

Board of Trustees Open Letter to the Community

As most of you are aware, the new Board of Trustees was put in place at the beginning of this term. Going forward we as a Board consider it important that we keep the School Community informed as to what is currently happening as well as our letting you know what we see as issues that will or may arise in the near future.

Firstly, though, I think it is important for me to let you know in laymen's terms who the Board are, and what we do.

BOT's consist of

1. A minimum of 5 parent elected trustees (we have 6)
2. A current staff member (elected by the staff)
3. The Principal

Parent elected Board members hold the position for 3 years. Boards have the option of holding Triennial elections, where all BOT members are elected, or they can, as Waiau Pa does, choose to have mid-term elections, where 3 parent elected representatives are chosen every 18 months. We feel this is the better option as it always gives us a continuity of representatives, rather than inducting a full board every 3 years.

***and for my 2 bobs worth....it is important for the community to remember that the "parent elected trustees" are exactly that....we are parents and have children at the school. We are not chosen by the Principal or school. Every decision that is made by the Board directly affects our own children, so please be rest assured, that we are there to ensure that ALL the children receive the best education possible within the constraints issued by the Ministry.

The board of trustees is the Crown entity responsible for the governance and the control of the management of the school. The board is the employer of all staff in the school, is responsible for setting the school's strategic direction in consultation with parents, staff and students, and ensuring that its school provides a safe environment and quality education for all its students. Boards are also responsible for overseeing the management of personnel, curriculum, property, finance and administration.

From the strategic plan, the principal and his management group then formulate their policies and procedures to enable them to meet these goals the BOT sets.

The BOT has no input into the day to day running of the school, but is responsible for ensuring that the school has the resources to enable them to meet the Ministry of Education's requirements for achievement.

So, at the moment, the BOT has some "priorities" that we are dealing with to ensure that the school is compliant with all regulatory requirements, that the school has the necessary funding in the right areas to assist in the learning outcomes of pupils, and that we are "future proofing" for expected growth and also retention of current pupils.

I would like to comment directly on a couple of those issues.

1. Procedures and policies. We are currently reassessing all the school policy and procedure documents so that they are all compliant with the new regulations as set out under the new Worksafe Act, and also going forward, the proposed changes to the Child and Young Persons Act. To this end, both myself, Simon Williams and some of his management team have attended specific information sessions on the new Worksafe requirements. While we consider that our current policies are generally sound, we have sought further information from the Ministry and STA on this, and will be working to get this updated as soon as possible. We want to get this right the first time, and to this end we will be working with a "School specific" consultant to assist us in this. We acknowledge as a Board that we do not have the legal expertise within our group to ensure full regulatory compliance. Once this new policy is complete it will be circulated to the community and available on our website
2. Year 7/8. As most of the community is aware, student numbers drop off at Waiau Pa in these years. We understand from community consultation that there are many and varied reasons for this, and there is certainly no "one fix option" for this. But to this end, the BOT is committed to retaining year 7/8 as part of the school. We are in the process of developing a plan to increase options and choices and will again share these as they are finalised

3. Planned growth. The proposed new housing development in Clarks Beach will no doubt bring with it more children, and therefore put pressure on the current infrastructure we have at the school. Unfortunately, at this stage, details on what we can expect in the way of growth is anyone's guess. As the development gains traction and a better idea of planning, and who is purchasing the properties becomes available, we will be entering into discussions with the Ministry to ensure we aren't caught short.
4. Achievement and Progress. As you may be aware, the Ministry sets "standards" of education in the 2 main areas of Literacy and numeracy. The Board is committed to ensuring funding and resources are available to all levels, to ensure that all children receive assistance to reach and exceed the expectations of the Ministry. You may have heard Mr Williams referring to the Pukekohe COL (Community of Learning) that is currently being set up with the aim of using all the resources in the COL to assist at all levels of abilities in the major curriculum areas. This is a Ministry driven (and funded) initiative to give schools in the COL access to teachers who hold expertise in specialist areas where we may not have someone available. This is still in its infancy, but having been to some of the meetings around this, I believe it will be a valuable asset going forward, especially being able to access other teachers who may specialise in increasing the learning abilities of some of the children who may be below the "line"
5. Modern Learning Practices. In the last two ERO reports, the reviewers have looked at the progress the school has been making towards the MLP's. Simon and I have been discussing this again recently, and we will be consulting with the staff and gaining their input on the best way to move forward with this. Family's with students in the new senior block have probably seen the changes made to the building with MLP in mind. The school will be moving forward in stages to the new collaborative teaching model, and more details on this will be released as processes are put in place.

The Board of Trustees along with the School Management team are aware that on occasions we don't always get things right in everyone's eyes. When this does occur it is disturbing to us all that some people in the community elect to vent their feelings through Social Media. The Board and School Policies are very clear in that no one in the school or board are to enter into commentary via any forms of social media. There is a very clear and descriptive Complaints Procedure available for all to view via the School website. We respectfully request that this is followed so as to ensure a fair and just outcome for all.

And finally, I have a couple of observations I have made since I have become part of the School Community. Waiau Pa / Clarks Beach is seeing a big change in its population demographic. There are a number of families who have shifted from the City, bought their kids from the City schools, and are looking for Waiau Pa school to provide more of those opportunities that their children enjoyed there. I, unabashedly, am one of those, and hope with the experience I have had on a "Townie" Board of Trustees, to slowly integrate new and varied options at the school, being they are curriculum based, or indeed, extra curricula. This will take time, but it is a personal vision of mine that our kids be able to access more educational, sporting and cultural options locally, rather than having to travel to gain these.

On behalf of the Board, I would also like to acknowledge the exceptional work of our PTA and Calf Club committees. I know this has been said before, but we are really fortunate here to have such a dedicated group raising additional funds to help our children and community. We will never be able to thank them enough for what I know is a very time consuming activity....and so often doesn't get the recognition it deserves....so thank you again.

Roger Hargraves

Chairperson

On behalf of Waiau Pa Board of Trustees