

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

October 7, 2020



Trustees: (back row) Connie Huelsman, Vice Chair Melissa Copley, Allan Tarnoczi, Superintendent Kurt Sacher, Gord Kerr, Joe-Anne Knispel-Matejka (front row) Chair Holly Bilton, Colleen Butler, Sherry Cooper, Trudy James

COVID-19 Update:

Associate Superintendent Corporate Services, Shawn Russell, provided a detailed update on the first weeks of school re-entry, which have been positive and effective. A government inspector conducted site investigations at four Chinook's Edge schools as part of a provincial review on safety restrictions and adherence, which he determined to be at high levels in the division. The inspector was provided with a detailed hazard assessment report from each school, which he hadn't seen documented with that level of detail until then. As well, the division's Occupational Health & Safety Committee has moved to monthly meetings from quarterly meetings, and reported strong efficiencies at schools and excellent support from Central Office. Alberta Health has reviewed the full Chinook's Edge Re-entry Plan, which they found to be thorough and effective in detail. In the end, as the Superintendent Team liaises with various provincial departments to ensure every safety precaution is in place in every school and department in the division, the findings show high success.

Transportation Quarterly Report:

The Board reviewed information on the new bus fees which came into effect at the start of this school year. The report shows a deficit in the Transportation budget remains, despite the new fees. Multiple unanticipated cost implications are due to COVID-19, which Central Office is tracking separately to clearly delineate that impact. Details will continue to be reviewed so that next year's fees can be set in March 2021 based on projected costs that are clearly separate from those of COVID-19, which is considered an anomaly. Impacts of COVID-19 on the Transportation budget include: grant amounts have fallen by approximately \$760,000 because of a government funding change as a result of Covid-19 and fees for urban transportation were refunded in the amount of \$44,664 due to COVID-19 disruptions in the spring.

Savings of approximately \$340,000 was also noted: cost of bus parts is approximately \$120,000 less than estimated and the cost of diesel is lower than estimated - both because of the COVID-19 disruption. As well, the budget includes the impact of an improvement in fuel economy as a result of the purchase of new buses. Contractor costs were about \$390,000 less than forecast and drivers' wages declined by approximately \$495,000 because of layoffs during school disruption last spring. In the end, the estimated shortfall for the 2019-20 school year is \$468,784 which includes the purchase of the seven new buses. The report also shows ride times and capacity on the division's 115 bus routes, which is a reduction of eight routes from the last school year due to lower ridership. All bus routes were evaluated for efficiencies.

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Student Enrolment:

The Board reviewed the division's student enrolment numbers as at September 30, which is the date the formal numbers are filed with Alberta Education. A slight enrolment reduction of 314 students was noted, bringing the Chinook's Edge enrolment to 10,803. This includes approximately seven percent of students who chose Remote Learning, predominantly as a result of COVID-19. The Board acknowledged the Remote Learning team of 10 teachers, under the guidance of Division Principal Rod Maclean, who quickly struck an entire K-8 program to facilitate student learning online. Remote learners in Grades 9-12 are being supported through the division's Career High schools, and the Board thanked staff in those schools for their extra efforts to support these students. Although they indicated the optimal learning situation for students is face-to-face with teachers and classroom staff in schools, Trustees appreciated the impressive efforts to facilitate Remote Learning to address student needs during the time of COVID-19.

School Zone signage:

The Board directed the Superintendent to investigate the status of school zone signs throughout the division, including the times they are in effect, in an effort to ensure highest safety measures are in place throughout each school community. Management of school zones fall under both municipal and provincial responsibility, depending on the type of roadway involved.

Collaborative Days report:

The Superintendent provided a review of the collaborative day approach to staff professional development, including the changing educational practices learned during the COVID-19 disruption. Teachers and school staff remain highly appreciative of the learning and support that is shared each collaborative day, and as schools have made enormous efforts to respond and adhere to COVID-19 restrictions the collaborative days are valued more highly than ever.

***Under the School Act, School Board responsibilities are to govern, advocate and promote.
For more information please visit About the Board.***

The next meeting of the Board of Chinook's Edge School Division is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, November 4, 2020.

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