

MINUTES

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF PALLISER SCHOOL DIVISION

REGULAR MEETING

BT20250114

DATE: January 14, 2025

9:00 a.m. - Palliser Meeting Room B

Trustees in Attendance: Lorelei Bexte, Chair
Tony Montina, Vice Chair
Debbie Laturus, Alternate Vice Chair
Mike Oliver, Trustee
Sharon Rutledge, Trustee
Louise Schmidt, Trustee

Staff in Attendance: Dave Driscoll, Superintendent
Tom Hamer, Deputy Superintendent
Audrey Kluin, Associate Superintendent, Human Resources
Cindy Rogers, Associate Superintendent, Business Services
Wesley Lebeau, Communications Officer

Recording: Michelle Taylor

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Lorelei Bexte called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution # BT20250114 - 01

Moved by: Trustee Tony Montina

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

CARRIED

3. MOVE TO *IN-CAMERA*

Resolution # BT20250114 - 02

Moved by: Trustee Debbie Laturus

That the meeting moves *In-Camera*, at 9:01 a.m., pursuant to Section S64(3) of the Education Act, and Division 2 of Part 1 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000, Chapter S-3 and amendments thereto, to discuss Privileged Information with regards to identified In-Camera Items.

CARRIED

Chairperson: *Loulei E Bexte*

Secretary Treasurer: *[Signature]*

MOVE OUT OF *IN-CAMERA*

Resolution #BT20250114 - 03

Moved by: Trustee Louise Schmidt

That the meeting moves out of *in-camera* at 10:30 a.m.

CARRIED

Ashley Eggins, Director of Finance, started her position with the division on January 8, 2025. Ashley was introduced to the Board. The Board welcomed Ashley to the division.

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM *IN-CAMERA*

There was no business arising from in-camera.

5. ADOPTION OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Resolution # BT20250114 - 04

Moved by: Trustee Sharon Rutledge

That the Minutes of the December 10, 2024, Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Palliser School Division be approved as presented.

CARRIED

6. PRESENTATIONS

6.1. Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Report

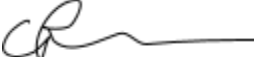
Mark Stolte, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Coordinator, presented the OHS Report. This report outlined incidents, actions taken, and positive initiatives which contributed to a safer and healthier environment across the Division.

Reportable Incidents to Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS):
Reports of incidents were submitted appropriately to OHS as per Palliser School Division and Alberta OHS procedures. No additional safety measures or changes were recommended by Alberta OHS.

Facility and Environmental Inspections:
Concerns regarding maintenance and indoor air quality at one colony school were addressed including independent testing by a third party which confirmed no air quality issues. OHS will continue regular inspections with the southern Colony schools early this year. In general, inspections revealed that most facilities are well-maintained, with minor improvements required in some areas.

Playground Inspections:
Alberta Health Services' Summer Employment Program conducted inspections at Huntsville, Picture Butte, Sunnyside, Nobleford, and Barons schools. These inspections found the playgrounds to be in generally good condition. The one issue identified, insufficient ground cover under swings and slides, was

Chairperson: 

Secretary Treasurer: 

addressed by summer maintenance staff by redistributing the gravel. In another inspection, The Health and Safety Coordinator, identified structural issues with three playground structures at Coalhurst Elementary School which has resulted in two structures being repaired and since reopened. The third structure remains closed and fenced off pending resolution. The Parent Council is exploring replacement options for the closed structure.

Snow Removal Challenges:

Late in the year, division contractors cancelled their service due to significant increases in insurance premiums which placed significant pressure on maintenance staff to find alternative solutions. Thanks to the exceptional support and dedication of maintenance staff, the division has been able to maintain excellent standards in this area.

New Behaviour Reporting System:

In collaboration with the Clinical Team Lead, OHS is piloting a new behavioural reporting system through the existing 'Public Works' software. Two schools are part of the pilot and will be able to report both positive and negative student behaviours. This familiar platform will empower staff with clear procedures and tools to recognize and acknowledge positive behaviour. Furthermore, students will be able to safely self-report incidents using this system. Updates on the progress of this pilot program will be shared with the Board as it advances.

Palliser School Division remains committed to a proactive and collaborative approach to ensuring the health and safety of staff and students. OHS expressed its appreciation for the ongoing support and dedication of the Palliser School Division Board of Trustees.

Mark was thanked for his presentation and for the work he does to keep students and staff safe.

Resolution # BT20250114 - 05

Moved by: Trustee Tony Montana


That the Board receives the Occupational Health and Safety Report as information.

CARRIED

6.2. Transportation Report

Dave Shaw, Transportation Services Supervisor presented the Transportation Report.

Chairperson: 

Secretary Treasurer: 

Transportation Services Overview:

Transportation Services operates a board-owned fleet of 85 buses with an average age of 7.0 years. There are 63 daily routes transporting 2,400 students daily, travelling over 1.9 million kilometres per year. Routes are developed using Traversa routing software and input from bus drivers and Transportation Services administrators. Transportation Services also manages 16 staff vehicles, two service vehicles, and 12 maintenance vehicles. The two repair facilities, in Lethbridge and Vulcan, are staffed by four full-time mechanics. Regular servicing, repairs, and tire rotations are included in fleet monitoring and most bus repairs are handled internally. Some circumstances require manufacturers' input (i.e., warranty repairs).

