



Royal Vale School Governing Board

Minutes of the meeting of February 19, 2024

Minutes of the Governing Board meeting held February 19, 2024 at 7pm, via Teams

Present: A. Balandona, A. Batsis, J. Bernas, S. Cherenfant, S. Halaris, V. Hatchwell, D. Lambiris, H. Magonet, N. Malhamé, S. Nabi, W. Ordon, L. Phaneuf, R. Schulz-Peissel, G. Ship, D. Szanajda, E. Savage, S. Wen, A. Di Domizio, E. Pervin

Also present: O. Delaney (Principal), S. Spetsieris (Vice-Principal), J. Lalla (EMSB Commissioner), Marni Rubin (RVEHSA), A. Bhuptani (RVEHSA)

Absent: E. Girolamo, C. Lagakos (Vice-Principal), A. Pardo

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by A. Batsis at 7:03 pm. S. Wen was secretary for this meeting, replacing A. Pardo.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted by N. Malhamé seconded by J. Bernas and unanimously approved with the following additions:

- 7.6 Home & School Comedy Night Fundraiser
- Bathrooms (To be discussed in 7.2)
- 9.2 Afterschool Homework Program
- 9.3 Catch-Up

3. Adoption and signing of the minutes of November 13, 2023

On a motion by S. Nabi and seconded by R. Schulz-Peissel, the minutes of November 13, 2023 were unanimously adopted.

4. Business Arising from meeting of November 13, 2023

N/A

5. Information and Reports (Student and H&S reps)

4.1 Student Life Report

- Raised money for NDG Food Depot
- Put up holiday decorations
- Organized candygrams and decorated for Valentine's Day
- Tubing and skiing was successful
- Organized for teacher appreciation with treats, pastries, snacks, flowers for teachers



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and staff shirt

- Put up lunar new year decorations and gave out dragon stickers

4.2 RVS Elementary Home and School Report

- Get-to-know-each-other Pre-K and K pizza party with magic show for students
- Recruited volunteers for the Caribou Math Competition
- Planning for a paper airplane competition for cycle 2 students
- Approximately \$1,800 raised from the cookie dough fundraiser and approximately \$2,000 received in donations for staff appreciation activities
- Staff Appreciation Week has been moved to March due to uncertainties with the strikes
- A group of grade 1 parents are doing research and putting together information packages for special events (such as pink shirt day) to be distributed to teachers, subject to approval by Administration, in order to bring meaning to these special events
- Justin Caldwell has left H&S and Ivonne Reyes has been hired as admin coordinator
- Term 2 has started
- Planning is ongoing for Term 2 with new programming (team building, ASL... etc.)

6. Questions

N/A

7. Discussion Items

7.1 Community Representative (Chair)

A. Batsis will be reaching out to invite Sharon Sweeney to be a Community Representative on the RVS Governing Board.

7.2 Budget Building Process

In conjunction with Administration, we will be putting together a list of items that our school would benefit from for the next budget. This is due in March.

O. Delaney suggested requesting for the following:

- an extra guidance counsellor in order to have one counsellor dedicated to academic guidance and another counsellor dedicated to mental health support
- 2 x 0.5 resource teachers for both elementary and high school in order to help with students that are struggling
- Funds for the beautification of bathrooms for staff and for students
- Funds to fix auditorium seats
- An extra day caretaker
- A student supervisor who would supervise the cafeteria, detentions, lateness, and discipline-related tasks



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W. Ordon suggested funds to improve and adjust classroom furniture and fix auditorium chairs.

G. Ship commented that every year we ask for a caretaker but we never get one. What can be done to get that? S. Spetsieris commented that requests for a third VP, an additional caretaker and additional resource are received in increments. Although the caretaker allocation is based on square footage, we have been justifying that there are 1000 students in both elementary and high school.

N. Malhamé commented that the elementary teachers are grateful for Marion Albrecht, the French tutor, who makes a huge difference. She would continue to support having this resource.

