



MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING – St. Elias Community School Council

Date: January 13, 2022
Location: via Zoom or phone

In Attendance

Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cassandra Wheeler (Chair)• Amy McKinnon (Treasurer)• Tracy Kane (Councillor)• Tinha Chambers (Councillor)• John Fingland (Councillor)	Staff (via phone connection): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nicholas Vienneau (Principal)
Regrets: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marsha Sparvier (Councillor)	Guests: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A
Minute Recorder: Laurette Sylvain (Secretary) – via Zoom	

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:34 p.m. Quorum was confirmed.

C. Wheeler opened the meeting by sharing that the emergency meeting was called on short notice to discuss the shortage of staff at school and to determine at what point we need to consider moving to remote learning.

Some schools have moved to remote learning for various reasons such as staff shortages and members questioned why are school was not supported in moving to remote learning.

N. Vienneau mentioned that:

- 4 out of 7 high school teachers are absent now, so he requested we move to online learning for the high school only. He prepared a class list and identified support staff who could cover such as EA, LAT, and himself. High school students had to be prepped for exams.
- Tomorrow is the last day of classes for high school and there are exams the week of January 17th. Even if a teacher is absent, exams can still be administered. Decisions can be made for the following week.

Members questioned and discussed the following:

- What is the threshold to keep the school going in terms of numbers? How do you run classes if there are not enough staff? A table was presented at a Department of Education (DOE) and School Council Zoom meeting last week and the matrix/table included when it would be recommended to go to remote learning, although wording such as “significant number of staff” and “majority of staff” was unclear. Based on that table, our school may have met the criteria to move to reduced in-school attendance and/or remote learning.
- How are the students and staff doing? N. Vienneau said there were between 60%-70% of the students in attendance. Staff are quite tired. We have teachers working through

their preps. The staff who are self-isolating do send in notes to substitute personnel but they can't be in the class and work with the kids. He mentioned that we should have all classes covered tomorrow. Two (2) staff are expected to return tomorrow. Two (2) are on leave and expected back the week of Jan. 24th.

- If current trends continue, what is a sustainable model where the teachers can still work and students can learn in a safe environment? Would a remote learning plan be more beneficial than having teachers coming in who are not well or exhausted? There are concerns regarding teachers' mental health. There are currently only 3 subs. There have been more than 6 staff since we opened up. It was proposed that we develop a plan based on the matrix provided by DOE to identify what our school needs are and present it to DOE. Our school could identify a well laid-out plan showing our minimum threshold. Impacts are felt when there are over 6 staff absent. It also depends if teachers have double duty. The administrator is making it work.
- How much longer can this go on? i.e. staff being required to cover extra duty?
- Many rural schools are teaching at the absolute minimum, although some Whitehorse schools seem to be moving to online learning.

Rapid testing:

- Does our school council want rapid testing to be available for all students or school families? It was felt rapid testing in the schools would be beneficial, despite getting false negatives. Also, the results of rapid testing do not get captured in the overall numbers. This is concerning in smaller communities where access to hospital/medical services are 200 km away.
- When are rapid tests going to be sent to communities? The Chair has not received any information as to when to expect the tests in the communities. Parents are quite concerned about transmission within the school and asking why there are no exposure notices. Are there data or statistics to support that there is minimal transmission in schools as stated by the MOH? With the rapid transmission of Omicron, this may prove to be different.

Members agreed that information consistent with the recent GY news release be communicated to all parents, students, and community members to encourage them to get a PCR test if they are sick. That way, results go to YCDC and exposure notices can be issued by GY.

In the future, members might consider that letters sent to senior officials at the Department of Education be published; i.e. posted on social media and/or sent to the parents to keep them updated as to what School Council has been advocating.

All agreed that before issuing any other letters to DOE, we give the department and the medical experts time to assess the situation since it seems to be changing very quickly.

Action: Amy McKinnon will forward YG's press release on rapid testing to the Administrator and all Council members.

Action: Cassandra Wheeler will prepare a draft notice, consistent with the messaging in the press release, to be posted on social media such as The Happenings of Haines Junction Facebook site encouraging parents and families to get PCR testing if experiencing COVID symptoms and follow the COVID guidelines if they or their kids are sick.

We will continue discussions at our meeting next Tuesday and follow-up regarding the situation.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Cassandra Wheeler, Chair