At this point in time, preschool students are not transported by Palliser school buses because of space constraints on most routes, but also, safety concerns for young children (weight requirements to travel in car seats, difficulty understanding and following complex safety rules, requirement for extra supervision) have also played a role in this decision.

Driver Training and Expectations:

Palliser bus drivers deliver exceptional service to families across the division. Drivers undergo professional training to meet and uphold the division's high standards for quality service. Regular team meetings provide a platform to review and reinforce safety protocols for road operations. Drivers are well-prepared to prioritize safety, even when managing challenges such as route delays.

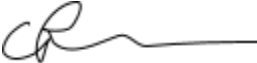
Transportation Services Fiscal Responsibility:

The 2023-2024 fiscal year ended with a small surplus due to the provincial fuel subsidy and lower-than-expected sub driver wages. The department is awaiting the final funding number from the province for the 2024-2025 school year.

Safety Measures:

Palliser's fleet meets all safety requirements. Biannual inspections are conducted per Alberta regulations. Fourteen buses undergo Commercial Vehicle Inspection Program inspections monthly and all necessary repairs are completed before buses are approved for road use. Commercial Vehicle Enforcement inspections have yielded no major issues. All regular route drivers hold "S" endorsements and current first aid certifications. Spare drivers complete "S" endorsement training before operating buses. Palliser Transportation Services is an approved training school, providing Class 2S driver training for its drivers and surrounding school divisions. Buses are equipped with GPS and tablets for location tracking, electronic logbook management, and data collection. The system monitors engine diagnostics, driving behavior, fuel consumption, and more. This data allows for real-time monitoring and analysis of critical details.

Chairperson: 

Secretary Treasurer: 

Accomplishments:

Think of Us on the Bus" campaign in its 13th year, supported by law enforcement, focuses on bus safety for students, drivers, and informs the motoring public of the process when encountering a school bus on the road. The department arranges bus safety presentations in schools in the spring. This year, five additional camera systems were purchased with 75 buses now having internal and external cameras and microphones. School and community field trips positively impact operations, keeping bus drivers engaged and offsetting operating costs. Field trip revenue remained typical in the 2023-2024 school year.

The Student Transportation Association of Alberta (STAA), in collaboration with the Alberta School Boards' Association (ASBA) and other provincial bodies, successfully advocated for the reinstatement of the fuel-price contingency fund and since March 2022, the government has rebated diesel fuel costs exceeding \$1.25 per litre for school bus operations. With current diesel prices near \$1.75 per litre, this rebate averages approximately 50 cents per litre. The fuel rebate program will remain in effect for the 2024-2025 school year.

There is an ongoing province-wide shortage of certified Class 2 spare operators. Palliser attracts potential drivers through positive word of mouth and plans spring recruitment for the 2025-2026 school year.

Governance Implications:

At the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, after changes to distance eligibility criteria in the School Transportation Regulation, 300 additional students were added to bus routes in Coaldale, Coalhurst and Picture Butte. With recently announced amendments to the regulation in September 2026, the distance eligibility criteria will change for students in grades 1 to 6, impacting routes and funding moving forward into 2026-2027.

The division has purchased buses annually for the past eleven school years, and it is recommended that this bus replacement cycle be maintained in the coming year and beyond, along with the ongoing sale of older equipment. As parts costs continue to rise, modernizing the fleet remains essential to mitigate the expense of maintaining older vehicles.

Dave was thanked for his presentation and for the work done by Transportation Services.

Resolution # BT20250114 - 06

Moved by: Trustee Sharon Rutledge

That the Board receives the Transportation Report as information.

Chairperson:

Louise E. Berte

Secretary Treasurer:

[Signature]

CARRIED

7. INFORMATION ITEMS

7.1. *SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Attached to the agenda was the Superintendent's monthly activities report.

7.2. *DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT, LEARNING SERVICES REPORT

Attached to the agenda was the Deputy Superintendent's monthly activities report.

7.3. *ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

Attached to the agenda was the Associate Superintendent's monthly activities report.

7.4. *ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT, BUSINESS SERVICES REPORT

Attached to the agenda was the Associate Superintendent, Business Services' monthly activities report.

7.5. *TRUSTEE REPORTS

Attached to the agenda were the Trustees' monthly activities reports.

7.6. *SCHOOL FIELD TRIP REPORT

A list of national and international field trips planned in the division was included in the agenda.

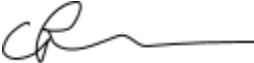
8. ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

8.1. Fiscal Budget Report 2024-2025

Cindy Rogers, Associate Superintendent Business Services presented a budget update for the first quarter of the current fiscal year. The 2024-2025 Board-approved budget included a \$1,357,595 deficit and an anticipated clawback from the province due to enrollment projection variances of \$338,302. However, the anticipated projected clawback from the province is significantly higher at \$3,411,209, a \$3.07 million loss in funding. Considering this change, Palliser would face a potential \$4.4 Million deficit in the 2024-2025 year.