A. Di Domizio supports having a student supervisor.

S. Cherenfant commented that the renovations to the washrooms are very pressing and should be at the top of the list (before other beautification requests).

J. Lalla commented that in the month of June, EMSB discusses and approves the school budget. EMSB has a surplus of money each year and he has made motions to allocate an extra \$20,000 to each school for a wide range of activities but EMSB has not approved this. Currently, legal expenses are coming from this surplus money and consequently, there is no money left over for the schools. J. Lalla recommended that we put in a separate request for items that are important.

A. Batsis commented that bathrooms are a basic human need. Children don't like using the bathrooms and hold it in all day, which is not healthy. Functional bathrooms are a basic need. Regarding fixing the auditorium chairs, since it is rented out to the community and generate extra revenue, there must be a way to get a separate budget for these repairs. J. Lalla confirmed that all rental revenues go into a central pot and are kept centrally with little going back into the schools.

The state of the bathrooms is a real concern. The turnover of the caretakers has resulted in gaps in the upkeep and S. Spetsieris has been making rounds to ensure cleanliness and supplies are stocked. Students do not flush toilets and graffiti is a real problem. Students have reported not wanting to use the bathrooms because of the uncleanliness. S. Wen suggested an awareness campaign for the students to encourage good hygiene habits and good citizenship. A. Batsis suggested creating a subcommittee to work on the budget building priorities. H. Magonet offered to help tally the priorities. S. Wen suggested using a Google Form to solicit everyone's input.

7.3 PED Day changes

EMSB has made the decision to move the March 15th PED Day to April 8th due to the solar eclipse. S. Spetsieris commented that the EMSB science consultants have procured viewing



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glasses for all students and will also share viewing locations.

7.4 GB Meeting April 8th – rescheduled to April 9th

The April 8th meeting will be rescheduled to April 9th due to the change in the PED Day. It will take place in-person at the school at 7:00pm.

7.5 Discussion re: boiler issue

O. Delaney apologized for putting parents in a precarious position due to the school closures caused by the boiler issue. RVS only has one boiler for the school and it is old. Tender has been put out by the EMSB for a second boiler. Not sure of the status of that process. We need to have a functional boiler at all times and this is an issue that EMSB needs to address. J. Lalla will look into the status of the tendering process and will raise this issue at the board level. S. Wen suggested for the governing board to send a letter to the EMSB. A. Batsis will draft up the letter with the help of H. Magonet and O. Delaney. J. Lalla suggested addressing the letter to the Director General.

7.6 Home & School Comedy Night Fundraiser

A. Bhuptani explained that this fundraiser would be a 2 to 2.5 hour show in our auditorium with an MC, 3-4 comics, a cash bar, snacks... etc. Many schools have done this year after year. The expected funds raise could be in the range of \$6,000-\$20,000.

M. Rubin added that RVEHSA spends approximately \$15,000 on various kids' activities for both elementary and high school students (such as bashes, corn roasts... etc.). Donations are not coming in the same way as they used to at registration. The comedy night fundraiser would be a way to fundraise for the various kids' activities as well as a "family support fund" for elementary students to participate in enrichment activities. Ticket price would be set at \$25-\$30. A detailed budget would need to be put together. This would be a fun event for the school community.

O. Delaney commented that a comedy night was organized by the Home & School at Cedarcrest for two years and it really brought the community together. Since the pandemic, we have not had a school-wide community event to bring everyone together and have a fun night out with good food and lots of laughs for the adults (teachers and parents). If we could do this year after year, not only can we generate money for the school, but it would also be a great community-building activity. Looking at doing this in late May.

A. Batsis requested for further clarification on how the money raised would be allocated and what percentage would support the family support fund vs. kids' activities that already receives support from the school. M. Rubin explained that the money would be used for school-wide kids' activities - not for the operation of the afterschool programs - as well as a family support fund. If this is successful and we can do this year after year, perhaps we can also fundraise for bigger projects such as a second play structure. Budget details would be disclosed once the fundraiser is approved.



