

PAC – PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Visit www.generalwolfepac.ca



Parent Advisory Council (PAC) Monthly Meeting

Date: Tuesday, May 10th – 6:30 pm

Location: General Wolfe Elementary school library

Meeting Minutes

PAC Members (in order of sign-in sheet):

Colleen Von Dehn, Susie McRae, Libby Taylor, Jennifer Coleman, Katie Stevenson, Serena Verma, Kristin Rotte, Gil Stav, Suzie Polzin, Jenny Evans, May Ke.

PAC Executive:

- Michael Nedelec, Chair
- Jaimini Thakore, Vice Chair
- Harold Schellekens, Treasurer
- Monica Luu, Secretary

Administration:

- Susan Nichols, Principal
- Rose Thomas, Vice Principal

These minutes are reflected in the order of what was discussed.

1. **Welcome and Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm.

2. **Approval of April 6th, 2016 Meeting Minutes**

Motion to adopt the Minutes of the January 27th, 2016.

Moved (L. Taylor)	Seconded (J. Thakore)	Carried
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3. **Special Guest – Chris Atkinson to discuss seismic upgrade**

- Nothing specific on General Wolfe
- Process update
- The architects are studying options – very detailed and no clear direction as of now

- The Long Range Plan will focus on accommodating schools for their swing space during construction
- Government will not fund any portables for seismic construction
- It will be Fall 2016 before we get a clear direction – there has to be a costing package that will go back and forth from Board to Ministry before they give options
- Superintendent will announce on June 20th a proposed school closure list. There are 60 days after this to consult (not including summer), which leads us to November
- School closures will be effect in 2017
- If there is a school close to General Wolfe, possibly use for swing site
- Re: Playground – Chris advises we wait until after November 2016 to decide if we should look at installing a new playground. Cost to remove, store and reinstall the playground during seismic construction could cost between \$20-40K. Can't guarantee a playground will be left up during construction. Significant costs especially if we are undergoing construction in less than 2 years.
- It takes approx 1 year to 18 months for design and permits of new school which means 2-2.5 years without a playground
- Not easy to figure out what will happen as General Wolfe is heritage. We have an interesting site as we could build on the back field or option is a hybrid where we keep the heritage façade and replace the interior
- If strengthening the school costs more than new construction, then the choice will probably be to build new.

Question: could we get a grass field after seismic?

- Very expensive
- Depends on budget for new school – there will be a budget for landscaping and you don't want to spend all the money on moving/re-installing a playground
- Can budget be used for naturalized playground?
- Best to call it landscaping
- Will need a survey to determine options
- Put money into playground
- Defer until after seismic and get a smaller playground and a grass field?

Question: if we have to move, can we do a fundraiser for landscaping?

- Yes, similar to playground fundraising

Note: there is a fixed post seismic landscaping budget (approx. 40k). If the playground moves then the money would be competing for post seismic landscaping dollars.

As an aside, sand has been dumped into the pit in the back and kids are very happy!

To sum up, Chris says no need to rush on playground now, wait until November 2016 and then decide. Need the costing to be right, should be approved quickly and to see the site plan in November 2016. A playground only takes max 3.5 months to order, receive, install.

4. Administration Report

Susan Nichols, Principal Report

It has been, as always, a busy and slightly unusual month. The VBE budget was not passed. We are now in less charted waters, as the budget directly affects planning and staffing for next year. At the moment I believe we are moving ahead with senior management planning as if the

budget had passed. This affects us quite a bit here at Wolfe. We will lose our VP despite retaining enrollment over 400, which will directly affect the amount of admin support available to staff, students and parents. As well, all of the teacher's prep that needs to be made up (18 days a year) will have to be covered by me out of my admin time-it is currently covered by Teachers on Call. On top of that, all schools have lost their extra clerical administrative positions if they have a full time staff of under 50-so that means Zahra will no longer be at the school two days a week. Band and strings are gone from all schools. We will still have a strong music program, and I am working with Mr. Mathewson to see about continuing an extracurricular band program.

