

Blossom Park School Council
Minutes of Meeting
Wednesday September 20, 2023

Present:

Susan Fattal: Chair and Treasurer
Mohammad Rasool Nasrat: Parent Member
Fatma Mahmoud: Parent Member
Caroline Rassi: Principal
Carmelina Falcucci: Vice Principal
Sahera: Parent

Absent:

Tammy Draper: Teacher Representative

Welcome

- The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm by the Chair.
- Susan welcomed everyone and welcomed a new parent (Sahera) who joined the meeting.

Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The agenda and minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Chair's Report

- **Schoolyard Trees**
 - We had six trees successfully planted in June through the City of Ottawa Schoolyard Tree Grant. We protected them, and our chief custodian, Anita Sloan, volunteered to water them during summer.
 - Anita contacted Susan on July 7 to let her know two of the trees were losing colour due to a possible lack of nutrients in the soil. Susan and Anita discussed the possibility of getting some tree spikes.

- One week later, Anita updated Susan and told her the source of the problem was Japanese Beetles. Rentokil, the Board's company, wouldn't be able to spray the trees as they are located outside the school building.
- Susan contacted the City of Ottawa for advice. They told her the only treatment recommended would be to physically remove the insects and put them into a bucket of soapy water. Susan went to school with a bucket of soapy water and some equipment, but it was already too late. The tree leaves were gone and the insects had left.
- The plan is to wait until spring to see if the two trees will be able to push out new leaves; if not, we may need to reapply for the grant to replace those trees.

- **Annual and Financial Reports**

Both the Annual and Financial Reports for the 2022-2023 school year have been submitted to the OCDSB. Submitting the reports is a requirement.

- **Pizza Program**

- We have learnt that Domino's Pizza, our pizza supplier, has switched ownership. A list including the new prices has been emailed to the school.
- Susan contacted the new owner and negotiated with him keeping the prices as they are. The new owner has accepted to honour the old price for this school year.

- **Co-Signing Authority**

- The cheques our council issues have to be co-signed by two parent members. Last year, the two co-signing officers were Tracy and Susan.
- Tracy has left, and Mohammad will be taking her place as a co-signer.
- Tracy, Mohammad and Susan have finalized the transfer of co-signing authority. So, this year, Mohammad and Susan are the co-signing officers.

- **Message to Parents**

- We sent two messages to our families to introduce our council to the school community: a short one, included in the principal's weekly update, and a more detailed one with Arabic translation, sent as a separate email on Monday.

- No new parents have contacted us. We will continue to encourage the involvement of new parents, and will keep the door open for new members to join until we meet the Board's elementary School Council requirement of a minimum of five parents.

Financial Report

Susan shared September financial report with the council: [September Financial Report](#)

Quick Description of Council Roles and Election of Executive Officers

- In our council, we have three executive roles: the chair, the treasurer and the recording secretary.
- Susan gave a quick description of each role.
- Chair: manages the council, communicates with the community and school; keeps documents.
- Secretary: Records notes during the meetings and creates minutes of the meeting. Minutes of the meeting are vital for certain activities such as issuing cheques. The issuance of cheques must be backed by a receipt and a documented approval of the payment in the meeting minutes.
- Treasurer: responsible for accounting, banking, financial receipts, and documentation of financial activities
- All members are expected to attend meetings. Absence from meetings must be reported in advance to the Chair.
- All Blossom Park parents and guardians can attend our meetings but cannot vote on the decisions we make. They need to join as members to be able to vote.
- Susan is re-elected as the chair and treasurer. Mohammad is a co-signer for the cheques. Fatma will take charge of meeting minutes for a certain time. There is no secretary yet.
- Caroline informed Susan that Tammy Draper will remain as the teacher representative.
- Caroline told the council that this year there will be a Student Council, so we might not have student representatives attending. The Student Council will be led by one of the teachers and will have both grade 7 and 8 students.
- Susan pointed out that before the pandemic, there used to be a Student Council. They used to choose one representative to attend our meetings, update us on their activities and discuss with the council topics that we would help with. As an elementary school, student representation in the council is optional, unlike high schools.

Principal and Vice Principal's Report

Thank YOU for a great start-up

- Great to see familiar faces and exciting to welcome new ones
- We are looking forward to meeting with many families at the Meet the Staff and Family Pizza Night. The date will be shared soon. We are thinking of the following plan:
 - 4:00pm-6:00pm
 - Open house format
 - Child leads parent around the class and the school 4:00pm-5:00pm
 - At 5:00pm, all families and staff will be called to the gym for a full staff introduction
 - Every family who placed an order will receive their pizza and we all sit and have dinner together.
 - More details will be shared as they are finalized

Blossom Park PS Priorities

Our focus and priorities for the school continue to be communication, safety, and staff development

- Communication - Principal's Weekly Update, Homeroom teachers' Google Classroom.
- Safety and emergency procedures: Review best practices and policies and procedures with staff and students.
- Staff development: Best practices to implement, alignment of practices, how to best meet the needs of various learners, literacy and numeracy coach support for formative years.
- School wide expectations for students. Currently reviewing them with students. Will be shared with families soon.

