

**Blossom Park School Council**  
**Meeting Minutes – March 23, 2022**

**In Attendance:**

Susan Fattal: Chair

Ayan Haji Egeh: Secretary

Nabi Habibi: Treasurer

Caroline Theriault: Principal

Carmelina Falcucci: Vice Principal

Tammy Draper: Teacher Representative

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

And one more parent.

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

- Susan welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- The agenda and minutes from the last meeting were approved.

**2. Chair's Update**

- PRO Grant: The grant, funded by the Ministry of Education, is intended for helping support parents' engagement in the school community. This year, the PRO Grant will fund the Speaker Series. School Councils are waiting to receive the list of speakers and topics. We are expecting to receive more information about the Speaker Series **by March 25.**
- School Councils have been asked to send suggestions for topics and speakers by filling out a form. Susan had asked for our members' input, and, based on the feedback she received, she included internet safety, social media, cyberbullying, nutrition, healthy lunch ideas and healthy meal preps on a budget.
- Susan was in touch with Sawmill Creek School Council chair regarding the Pro Grant Speaker Series sessions. Sawmill Creek School Council members have been brainstorming for ideas, and they are interested in an interactive session like the science night event last year. The science night school activity was very popular. Sawmill Creek School Council expressed their desire to work with our school council and share a speaker session if it is beneficial for both schools.
- Susan, Ayan and Nabi visited the school, and they had a better idea about the placement of the trees in the schoolyard. More about the topic is to be discussed later in the meeting.

- The School Council received the cheque from the school for the Charitable Impact payment of \$281.88. Susan will deposit the cheque tomorrow.
- Susan mentioned that we haven't received any news regarding the \$500 grant yet. We know it will be transferred to the school's account. Once the school receives the grant, Caroline will inform the school council members to get the cheque.
- OCDSB will conduct a financial audit of the school council from September 1, 2021, until March 25, 2022. The KPMG external auditor will perform this. The School Council will provide records, paperwork documents, bank statements, meeting minutes, etc. The documents will be dropped off at the OCDSB location by April 8<sup>th</sup> as requested. Part of the process is completing a questionnaire about how our School Council manages the finances in terms of documentation and reporting. All our expenses, withdrawals and deposits are kept in an accounting book.
- We have learnt that ONFE (Ottawa Network for Education) are resuming their classroom garden program. In October, Susan asked them to put our school on their waiting list for a garden tower. She has learnt that currently there are no extra towers. However, we can participate in their windowsill garden program, which will start in early April.
- They sent a survey form link to be filled out by the interested teachers. Susan will forward the email to Caroline for follow-up.

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

- The current balance is \$4,048.56 as of March 23<sup>th</sup>.
- Susan will deposit \$281.88 from the Charitable Impact tomorrow.
- Nabi is still waiting for the paper bank statements. He has not received any bank statements from the school recently.
- Carmelina clarified that Canada Post doesn't bring the mail to the school office any more. The community mailbox hasn't been checked regularly. It's possible that the bank statement was sent but still in the mailbox.
- Susan mentioned that the bank statements will be provided for the financial audit. She will see the bank for that.
- Nabi has received the bank card, and he will activate it soon.

### **4. Principal and Vice Principal's update**

- The data from the Student and Staff Voice regarding tree selection was shared with Susan.
- The Wellness Day at Blossom Park School is this Thursday, March 24.
- Unfortunately, the two individuals who were supposed to deliver the workshop fell ill, so the Wellness Day was rescheduled.
- The province of Ontario has decided to move forward with the EQAO tests. Carmelina mentioned that it's essential to capture gaps from the last two years because EQAO has

not been administered due to the pandemic. The returned data would highlight how students can be best supported.

- EQAO will be administered for grade 3 and 6 students during the second week of May following Ramadan and other possible cultural holidays.
- Miss Sow has returned from her leave as a part-time teacher, and Mrs. Niefer is on leave for the rest of the year. The school will continue to staff more teachers.
- Carmelina indicated that the school would move forward with new COVID-19 protocols. Students and staff can now choose to wear a mask or not at school. The school is having discussions with the students about respecting the choice of others regarding wearing the masks.
- There is no cohorting outside the school any longer, so all students can be in the schoolyard. However, there are many water puddles and ice in the field, so students will stay on the asphalt area for the time being to avoid accidents until the spring. In addition, groupings are happening in the classroom, and desks are a lot closer. Intermural sports are also happening for grades seven and eight. Social skills groups have also started, and educators are starting other activities like the art club. Also, the library has reopened.
- Carmelina and Miss Natyshak have applied for the Girls on the Run program. The school received the approval to run the program. This is a great program designed for students from grades three to five, where girls will train, gain more confidence, build life skills working together as a team, and make better eating choices. The program will be offered to 20 students from grades four and five for ten weeks. Students will learn how to run a five-kilometre race after the ten weeks. The race will happen in the school field, weather permitted, or in the gymnasium. The program will be offered twice a week **from April 14 until June 13**.
- Carmelina talked about new social skills groups from the OCISO Social Skills. The school has had the social worker come in and provide some sessions to a group of students, and it's going well.
- The school continues to have an eyewear program for students who have eyewear that was damaged or cannot afford eyewear from prescriptions they've been given.
- This Friday, grade 8 will have their photos taken.
- **On April 14**, the intermediate girls will be having their last immunization for hepatitis B.
- Pizza Day is allowed to be back in May and June. Parent volunteers can run the pizza program at the school.
- Caroline is interviewing for a rotational educational assistant between Blossom Park and Roberta Bondar PS to supply for absent teachers.

