

PALMERSTON AVENUE PS SCHOOL COUNCIL 2021-22

General Meeting #1

Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021

Virtual meeting called to order 6:35 p.m.

Attendees: Co-chairs Jen Heimpel and Laura Heath-Potter, Treasurer Beth Janson, Secretary Nancy Sarnoff, Principal Rory Sullivan, Vice Principal Bronwyn Davidson, Meggen Janes, Robin Cooke, Jacki Chapel, Laura Stavro-Beauchamp, Michelle Carruthers, Larissa Stori, Sarah Kipperman, John Picone, Liz Capozz, Jason Woodlinger, Henny, Naomi

General welcome

Jen Heimpel

General school update

Rory Sullivan

— School year has started in a pandemic reality but with excitement to see all kids and staff creating routines and safe and inclusive spaces. Teachers are very watchful of mental health. Thanks to the care-taking team for enhanced cleaning and their work over the summer and also to the office staff: Amanda and Argentina.

— Teachers are still gathering diagnostic information knowing there will be gaps. We're providing them time to engage in co-planning work. This week, students learned about the impact of residential schools and truth and reconciliation and how we can work as change agents to make a difference and address social injustices. As a staff, the intent is continue these discussions in the coming weeks and months.

— Sports and extracurriculars: awaiting guidance from Toronto Public Health.

— Grade 5 has been given Chromebooks but no carrying cases or charging systems. School has purchased carrying cases and is working to facilitate charging in classrooms.

This was an initiative through the IT Services department. The school has over 60 Chromebooks now that have been washed and scrubbed and are going out to students.

— Looking forward to a Halloween Parade in a few weeks, but won't be able to do an inside parade if it's raining.

— Welcome to all the new and returning teachers and staff.

Bronwyn Davidson

— The Anti-Racism Committee met to discuss planning, and how to make this week meaningful with all the COVID restrictions. We wanted to do a big gathering on the land, but since we couldn't we broke up the week with truth and reconciliation work so students could understand the concepts. The school marked today (National Day of Truth and Reconciliation) with a moment of silence. Room 12 made a banner that everyone signed. A parent (Jacoby's mom) got us a flag saying All Children Matter, that's now flying at the front of school.

Annual Council Activities

Jen: The following events are on hold:

- Welcome back BBQ

- Harvest Festival
- Pizza Lunch (one of our biggest fundraisers)
- Dance-a-thon
- Snowed In (arts and media literacy)
- Spring Forward (annual STEM event)
- May Fest
- Graduation: This past year the event was virtual, but optimistic for something more traditional at school year end.

There's always a need for money so we need to look at alternative fundraising initiatives. School did a direct drive last year and we're looking for other ideas.

Council Committee Overview/Reports/Initiatives for 2021/22 School Year

Jen: The council website includes summations of committees. Thanks to Beth and Laura for keeping it up to date.

Teacher Appreciation

Jen

- Pre Covid we'd have an end-of-the-year lunch where parents would bring in food and we'd decorate the staffroom.
- Two years ago, we created special t-shirts for the teachers.
- We did a luncheon last fall, but didn't have the opportunity to host one at the end of last school year.
- Julia has offered to help with the committee again, but would welcome the help of anyone who's interested. We plan to replicate what was done last fall with a catered lunch. Please get in touch with the office, Laura or Jen if you'd like to help.
- Still waiting to confirm the dates for the luncheon. Rory is talking with Julia tomorrow and will try to get date info.

Arts Committee

Robin Cooke

- Next Tuesday there's a My Life Online social media awareness event for parents. Robin will write an email and send it to the group to be disbursed to more people. This will be a live Q&A. Hope to promote this on the blog and through our own networks. It will be recorded so people can watch it after the event.
- My Life Online Livestream Viewing Link - https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_SWz4iGBtShmf2wX1CVgAZA
- Ordered 2 "step pianos" for Janice for music class. One is like the one in the movie Big.
- Ordering a Bose speaker for Ms. Mattoni.
- The arts contest was a huge success. Thanks to Jacki and her husband!

Discussion about outdoor events with Principal Sullivan.

RS: We looked at doing an outdoor assembly but there are logistical, audio, and visual issues/limitations. Determined it's too challenging to reach everyone in a meaningful way.

RC: Why can't we do something like the welcome back BBQ?

RS: It's a challenge to police people and enforce protocols. The TDSB protocols are informed by Toronto Public Health. We meet with TPH weekly. Being cautious. This variant is particularly tricky. Our duty is to ensure the kids are safe.

RS: Talked to Ms. Tattoni today to be sure she's encouraging students to go to the library. There has been a change in protocol and students can now access the books. She is ready to take kids through an orientation.