Staffing update

Our enrollment numbers have changed from our May planning projections. We are still working through the details of how this impacts our school organization. We are working closely with People Culture and Learning (PCL) formerly known as Human Resources (HR) and we will provide families with updates as they become available.

Engaging activities coming up

- Ms Dineen and Ms E.Jehan have established a Math Ambassador group. This is a small group of students who are responsible for the math manipulatives room and will deliver resources to teachers who sign up
 - Ms Falcucci has organized and established our lunchtime monitors and they began their work this week.
 - Ms Falcucci has coordinated a boys' sports youth group in collaboration with YOCISO to come on Tuesdays starting next week to work with grades 5&6 boys.
 - Ms Piribauer will be leading the Terry Fox run for the school scheduled for next Tuesday, September 26. Students will be encouraged to bring in a small donation.
 - Ms Murch will be running the Popcorn fundraiser - forms have already been sent home.
 - Ms Smart and Ms Young are leading the Junior Girls Soccer team in preparation for their tournament on Oct 12.
 - Mr Parsons and Mr Ruth are leading the Junior Boys Soccer team in preparation for their tournament on Oct 19.
 - Ms Dykes and Ms E. Jehan will be leading the Intermediate Student Council this year.
 - Ms Draper will lead Girls on the Run starting this Fall.
 - Ms Shohdy and Ms Chivot will be running an Art Club.
 - We are excited about our new green team
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- The chair commented on the importance of the various tools that help parents keep track of their children's learning and mentioned that Google Classroom, for example, is not effective if not updated regularly. Using those tools (monthly newsletter, agenda, etc.) seems more like a personal teacher preference and choice. There doesn't seem to be a consistency in the process.
 - The principal stated that the Google Classroom update is not required by the Board so she cannot force the teachers to do it. Each teacher has their own way of handling their communication with the parents. They, however, are always expected to respond to parents' communication and emails and address any issues. She will keep reminding the teachers about the importance of updating the parents and communicating with them.
 - Susan also pointed out that making the school expectations for students one of the priorities this year is very positive. However, sharing them with the families need to be accompanied by helpful recommendations of tools, strategies or advice to help the parents support their kids. Those recommendations could be shared through links in the weekly update or through emails by the homeroom teacher. Our families have different

backgrounds and have different needs. Some parents find it challenging to access online resources.

- Caroline agreed with Susan and clarified that the student expectations are not related to the students' academic performance. They are some rules regarding using the building, caring for the class, the gym and the library. They are basically the do's and don'ts that the students need to be aware of and respect. The rules are presented to the students in a very positive and friendly way.
- Caroline asked if the council would like to help and get involved in the Family Pizza Night.
- Susan offered to help with the forms and pizza orders.

Matters for Discussion

1. Meeting Dates and Times

- Susan suggested keeping our meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 5 PM.
- In case the principal and vice principal would prefer to move our dates to the second Tuesday of the month, all the parent members have no problem.
- Caroline will discuss the matter with Carmelina and will let Susan know next week.

2. Pizza Program

- We are preparing for the launch of our pizza program in October. Caroline will share the student name lists with Susan when they are ready.
- In our previous meeting, Carmelina suggested revisiting the idea of using School Cash Online as the only way to order and pay.
- So far, we have been offering our families two options: School Cash Online and Paper Forms with cash and cheque payment.
- Carmelina said she still supported moving in the direction of online orders. She gave an example about herself as a parent who finds it more convenient to pay for the whole term through School Cash Online, so she doesn't need to worry about the pizza payment later.
- Susan thinks that not offering the cash option might be challenging to many of our families. Many of them prefer and continue to pay in cash for pizza even when the online payment is available. Sorting out the forms and cash payments is more time consuming, but it caters to the needs of our parent community.
- We always offer both options for our pizza program. The School Cash Online item goes out to parents the same day as the paper forms.
- Fatma supported the idea of offering both options to our families.

- Mohammad said he pays for his kids' pizza in cash, and finds it very convenient this way.
- Carmelina asked if we can offer both options for the whole term October-December.
- Susan answered that we can do that. Last year, we moved from sending the forms every month to sending them every two months.
- Carmelina asked if the forms are translated to Arabic.
- Susan replied by clarifying that every form is designed to have all the important information fit and be printed on one page to save paper. The necessary parts of the form are translated to Arabic.

3. School Council Priorities and Direction This School Year

Susan quickly summed up the council priorities for this year:

- We will keep seeking and encouraging parent involvement.
- The Pizza Program will continue to be our main fundraiser in addition to other smaller fundraisers that we can work on.
- Communication with the administration and the families will continue to be a priority.
- We will continue to collaborate with the school on any initiatives that support the students' well being, academic achievement and fun activities.
- We will bring back the discussion about the school's outdoor class project to see if we can move forward with it.

Questions and Suggestions

- Mohammad said his daughter was wondering why the flag of their home country was not represented among the other country flags on the ceiling of the school entrance area.
- Carmelina explained that those flags were painted on the ceiling a long time ago. During the summer break, some necessary maintenance work was done at school and some tiles had to be removed.

The suggested Date for our Next Meeting

It will be shared with the members by email.

Susan thanked everyone for their time and participation.

The meeting was adjourned at **6:02 PM**.