As a result of the budget situation, final staffing allocations have not been to schools yet. We will get them tomorrow, but as there is no approved budget things could still change. Next year we are looking at over 400 students again most likely, but Human Resources has only allocated 16 divisions into which to fit the students. This is possible with a variety of organizations, but all classes will be very full. Once I am given staffing tomorrow we will start to work on a variety of organizations, which will be discussed with staff before being finalized. Class placements begin in June. In the last newsletter I mentioned if you have information about class placement which I do not know you may let me know in writing. Letters naming teachers will not be considered. Final class placement is up to the teachers, and, ultimately, me.

We had a great Professional Day on May 1st -we had a speaker from UBC-Okanagan come and do a hands on workshop on Maker Spaces. This inquiry approach to solving problems kept us all thinking very hard and engaged in the process, and was a great introduction to an approach to hands on inquiry learning.

I have not had any updates on hot lunch-there have been no comments sent to me by the board, so at the moment I am assuming that the program is continuing.

We are all looking forward Sports Day-please keep your fingers crossed for good weather! Thank you to Harvey Chiang, Natasha Patton and their teams of volunteers for all their work on these events.

Tonight is the night of bands at Tupper-thank you to Mr. Mathewson for all his work organizing this city-wide event.

Track and field, is underway-thank you to the teacher coaches. We appreciate the PAC's support of this event. Our badminton season has wrapped up for the year, and the

Ultimate team is also busy practicing.

Yesterday Division 14 held a very successful breakfast fundraiser for the families affected by the Fort McMurray fires-they raised over \$200 for the Red Cross.

Finally, please mark your calendars for the Community Appreciation event May 26th. It is from 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM in the library, with babysitting for school aged children available by RSVP. We hope to see as many as possible of you at this fun community event!

Side note: we should share the emails of the Super PAC, DPAC, etc to get families to email their MLA, school board, etc regarding all the cuts to schools, seismic, long term planning, etc.

Teacher Report – Ms. Wallace:

Thank you to the PAC for the support provided to the teacher’s class budgets. Very appreciative. Some of the things they used the funds for:

- * Business project
- * Sewing
- * Books
- * Buddy activities

There is a new focus on Science and it looks very exciting. We received 4 new back light microscopes and now have 13 – for all classes. Some classes have used them to study water from QE Park, fish scales, plant life, etc.

Magnifying glasses – we now have 12 – mostly for the primary and are very user friendly and forgiving for bumps and drops by little hands. Ms. Wallace has said they are very well received by her class. Cost was \$436 for 12. Many materials for class purchases are inexpensive, but add up over the year as teachers like to add to their units, etc.

5. Treasurer’s Report

The 2016/2017 budget was presented for approval. Click the icon here to see the budget:



2016-2017
Budget.pdf

Motion to approve 2016/2017 budget:

Moved (L. Taylor)	Seconded (J. Coleman)	Carried
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All in - unanimous

6. Other discussions

Direct Drive:

- Previously Direct Drive raised \$8K for playground
- No Direct Drive this year, maybe next year to focus on technology
- Jamini & Gil to meet with Susan re: technology
- Survey will come out soon re: band/parent priority/music. Maybe next survey will be about technology.

PAC Elections next month on June 14th

- Please see Susan Nichols if you’d like to help the school.

Halloween Dance needs volunteers!

General Wolfe week at Nesters’s - June 12-18

- Kids will be bagging groceries

- Nester's will donate water to Wolfe on Car Free Day
- Saturday will be hot dog day
- Proceeds to General Wolfe
- Funds will be used to send gr 6/7 to camp
- Cost is \$30K for 100 kids to go to camp
- Camp Coordinator is Alana Rentz
- Side note: If you donate your Nester's points, all points to the bottom line then, Nester's will match.

Meeting adjourned at 7:39 PM.

Moved (L. Taylor)	Seconded (G. Stav)	Carried
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Special article to share:

Christy Clark gives record funding to private schools, pressures some Vancouver public schools to close

By Jenny Uechi & Elizabeth McSheffrey in News, Politics | May 6th 2016 National Observer

Vancouverites are paying more than enough to keep their public schools open, but the Clark government is redirecting the money to private schools.

In 2015, Vancouver taxpayers gave the province [more than half a billion dollars](#) to fund public schools for the year. As part of the property tax, homeowners pay a "school tax levy" fill provincial education coffers. Because of Vancouver's soaring real estate prices, [the city paid \\$519 million in 2015 — but got only \\$440 million back to pay for public schools.](#)

Vancouver School Board (VSB) faces a \$24 million budget shortfall this year (its 11th shortfall in a row). The problem isn't limited to Vancouver: cuts totalling more than \$81 million are affecting schools in [28 districts](#) across the province, including Kamloops, Abbotsford, Surrey, Prince Rupert and Prince George.

