

École Robert H. Smith School Parent Council Minutes
Tuesday, February 4th, 2025
RHS Library

6:05 pm Call to Order & Attendance

Attendance: Danielle (Chair), Kathryn (Vice-Chair), Tara (Treasurer), 15 parents, plus Adam (Principal), Sarah (VP), Kathy Heppner (Ward 3 Board Representative)

Additions to the Agenda

Environmental Advisory Committee Feb 25 – Annex East Building on Wall Street
New business – attempted child abduction in River Heights

Motion to approve the revised agenda by Tara; seconded by Jill - all in favour, motion approved

Minutes from January 11th meeting

Minutes from the last meeting – changes to provide better context about the SDAC meeting and the discussions around lunch programs, fundraising, and other items

Motion to approve the minutes, as amended, by Jill. Seconded by Crystal. All in favour, motion approved.

Local trustee Kathy Heppner was in attendance and those in attendance did introductions.

Chair's Report

Fundraising via 50:50 possibly through Munch-a-Lunch to fund for indoor recess activities. Something simple and not labour intensive in this new era of fundraising. Was approved at previous Parent Councils.

Administrators Report

Adam had spoken to Matt Henderson on Monday following up from parent concerns that were outlined in a letter sent to RHS parents re: lunch programs. Main concerns are about staffing, and there may be some benefits/improvements overall with new plan. Adam is optimistic that things can be figured out.

The changes to lunch programs have been on the horizon since last year. Some schools have had issues with staffing, and inactive parent councils to oversee. RHS with Cheryl retiring would have had to adapt regardless, but new mandate precludes fees and hiring

parents. The aim of raising this on the agenda is to ensure parents are aware and that concerns of parents are addressed. RHS does not have an issue with students not returning to school if they go home for lunch – no access to specific grants, concern about number of support staff to take over the program. Current lunch supervisors at RHS work the whole hour (inside and outside).

Next SDAC will be primarily budget.

Adam spoke to the Lunch Program. Started with a historical perspective. Provision in MB Schools Act and WSD to be able to offer lunch programs. Most schools have been run by PACs in the WSD (a lot of work to run a lunch program for unpaid PAC volunteers, impaired by staffing limits, cost). Fees at RHS for lunch program have been the same for a decade at \$1.50/student/day.

At RHS, prior to 2006 was run by the PAC. Come 2006, Cheryl Homes and Penny Trudel (EAs) took over the lunch program as a non-profit. Has very been successful but increasingly challenging to find staffing and EAs. Cheryl has retired as an EA but working PT to still oversee the program. The RHS Lunch Program staff are not WSD staff (aside from EAs and FT RHS admin and teachers as needed).

Lack of lunch programs in the WSD are seen as a barrier to:

- Parents being able to work
- Consistent student attendance
- Cost (RHS is relatively inexpensive)
- Children with special needs may experience exclusion from PAC lunch programs

Rationale for WSD to move to a cost-free, school run lunch program:

- Improve student presence at school
- Inclusive of all students regardless of ability or disability
- Providing a lunch program using WSD staff supports legal ramifications as all staff are WSD employees

Current Parent Concerns with changes to RHS Lunch Program

- Loss of teacher contact time (PE, music, LSTs, Admin)
- Insufficient staffing to supervise – only have 5 EAs
- Loss of microwave – each class has a microwave (get sanitized everyday, technically not allowed to be out in the classroom)
- Loss of intramurals
- Having students need to eat the gym (noise volume – can be incredibly loud, possibly eating on the floor)
- Allergies, choking hazards – have kids with severe anaphylaxis

Teacher between 11am-2pm have a 55-minute lunch continuous as part of contract. If they have to oversee lunch, they still need to be given their lunch break.

RHS has significantly fewer EAs relative to similar schools of the same size. We'd be going from one supervisor per room, to projected staffing of 5 EA's, 4 teachers and 2 Admin, based on what we currently have.

RHS Next Steps

- Consult with community about the changes
- To receive concerns (please share with Admin)
- Will share a comprehensive plan prior to March PAC
- Receive feedback at March PAC
- Pilot changes beginning after spring break using lunch program staff.

Balanced school day timetable is being considered – spreads out break times. Currently have 15 min morning and afternoon recesses, with 55-minute lunch. Will potentially modify to two longer breaks with three learning periods. Kindergarten and nursery would stay on their current timetable.

RHS is short-staffed at least once a week up to three days a week that poses challenges.

Proposing that students eat from 11:40am to noon with teachers in the classroom. Can use this time to work on regulation, or have teachers read to students while eating, or other ways of trying to build community. Would mean phys ed and music teachers can eat 11:30am to 12:30pm. Would be more structured lunch period. Students would still then have 55 minutes of lunch recess. No expectation of kids being outdoors for the hour (cold weather days, or hot weather days). There seems to be 'issues' arising with school yard behaviour with longer less structured lunch recess, which needs to be managed (largest concern then is staffing outdoors for lunch as needed). At 12:30pm music and phys ed could then take students as their lunch is done. Could also do clubs in a room with the extra time as classrooms would be free.

Teachers can do 'extra time' such as clubs, intramurals, during lunch if they wish can be tracked and banked for a day in lieu.

Concerns were raised about older grades spending lunches on screens – admin says this will be addressed as screens should only be used with a purpose.

RHS staffing planning starts in about a month which will aim to account for lunch program supervision. Trying to plan for worst case scenarios so that there is always sufficient staffing. Volunteers though are not off the table potentially.

There was a discussion around the how the whole process rolled out overall and concerns/questions will be brought to Matt Henderson by Trustee Kathy Heppner.

RHS did acquire the EA hours it needed this year (aside from a 3 hr a day position).

Water filling station is being installed.

A question was raised as to where is the money coming from to cover these lunch programs? WSD budget will try to address this via savings from reallocations from what has been considered wasteful spending in the past. Trustee spoke to the needs of the school being met through increased allocations for EAs to ensure school safety, but concerns raised as to whether this would be the case. The lack of planning and transparency by the WSD was a common concern. For example, the results of pilot programs around lunch programs have not been shared.

Treasurer's Financial Report

Financial report was shared. Made \$50 from last fun lunch. Question about fundraising and what is allowed. Must be approved by the principal. Adam spoke to the possibility of attending Adams Family play - \$5 per student plus buses to attend Gas Station theatre and fundraising to cover the costs as this is a performing arts trip.

Motion to approve made by Cheryl, seconded by Jill, all in favour, motion approved.

New Business

Discussed recent abduction attempt in River Heights. Has not been deemed an attempted abduction but rather a mental health crisis. On Monday, teachers did discuss 'stranger danger' with students, though the approach is more sophisticated than just 'stranger danger'.

Motion to adjourn by Al, seconded by Will. All in favour, motion approved.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.