

Newtown School Board of Trustees

Meeting minutes

Wednesday 1 April 2020, 8.00 pm, via Zoom



Present: Jess Gorman, Nick Booth, Haidee Westwater, Amelia Handscomb, Yadana Saw, Victoria Esson, Louise Conwell, Mark Brown, Nicki Read, Justine Henderson, Paul ilson, Jesse Gale, Emma McMenamain, Fatima Osman and Jo Gould (minutes).

Apologies: none.

1. Karakia

2. Previous Minutes

The minutes from the Board meeting held on 26 February 2020 were approved. Most of the actions were rolled over, except the item on the estimated project management costs for the pool refurbishment. Yadana reported that the project management fee is likely to be about \$22,000 + GST through to the end of the project. Around \$5,000 has been charged to date, with the other costs incurred for structural engineer input, quantity surveyor reports and the like.

3. Principal's report

Mark tabled his report. In addition to explaining the structure of the report to the parents who had joined the meeting, the items discussed included:

- Mark acknowledged the calm and positive approach of staff in the lead-up to the COVID-19 lockdown. He also acknowledged the hard work of Trish in response to the increased demands of her role in the current situation.
- The wellbeing of staff and whānau is of central importance. EAP (employee assistance programme) is available to provide support to all staff and their whānau. Louise has prepared a report on the staff wellbeing survey with a summary of the results and recommended next

steps. This will be discussed at a future Board meeting. Louise has been checking in with staff about what they are doing during the lockdown for their own wellbeing.

- The school grounds are being used for drive-through COVID-19 testing. Medical staff are using the hall, as this is in a more isolated area that can be more easily cleaned. The staffroom and Moana are being used as break-out areas. It is unclear at this stage whether the hall will still be required once the school is open again. This will require ongoing conversations with health staff well in advance of the school's re-opening.
- Communicating with whānau and caregivers during the lockdown - this has mainly been through electronic means. Staff are unable to return to the school grounds to print newsletters or other correspondence for those families unable to access email or the school's website (around 25 families ordinarily receive printed copies of the newsletter). Board members suggested that these families could be phoned or sent texts with important updates (Board members offered to assist with this).
- Nicki provided an update on the work underway to prepare learning from home resources for when Term 2 starts on 15 April. Teachers have been working together on this in their whānau groups throughout the holidays. A Newtown School learning-from-home website is in development. The focus is on getting the balance right, to help families with learning content (there is lots of rich content, both on- and off-line), without creating pressure on caregivers (particularly where children are at a range of ages). Teaching staff are also thinking about how to communicate best with the children (Zoom, seesaw) and how often. There are cyber safety considerations, as well as issues around access to devices. Staff are unable to retrieve Chromebooks as they can't access the school buildings during the lockdown. There will be the opportunity for parents and caregivers to provide feedback on what's working, and what's not.
- Justine discussed the challenges of catering for learners with additional social, emotional or learning needs. There are not a lot of existing models of distant learning that can support these learners. Justine has been gathering information about what other schools have been doing, both here and overseas. Thought is also been given to how the school can best utilise the TAs, and how to support whānau who have English as their second language.

- Board members and parents attending the meeting shared their thoughts and suggestions - emphasising that what many children are missing the most is connecting with the friends and teachers.
- Recovery will be an important stage following from the lockdown. It was found after the Christchurch earthquake that this stage needed careful and ongoing planning - for students, whānau and staff. A plan for a re-entry to school will need to be developed.
- The school's ten year property plan has been approved in principle. Work detailed in the plan can now progress. Items are being bundled together so they can go out for tender. Architectural concept plans for refurbishing the old administration block, staffroom and some teaching spaces (Moana) have been received.
- Audited annual accounts are ready to be provided to the Ministry in draft form, although this process has been put on hold from Ministry's end.

4. School pool

Yadana summarised the indicative costs of the three stages of the pool refurbishment project:

- The first stage is focused on structural improvements and watertightness. Approximate cost is \$465,000 + GST.
- The second stage is internal work, focusing on improving accessibility, and fitting out the changing rooms and bathrooms. Approximate cost is just over \$100,000 + GST.
- The third stage is mechanical and plant work, and ventilation, at a cost of around \$140,000 + GST.

The school will need to fundraise around \$270,000 plus GST, on top of the \$500,000 the Council is contributing. The next step is the development of an implementation plan, as the Council won't release funds until they can see a plan on how the second and third stages will be funded.

Yadana also reported that there will be a meeting on 2 April with the Wellington City Council and Ashby Property Services Ltd to discuss the school pool refurbishment project.

ACTION: Yadana to email the Board with a summary of the meeting on the school pool refurbishment project.

Next meeting: TBC (possibly a Zoom meeting before the school reopens).