At the same time, private and independent schools received [\\$341 million](#) in public funding this year, up from [\\$311 million](#) in public funding from 2014 to 2015. Clark sends her own son to the prestigious St. George's School, a private establishment in Vancouver, which charges upwards of [\\$20,000](#) a year in tuition for residents and [\\$30,860](#) for international students.

The issue has sparked outrage from parents across the municipality.

"[Public education] is one of the most sound investments government can make in its democracy," said Farah Shroff, a mother of two children enrolled in a VSB school this year. Shroff said she said can't understand why B.C. would withhold funding from public education, even as the province posted a surplus.

Every year, the provincial government charges school taxes to B.C. homeowners to fund school board budgets across B.C., and with the soaring price of Vancouver real estate, the city shores up a disproportionate share.

A provincial budget surplus

It's all based on a provincial funding formula designed to ensure equal opportunity for students across the province, irrespective of the tax contributions of their communities. While she doesn't dispute that the "have" districts should share funds with the "have nots," Shroff said Vancouver's schools have been suffering from underfunding for years.

This year, Clark's government announced a budget surplus of nearly \$400 million for 2016, but the money hasn't trickled down into public education.

"In a year when the government is declaring a surplus, it's time to invest in public education if the system is experiencing budgetary shortfalls," explained Shroff, an adjunct professor of population and public health at the University of British Columbia.

If the provincial budget surplus can't contribute to keeping the administrative staff at her children's school employed, she added, what about a portion of the city's skyrocketing real estate taxes?

Last week, the Vancouver School Board (VSB) voted to reject a budget suffering from more than \$24 million in cuts that would slash 200 jobs affecting small group literacy interventions, sports and arts events, classroom sizes, teacher librarians, gifted teachers, resources teachers, and student support workers for the most vulnerable

VSB trustee Patti Bacchus said the premier hasn't directly ordered any public schools to close, but said that's what the budget cuts mean.

"[Premier Clark] and the education minister always fall back on the 'well, it's a local decision' comment regarding specific school closures. But they are leaving boards very few options given the 95 per cent capacity requirements in order to get seismic upgrade funding," she said.

The Ministry of Education said in January that large public schools won't get seismic upgrading funds until they can prove 95 per cent capacity, which some parents say puts children in danger. According to a recent poll from Insights West, more than 60 per cent of B.C. respondents think the provincial government is to blame for this shortfall and its consequences, while one in four blame the VSB. One of the only groups more likely to blame the VSB however, are BC Liberal voters in 2013, it found.

"Salt in the wounds"

There's no denying that the entire province is facing an education funding crisis, Bacchus said, but Vancouver feels the burn in a different way because of how much it pays in school tax.

"It rubs salt in the wounds when our taxpayers are contributing more," she explained, "through a levy that is only supposed to make up part of our education budget."

The B.C. Education Ministry was called for comment earlier this week and has not yet responded. Vancouver East NDP MP Jenny Kwan however, suggested that there's something wrong with the ministry's funding formula if the VSB is consistently underfunded and could resort to reducing literacy programs for vulnerable students as a result of Liberal penny-pinching.

"It is Christy Clark's choice where she wants to invest taxpayers' money," she told National Observer from Ottawa. "We have the poorest riding in the entire province and a great number of families and children who are in great need.

"We have the highest urban Aboriginal community as well, yet our funding is deficient to ensure that every single student has equal opportunity to succeed. How is it that Vancouver is constantly at the losing end — the short end of the stick — when our school tax far exceeds the amount we're getting back to support Vancouver students?"

Kwan said the funding formula needs to recognize the complexity of Vancouver classrooms and adjust accordingly.

Every school board is required by the province to pass a balanced budget every year, and the VSB's rejection last week caused a tense standoff between the board and B.C. Education Minister Mike Bernier, who confirmed he would be willing to fire trustees for continually refusing cuts.

The board — responsible for roughly 54,000 students at all grade levels — has until June 30 to pass a balanced budget.