Weighted Moving Average provincial budgets are set using the division's January projected numbers and the previous two years' actual student numbers. The clawback is based on the difference between preliminary student enrollment projections and actual student numbers from the September 30th count. The Division sets aside funds in anticipation of an overestimation in these projected student numbers. Due to a new targeted enrollment growth grant implemented in

Chairperson: 

Secretary Treasurer: 

2023-2024 to meet the needs of rapidly growing student numbers in Alberta, Palliser lost \$1.5 million in funding on this grant alone.

The Palliser Administration is committed to identifying and implementing cost-saving measures that have minimal impact on classroom delivery to reduce the projected deficit amount. The priority is to ensure that these efforts do not compromise the quality of education while working towards protecting the long-term sustainability of our overall operating reserves. With savings on unfilled budgeted positions, retention of contingency positions, grid hires at lower than budgeted rates and targeted grant funding additions, the projected deficit is \$2.6 million at the end of the first quarter.

Resolution # BT20250114 - 07

Moved by: Trustee Mike Oliver

That the Board receives the Fiscal Budget Report as information.

CARRIED

8.2. Approval of 2025-2026 Division Calendars

Jackie Kark, Director of Learning presented the draft calendars for the 2025-2026 school year. There are three division calendars: South Schools, North (Calgary) Schools and Islamic Schools. Draft calendars have been reviewed by Administrators and School Councils and their feedback was considered in drafting the final versions of the calendars. Overall feedback was positive from parents and staff.

Resolution # BT20250114 - 08

Moved by: Trustee Mike Oliver

That the Board approves the division calendars for the 2025-2026 school year as presented.

CARRIED

8.3. Policy Committee Report

Following the direction of the Board from the December 10, 2024, Regular Meeting, Administration shared amended drafts of Policy 3: Role of the Trustee, Board Chair and Policy 9: Appeals and Hearings Regarding Teacher Transfers, formerly Policy 9: Appeals and Hearings Regarding Teacher Matters, for stakeholder information. Following a period of stakeholder review, the Policy Committee brought these two policies forward for final approval.

Due to the ongoing Superintendent search, the Board directed the Policy Committee to meet in early January, ahead of its previously scheduled March meeting. The Policy Committee met on January 7, 2025, and reviewed Policy 1:

Chairperson:

Louise E. Berte

Secretary Treasurer:

[Signature]

Role of the Board of Trustees and Policy 2: Role of the Superintendent. After further review of this policy with all Trustees, the Committee requested that the Board direct Administration to share the draft of Policy 2 with stakeholders for information.

The Policy Committee's requested Trustee feedback on Policy 1: Role of the Board of Trustees for the Committee's review at the March Committee Meeting.

Resolution # BT20250114 - 09

Moved by: Trustee Tony Montana

That the Board approves Policy 3: Role of the Trustee, Board Chair and Policy 9: Appeals and Hearings Regarding Teacher Transfers as presented.

Resolution # BT20250114 - 10

Moved by: Trustee Tony Montana

That the Board directs Administration to share the amended draft of Policy 2: Role of the Superintendent for stakeholder information.

8.4. Bill 27 Administrative Procedures

Bill 27 received Royal Assent in the legislature on December 5. The bill makes several amendments to the Education Act including sections involving gender identity, sexual orientation and human sexuality, as well as amendments to ensure education continuity during public health and states of emergencies.

The division has reviewed and updated current administrative procedures (APs) to align with the amendments. A new AP, Administrative Procedure 133: Emergency Health Issues Response, and a revised AP, Administrative Procedure 207: Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation and Human Sexuality Topics were shared with the Board as information and will be posted on the division website in late February pending further government direction.


There are two pending Administrative Procedures to maintain compliance with the proposed amendments to the Education Act.

8.5. Change to September 2025 Board Meeting Date

The Board established dates for its Regular Meetings for the 2024-2025 school year at the Organizational Meeting on June 11, 2024.

Discussion took place regarding a change to the September 2025 meeting date and setting a date for an October meeting since the municipal election does not occur until later in that month, October 20, 2025.

Chairperson: 

Secretary Treasurer: 

Resolution # BT20250114 - 11
Moved by: Trustee Tony Montina

That the September 9, 2025, Regular Meeting of the Board be changed to September 2, 2025, and a Regular Meeting of the Board be set for October 14, 2025.

CARRIED

The meeting paused for lunch from 12:01 p.m. to 12:35 p.m.

9. MOVE TO IN-CAMERA
Resolution # BT20250114 - 12
Moved by: Trustee Sharon Rutledge

That the meeting moves *In-Camera*, at 12:35 p.m., pursuant to Section S64(3) of the Education Act, and Division 2 of Part 1 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000, Chapter S-3 and amendments thereto, to discuss Privileged Information with regards to identified In-Camera Items.

CARRIED

MOVE OUT OF IN-CAMERA
Resolution # BT20250114 - 13
Moved by: Trustee Mike Oliver

That the meeting moves out of *in-camera* at 1:14 p.m.

CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 1:14 p.m.

Chairperson: 

Secretary Treasurer: 