Spirit Wear

Laura Heath-Potter

— New hats, t-shirts and sweatshirts will be delivered by early November at the latest. There's still some stock from last year's sale so there will be a small fundraising element to the spirit wear sale this fall.

— Laura is hoping to relinquish the spirit wear project after handling it for many years. Ideally, someone can come on board now to see how it works and then take it over spring or fall of next year so they don't have to start from scratch.

STEM/Outdoor Classroom

Meggen

— Spring Forward is the STEM event that's held in March, national engineering month.

— This is Megegn's last year at Palmerston so it would be nice to hold something, and of course we'll be looking to bring in a new committee head for next year.

— In the past, we've held a Math Night, outdoor inventor's playground, an after-school math program, a Lego program, and Climate Change Night.

— Meggen continued her work on the outdoor classroom/garden and received grants: a \$3,000 grant from Whole Kids to revitalize an outdoor garden on the west side of the Annex area; and an \$8,000 farm-to-school grant to run salad bars. The funds are to purchase a salad bar and related equipment and training. Were only able to do three salad bars, but they were wonderful and everyone loved seeing the long line up from kids for salad! Hopefully those can come back later in the year.

— Meggen also put together some life-size games: Yatzee, Connect Four and Jenga. A parent group helped put together a tree identification guide, which is still available for teacher use.

RS: Grade 6 should have leadership opportunities to work with some of the life size games.

Jen: Each committee head has meetings. We'll distribute email addresses for those who want to get involved.

Robin: Michael is interested in doing more. He seemed interested in keeping up with the identification stuff.

Health and Wellness

Jen

— Enza Gucciardi ran this committee for about 5-6 years, but her kids were in the remote school last year so she took the year off. She may be willing to help with the committee, but if not, we'll be looking for a new committee head this year.

— This committee has brought speakers to schools to make presentations on physical and mental health for students and parents, as well as purchased food preparation supplies to educate child about healthy food choices and preparation (in class sessions).

Community Outreach

Laura Stavro-Beauchamp

— Sasha and I started it last year and had great success in the late fall for donations for children in the north and remote communities: diapers, crayons, toys, etc.

— We've been trying to figure out if we should re-engage with Nanook and see if they're planning to make shipments this year.

— New idea is the Downie/Wenjack Fund. The week of Oct 17-22 is Secret Path Week. People do walks to raise money. Their goal for this year is \$60,000. This would be a great way to continue the discussion of Truth and Reconciliation with the walk, and also if we decide to collect donations again to send more to the north.

— The foundation has a legacy school program. St. Alban's is a legacy school. It starts building an ongoing relationship in the learning context. They provide resources and materials to teachers. It's very age appropriate to our school. Would love for others to get involved.

— Laura will speak to the teachers on Oct. 13 at the staff meeting.

Internal/School Outreach

Jen:

- Council has historically put together a bit of money going toward funding breakfast food, cold and wet weather gear to support needs within the school. Steph and Suzanne work closely with office to identify what's needed. There's a lot of need within the school and it's always done very discreetly. We may be looking for people to help with these initiatives.

Fundraising

RS: We raised about \$3,000 for the Terry Fox Run. Fundraising is difficult in these challenging times. Council may want to consider a direct drive. This works well if you can earmark what funds could go to.

Laura HP: Indigo Flip Give raised \$800 last year and we've talked about doing an auction but never did because it's such a huge undertaking. Would love to have someone spearhead that with research I've done. A direct drive would be a great way to kick off the year.

Robin: What about a holiday marketplace? Could do a hybrid auction/marketplace holiday-inspired event. But who's going to do it?

Sarah Kipp-Ferguson: I'm a new parent and a teacher at another school. We've had an event where students enter into a raffle to become Principal or VP for the day. They'd do morning messages, visit classes. It's very easy to organize, you don't need an online platform, and it's very student focused. The kids can get very excited about it.

Bronwyn Davidson: Pizza Pizza/Last school year on a random Thursday 10 percent of profits went to council. Pizza Pizza people wanted to know if we wanted to do this again. Consensus was that we should. Bronwyn to confirm with the store manager and advise of site/coupon code access.

Parent Activism

Lisa Price is Committee Head.

Yearbook

Jen: Laura took this on last year and created a beautiful yearbook. Looking for someone to take this on with design/layout experience. Would be amazing to do a yearbook club for the older students starting in October/November. They can collaborate on layout/design, collect and organize the photos. Let's put the call out to anyone willing to help.