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A. Batsis commented that the school has always chipped in for kids' activities. Would the school continue to contribute? M. Rubin explained that it is hard for H&S to cover for the of school-wide activities (especially covering costs for the high school students also). Whether the school will continue chipping in to the kids' activities will depend on how much money is raised and the cost of the activities.

S. Wen commented that the pandemic has changed the dynamics of the school community. This type of school-wide event could be very beneficial for rebuilding the school community spirit.

On motion by D. Lambiris and seconded by H. Magonet, GB unanimously approved the motion to hold a comedy night fundraiser with funds raised benefiting kids' activities and the family support fund.

8. Information

8.1 Administration's reports

- BHM programming on-going all month (parents were emailed the schedule)
- School Sports
- Elementary girls basketball - 17-0 record, won 2 tournaments, playing in finals next week
- Elementary hockey - lost in the finals in a shoot out today, best finish ever
- High school wrestling championships - RVS student athletes won 2G and 1B medals
- High school swimming championships - Student athlete Ronnie set 3 GMAA records
- High school futsal and basketball playoffs on-going
- High school bantam boys basketball will play for the gold next week
- Transition to high school program - grade 6 students received 4 in-class workshops and parents virtual workshop in January
- Cycle 3 skiing/tubing day will take place on Feb 23rd
- High school skiing and tubing day took place on Feb 13th
- RVS will be hosting Robocup Quebec on April 19-20
- Secondary 3 Vaccinations – November 15 (Smooth process)
- Shoebox Project - Delivery November 17 (huge success)
 - 113 boxes prepared, valued at well over \$50 each
 - Distributed to homeless shelters across Montreal
- Parent Teacher Interviews – November 20th
- Holiday Concert December 18
 - Many spectators
 - Successful Bakesale during Intermission, raised approx. \$400
- January 10th Geordie Production Play: A play called Instant from Erin Shield – the theme was on Digital Literacy - Online Identity & Perception - Peer & Parental



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Pressures - Suicide prevention and cyberbullying

- January 12 - Vanier School Day Bball Game hosted at Vanier from the Vanier College Athletics Department - all our Bball teams took part and had a great time taking in the games
 - Elementary and High School
 - 2 buses
- January 18 – Grad Photos smooth process
- February 2nd – Black Theater Workshop – Sec. 5 attended the Segal Center (start of BHM events)
- February 13 – Winter Carnival Day (successful)
- February 14 - VALENTINE'S DAY - FREE DRESS Day
- February 15 – Black History Month – Speaker Roen Higgins & Steeve Blactette - Sec 3+4

8.2 EMSBPC report

Teacher's strike ended with an agreement signed by the government and the union.

Following return to work, within the first two weeks upon return to school. Students at both elementary and high school levels were to be evaluated to determine whom would require tutoring, to be able to catch up to be at the required levels.

Teachers could volunteer, on a voluntary basis, but could not be required to do so.

On week 3, parents of students requiring extra instruction, would receive through mail, a letter communicating of their child's needs. Parents opting to participate in the program, would be required to respond, advising of their interest. This program is free of charge to families with costs covered by the provincial government.

Report cards were to be distributed in two (2) weeks. Term 2 was to be delayed by two (2) weeks.

Final exams are scheduled later in the month of June with the ponderation of final exams were reduced for all levels in the following manner:

Sec. VI & Sec V: 20% instead of 50%

Sec I, II, III: 10% of the final grade

Grade 6: 10%

Summer school will be offered to students in danger of failing a course. There is no cost for these sessions.

Bus strike: at this time, no additional news from TransCo.

Guest speaker Mike Cohen attended.

A wonderful lecture was delivered concerning the history of the EMSB, and communicated to the fact that enrollment is declining post Covid, and the rigorous language laws. Enrollment has declined by 19 000 in the youth sector and 15 000 in the adult sector.



