared the City of Ottawa application form with the school.
  - The deadline for the application is June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.
  - There is a plan review process with a minimum of one site visit from the city representative. The visit will take place between December 1<sup>st</sup> to June 1<sup>st</sup> within the same year of the submitted application.
  - Following the city approval, the funding and the trees planting come in the spring season of the following year.
  - The City of Ottawa allocates \$10,000 for school tree planting projects.
  - The grant can be in the form of funds up to \$500 per tree, or the school can order actual trees from the City of Ottawa Forest Management Unit.
  - Applications can be accepted from several entities, including Student or Parent Councils.
  - Any interested entity should show commitment to maintaining and protecting the trees.

- Applicants should perform tree maintenance activities, such as watering the trees.
- Priority is given to first-time applicants and who didn't receive prior findings. Applicants can apply more than once, but not within two consecutive years.
- Expenditures and reporting: After planting the trees, the applicant must submit a final project report, which is due by May 1<sup>st</sup> following the tree planting.

The report must include the following:

- Number of the tree planted.
  - Evaluation of the tree maintenance program.
  - The photographs of the new planted trees.
  - There will be follow-up inspections by the City of Ottawa Forest Management Unit staff to ensure the proper maintenance of the trees and to provide any support and guidance during the project.
- Applicant must provide site sketch of the location where the trees will be planted, tree species and the tree size at the time of planting (e.g., caliber and height), location of host IP, watering source, existing structure such as buildings, equipment, trees, sheds, winter storage area, existing vegetation in the area, street names and overhead utilities. In addition, the applicant must provide a three-year maintenance program and watering schedule.
- Timelines:
  - Application submission by June 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - City of Ottawa Forest Management Unit site visit by December 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Final approval by property owner by February 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Final approval by the city delivered by March 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Final report delivered by May 1<sup>st</sup> of the following year.
- Susan shared the school yard map in the meeting to be used for planning and discussion. A clear map needs to be sent to the city along with the application.
- Carmelina and Caroline will follow up with the custodial staff to ensure they can be involved in the project.
- Carmelina suggested avoiding planting the trees in the soccer field as students enjoy playing in this area. There is a potential area for tree planting between the portable, the soccer field and the play structure. Another area for the trees is the kindergarten area and along the right-hand side of the fence near the Catholic board. Carmelina will try to get a better survey map to continue the discussion.
- A working group with two different teams is desirable to continue the discussion of the project. One team represents the adult team and includes the parents,

school staff and custodian and another team of students to have their voice about the project.

8. Questions/Concerns/Suggestions

- Manal, a parent, inquired about the ESL classes for her children as they are new to the school. Caroline mentioned that ESL classes would continue, and the support teachers have the Google classrooms. Online learning uses Google platform and all the links will be shared with the parents by the teachers. In the even of remote learning, technology will be provided to the students, and the teachers will provide the connection information to the parents. Parents will help their children to access the online classes and the teachers will provide the educational content.
- Student asked if they could go out for lunch. Caroline stated that going out for lunch is not allowed as this will risk mixing with other cohorts from the school and outside the school. There is the risk of spreading or coming in contact with someone with COVID-19, which could endanger the population in the school.

9. Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at 5:00 pm.

10. The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 pm.