## 5. Teacher's Update

- Tammy sent an email to the teachers for feedback, and there is nothing to report from the teachers.

## 6. Student Representatives' Update

- Sedra wanted to know if students could have lockers at the school. Caroline will discuss it with the teachers to determine the feasibility of the request.
- Seynab was wondering if there is a photo retake day. On Friday, Caroline will ask the team whether they will consider a photo retake day and go from there.
- Masa asked if students could go outside during lunchtime. Caroline mentioned that there would be gradual reintegration, and it could be possible in the spring.
- The graduation ceremony is still tentative. The school is waiting for further directions from OCDSB.
- Susan asked if there is a photo retake day for the students other than the grade eights. Carmelina confirmed that there will be no photo retake day for the other students as Photo Visions are fully booked and it is hard to find available slots.

### Important matters for discussion:

#### 1. Tree Planting Project:

- Susan contacted Ottawa City for more information regarding the watering and the maintenance of the trees. The Ottawa City will provide the school with gator bags. The gator bags would need to be filled once a week between May to October and twice a week during the drought season, especially in August. They suggested using stakes and snow fencing to protect the trees at the initial stages after planting.
- Susan communicated with Sawmill Creek council member who has been responsible for their school's application for the tree grant; she asked for their advice and lessons learnt from their experience. Sawmill Creek school has been approved to get their trees planted this spring.

They mentioned that they had the same issue with regards to watering, and they have chosen to go with using the buckets. They've had rotations set up among their members to water the trees. In general, tree maintenance work for the trees that are already in the schoolyard is managed between their principal and custodian who deal with an outside contractor company for any issues they have.

- Carmelina mentioned that having a contractor come to the school means that the school will provide funds from their budget. Carmelina suggested having School Council members investigate and approach contractors for their services because sometimes the company might offer a good deal if the request came from the school council.
- School council members preferred to have the trees planted close to the school building and the water source.
- Carmelina sent an Excel sheet to the council members about the most popular tree species selected by the students and staff. Sugar maple was the highest selection. We can have the top 12 species and go from there.

- During the parent members' visit to the school, Carmelina suggested having three hoses connected to water the trees. The distance between the water source and the tree is about 30 to 50 meters. We will consider watering using buckets, but will have to purchase a gardening cart to move the water to the trees.
- Susan reminded the members of the tree planting project timeline: the application must be submitted by June 1<sup>st</sup>; between June and December, there is a the visit from the City of Ottawa; by February 1<sup>st</sup>, the project must be approved by OCDSB; by March 1<sup>st</sup>, the final approval will come from the City of Ottawa; planting will take place in spring 2023. We can consult with the City of Ottawa for any issues; they have been so cooperative and friendly.
- As part of the application, we need to answer a question about "Project Description and Benefits of the Project". Susan requested that the school provide their school vision about utilizing the trees and provide a justification for the tree planting project. It is also a good idea to have the council's perspective included in the justification.

## **2. PRO Grant Suggested Topics and Options:**

- For the Speakers Series, Susan presented the topics from last year. She will share with the members any further updates once she receives the information regarding this year's list.
- Tammy mentioned that since COVID is part of our environment, the mental health topics will be very important, considering much of the outreach sources are backlogged. This might be something the community won't have access to. It will be great for the parents to have topics on mental health.
- Caroline is concerned that for parents to listen to any of these topics, it would need a translation.
- Susan mentioned that the virtual platform might be challenging for the parents. The virtual translation is costly, and it requires a special zoom account. It costs almost \$1000 for one hour. Also, some parents in our parent community find accessing technology challenging. For example, a lot of parents were not able to access the electronically provided report cards for their kids, and paper copies had to be eventually sent to them.
- Ramadan will start next month around April 2<sup>nd</sup>, and some members will be fasting. We will take a break for the month of Ramadan.
- Susan will send a reminder by April 20<sup>th</sup> to the school to send their monthly update; she will add to the document the Council's update and latest news and will make them into one PDF file. She will send the updated PDF document to the members and the parents at school. Meanwhile, we will keep in touch regarding any work that needs to be done.
- The suggested date for our next meeting is May 18 at 5 PM. The date is not confirmed yet. We will have the date of our next meeting confirmed around mid April by email.

**7. Questions/Concerns/Suggestion**

**8. The meeting was adjourned at 6:03 pm.**