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Parents are enrolling their children in the French sector schools due to Bill 96 and the new CEGEP regulations. Mr. Cohen strongly suggested that all schools create strong marketing campaigns and buzz to encourage increasing enrollment.

The EMSB is working on marketing campaigns to demonstrate that the EMSB does prepare its students to be completely bilingual. The board regularly invites political representatives to speak at local schools to encourage exposure.

Mr. Cohen is also working on a campaign encouraging strong focus on Quebec culture. He is also asking governing boards to promote the French language in various type of projects, as for example:

- Poetry readings
- Cultural projects
- Kindergarten choirs

Mr. Cohen also requested that the individual school communities publicise their appreciation on social media (FaceBook, X, Instagram) and *like* pages pertaining to EMSB publicity. By activating *likes* on social media, by an average of 2-3 times a week, exposure to the EMSB would increase page views and attract more public interest.

Regional directors were also requested to work with school principals to increase school marketing.

In addition, strongly encouraged that governing boards discuss marketing incentives at every meeting.

Finally, it was strongly recommended that schools demonstrate the level of French to visitors at Open Houses, by staff, teachers, and especially students, to demonstrate the high level of bilingualism.

Comments from the floor included the following points:

- Governing boards must work in the community to encourage the continuance of students continuing their education at the EMBB instead of attending school in the French sector.
- If students continue to stream in the French system, the English sector will be lost.

Other initiatives:

Pilot projects have been initiated at Laurier MacDonald and Marymount whereas student are offered *internships* with professionals in the private sector to learn about marketing. Mr. Cohen encourages school administrators to contact him if local schools are interested.

It was suggested that alumni come back to their originating to speak about their career paths to inspire students.

8.3 Commissioner's report

J. Lalla to report on the catch-up funds in section 9.3.



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9. Varia

9.1 Governing Board financial balance

There is a surplus balance of \$980 from the past few years (and will be over \$1,000 after this year). The GB needs to decide on what to do with that money. N. Malhamé suggested a scholarship for kindness and citizenship. A. Batsis suggested for GB members to email suggestions to her and we will put it to a vote.

9.2 Afterschool Homework Program – see 9.3

9.3 Catch-up

J. Lalla can't give specifics on this fund as it was just announced this afternoon. It is his expectation that there will be a lot of money coming to schools to help students catch up due to the strike days.

O. Delaney commented that this "rattrapage" fund is expected to be decentralized money for tutoring. The school will determine who is qualified to be a tutor. And if the school cannot find enough tutors, teachers can also apply to be tutors outside of their classroom time. Can also use Building Block Tutorials during non-teaching times (during lunch, before school, after school). This could be used to help Sec 4 and 5 improve their French. Help to younger grades will be based on needs and is more flexible. Help could include prioritized learning, Saturday exam prep classes, home tutoring support for complex cases, waive summer school fees, math prep classes for grade 6 students, one-week experimental ecological day camp for 24 students from low-income families, language camp at Mackay for grades 1 and 2, money to help high-needs students, tier 2 intensive intervention. It would also be a great idea to put some of this catch-up money towards afterschool homework program.

H. Magonet asked whether this would be put in place before the end of the year. O. Delaney expects that to be the case.

10. Questions

N/A

11. Consultation for Selection Criteria for Appointment of Principal

Based on the list of criteria shared, H. Magonet commented that the list is already comprehensive and S. Cherenfant suggested that we list the list as is. D. Lambiris suggested adding in wording about leadership (such as proven track record of leadership to staff and community or provide exemplary leadership to staff and community, or awakening leadership in others... etc.). A. Batsis will wordsmith a criterion on leadership and add to the list. 17 in favour, 1 abstention, 1 absent.



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12. Adjournment & Closing

On a motion by R. Schulz-Peissel and seconded by S. Halaris, the meeting was adjourned at 8:56 pm. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 19, 2024 in-person, at the school.



A. Batsis
Chair, Royal Vale Governing Board
2023-2024



O. Delaney
Principal, Royal Vale School