

PRINCIPAL
Mrs. Kerry Aiken



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Board Planning Session: Superintendent Dave Driscoll provided an update on the mid-April Board Planning session in which Palliser's senior leadership team and Board of Trustees worked with school administrators to come up with a direction for the school division for years to come. He praised the depth of thought and passion displayed by those school administrators in helping to set division goals. Working on that feedback, he said the two main goals which surfaced were the importance of both literacy and numeracy, and the need to provide supports for the wellness of both students and staff. The senior leadership team is now working on possible wording of those goals, with a draft to be shared with Trustees and school administrators for their consideration. Once those goals have been set, they will work together on specific strategies to achieve them.

Bus Tender: Secretary-Treasurer Dexter Durfey informed trustees that plans to purchase up to five new school buses each year will be scaled back this year to four, due to uncertainty over the delayed release of the provincial budget. In addition to three buses for the regular fleet, one motor coach-style bus is being considered for purchase by Palliser's international program for pick-up and drop-off of students at the Calgary airport as well as any field trips during their stay. That bus will have room to safely store luggage and could be made available to Palliser schools for lengthier trips and also be available for rent by outside schools or institutions. At a cost of about \$130,000, the purchase will be funded entirely by the international student program, added Durfey.

School Grounds Maintenance: The Board heard that Palliser will be hiring summer students and purchasing its own lawn mowing equipment in order to carry out school grounds maintenance in a more cost-efficient manner. Discussions will be had with community groups which have supplied some of that work at certain schools, said Secretary-Treasurer Dexter Durfey, and if they are able to meet Palliser's criteria they can be retained. The move is part of Palliser's ongoing commitment to maintain its facilities as a showcase for the communities they serve.

Board and Superintendent Evaluations: A subcommittee of the Board of Trustees has been formed and tasked with coming up with proposals for the mandated evaluation of the Board and the Superintendent of Schools. Those proposals, which will look at the process involved as well as the possible use of facilitators, will be brought back to the Board as a whole for further discussion. Board Chair Robert Strauss noted there has been a lot of changes both on the Board and in Palliser's senior leadership team. Now that everyone has had an opportunity to become acclimatized to their new roles, he said it is appropriate to discuss evaluations.

Division Calendars: Palliser's senior leadership team will be looking for input from Trustees as to guiding principles and values to be used when designing divisional school calendars in the future. Superintendent Dave Driscoll told the Board it has become apparent there is a lack of parameters available to guide staff when putting together calendars, other than those needed to meet contractual agreements. While diversity is something that Palliser embraces and certain accommodations must be made as to the needs of each individual school community, Driscoll

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said there should be rationale behind calendar decisions other than 'it's always been done this way.' Decisions should always be made based on what is best for the students. Once draft guidelines have been arrived at, they will be shared with stakeholders, including School Council members, for their feedback.

Highlights of Board of Trustees Meeting Tuesday, May 21, 2019

Capital Plan: Secretary-Treasurer Dexter Durfey said after a detailed inventory of all school properties owned by Palliser Regional Schools – including any issues which might need to be addressed at each of those as well as population trends in their respective communities – the list of priorities for the top four have not changed. Those are, in order, an overall solution for Coaldale, Country Central High School in Vulcan, a Coalhurst solution involving both elementary and high school, and Sunnyside School. The Board accepted the updated Capital Plan for 2019-2022, with Chair Robert Strauss noting he was very appreciative of the detailed and long-term approach taken by Durfey.

Financial Update: Trustees heard from Dexter Durfey, Secretary-Treasurer, that as of April 30 Palliser was facing a projected deficit of about \$380,000 for the end of August, 2019. On a positive note, plant operations and maintenance has a projected surplus of almost \$200,000 despite a heavy workload in catching up with work needed inside schools and continued beautification for many school yards. Transportation has a projected surplus of almost \$165,000, while board and system administration has a projected surplus of more than \$65,000 after running a deficit the last couple of years previous.

English Language Learners: Director Adam Browning provided the Board with the 2018-2019 report on the English Language Learners (ELL) program, also known as English as a Second Language. The ELL enrolment numbers have gone up from 2,424 in 2015-2016, to 3,132 at the most recent count. With more than a third of Palliser students falling under that category, the division likely has one of the highest ELL populations in the province by percentage. While much of that increase is found in the alternative programs in Calgary, he said numbers have also grown in rural areas including those offering programs to Low German-speaking Mennonite students. Browning said a better job is being done now in assessing those students' level of proficiency and Palliser is leading the way as far as professional development for staff who serve those students. He added efforts are also being made with the help of community partners to offer support for students at an earlier age, and greater stakeholder engagement has led to the expansion of high school programs for those serving the LGM community.

Inclusive Education: Trustees heard that the number of coded students who require additional classroom supports is growing, but they still account for less than 10 per cent of the entire student population. Director Shane Cranston said priorities in the area include supporting students in their academic endeavours, building partnerships in the community to provide greater support, and building capacity in staff to support inclusive practices. Together we will ensure learning success for all students to develop their unique potential as caring citizens in a

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changing world. Palliser continues to score above the provincial average for student inclusion and supported families, he noted. Cranston said those students and their families are even better served with the addition of a Coordinator of Counselling this past year, a Family Connections Worker supported by outside agencies and a wellness framework in the works.

The next Board Meeting is scheduled for June 18th, 2019. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Lorelei Bexte at (403) 485-0823 or loirelei.bexte@pallisersd.ab.ca