Grad

Jen: Typically parents of the Grade 6 class organize the event and there's a budget set aside for decoration and activities. In the past, there was a meal and party at the school but that hasn't been an option the past couple of years. We'll be looking for Grade 6 parents to take it over planning the event. The grads also get an opportunity to purchase grad hoodies. We'd like parents to take that on as well.

Budget

Beth Janson

— Created a budget request form for any staff or committee heads

(<https://forms.gle/CovMsCuLQRTDVSk67>)

— We're looking for proposals for enrichment activities and items for the students, which will be discussed and voted on at the budget meeting next month

— There's also a reimbursement form, and we are set up to do e-transfers.

— The fundraising for this year really funds next year, so we're now working off last year's funds (which are limited)

— We're in dire need of new fundraising activities. If you have any ideas please reach out to beth@bethjanson.com.

— A Toronto company delivers barrels to schools to collect recycled batteries from October through May. Barrels picked up in June. Chance to win a prize based on gathering the most batteries. Community members can put their batteries in it as well.

RS: Great idea. (Beth will pursue.)

Meggen: I want to make sure we have school buttons this year. If there's no Mayfest, can we do a photo-button day as a fundraiser?

School Yard Update

RS:

— Over the summer, there was a miscommunication through our facilities department relative to work to be done in the school yard. Due to a breakdown in communications in our facilities teams, the grounds crew went ahead (without involving the school), and the garden in the front of the building was removed.

— A meeting was held on Sept. 8 with the superintendent and community members to try to understand how it happened, and to discuss next steps towards replacement of the plants.

— Our facilities department apologized, and the procedural approach has been changed.

— We were given funding from the Board to replace the plants (approximately \$7-10,000), and as well as the funding required for a Master Site Plan for the entire school grounds (which equates to about \$7-8000).

Master Plan Steering Committee

- Anyone who's interested (parents, kids, staff and community) will be polled to gather information and ideas about what they'd like to include and/or change on the school grounds. The Committee will work closely with our TDSB Facilities Coordinator and a TDSB Landscape Architect who'll review the proposals, and designs and present options for the master plan. The Committee decides on which option they'll pursue, and fundraising initiatives for the rollout of the site improvements will begin.

- On October 18 students will be invited to make design proposals on what they'd like to have on the school grounds. That then goes to staff, parents and interested community members to add to the concept.

- A meeting date will be set shortly. Anyone who's interesting in being part of the planning, please contact Mr.Sullivan or Ms.Davidson.

Naomi Luker, former Palmerston student and Seaton Village resident

Spoke on behalf of neighbors, including Henny Marcus who was involved in the gardens creation and ongoing care.

— Naomi and Liz Addison will work together on the School Council.

— Neighbors met to collect and inventory what remains at the garden, and a number of plants remain and are pushing through the new mulch.

— Naomi and Henny will document what plants are reemerging and share what we learn with Richard Christie's landscape architecture team.

Liz Addison, Seaton Village resident

— So impressed with this school!

— Vision for garden: We want to salvage and nurture plants that remain in the garden and engage with other members of the school community to restore the gardens.

— We'd like to work with the rest of the school community to restore the garden immediately, especially given that the master plan alone likely won't be completed until 2023.

— In the short term, the group would like to continue to monitor the garden beds to observe what else emerges.

Jen: Formally nominates Naomi and Liz to join Council and be involved. Laura seconds. Council voted “yay” to the new nominees.

RS:

- There will be between \$6,000 and \$10,000 to replace plants.
- Plan should be completed by the end of this school year.
- There is a desire to return the gardens, but this must go through a consultation process.
- Will reach out to Richard Christie and let him know what Liz and Naomi have said about what’s growing. But no new plantings can start until there’s a better idea of what a plan will look like. Will get back by Monday at the latest. Richard is very supportive.
- Need to be careful in terms of adding anything right now, including benches. Don’t want to facilitate an injury. All new items must be vetted by the Board.
- First meeting will happen once there’s a Council rep. Richard Christie, with facilities in charge of grounds and renewals, will also be at the meeting of the Steering Committee.

Laura: Should put out a link on Facebook page for greater Palmerston community.

Liz: School needs to be better connected and integrated with the community. Likes idea of putting notices on Seaton Village Facebook page about the school events.

Jen: We will make efforts to expand our communications to reach out beyond just the parent community.

Elections and Voting for Council Executive

The following were nominated, seconded and voted in to Council Executive:

Co-Chairs - Laura Heath-Potter and Jen Heimpel

Treasurer - Beth Janson

Secretary - Nancy Sarnoff

Community Members - Liz and Naomi nominated and seconded.

Next Meeting (for budget) scheduled for Thursday, October 28th.

Meeting adjourned 8:22 p.m.