

**Alta Vista Public School  
Minutes • School Council  
Wednesday, April 21, 2021**

**NB: The meeting took place via Google Meets due to OCDSB COVID-19 protocols**

**1. Welcome and Introductions (Shelly Firth, Chair)**

**2. Approval of Agenda and Meeting Minutes (Shelly Firth, Chair)**

The agenda was approved. The minutes were approved.

**3. Chair's Report (Janice Chamberlain, Vice-Chair)**

Regarding the PRO Grant (up to \$650), it was reported that My Life Online would not lower the fee for their virtual workshop.

To better inform the conversation about our PRO Grant, invitations from other School Councils to join their PRO-sponsored virtual presentations were shared: Woodroffe HS's "Raising Kids Not Scared of Math" on April 21; and Roberta Bondar PS's and Robert Bateman PS's "Social Media and Your Kids" on April 29 and "Mental Health 101: Strategies for Parents" on May 19.

With the topics of these invitations in mind, School Council voted to host a virtual "Zentangle Meditative Drawing" workshop presented by Nancy Dean of Practice Making Art. This presentation will be shared with other schools.

**4. Administrative Report (Dennis Paré, Principal)**

Following the decision of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) to hold public consultations on the School Resource Officer (SRO) program, coupled with a broader conversation about systemic racism and law enforcement, the issue of SROs at AVPS was discussed. Principal Paré said his experience with SROs has been positive. SROs are trained to intervene and de-escalate a situation when a student breaks the law on school property. The program has been at AVPS for at least 10 years. One attendee, who identified as a member of a racialized community, said that having a member of the police force in school causes her trepidation. Similarly, another attendee said she would be uncomfortable if her child was interacting with a uniformed officer at school. In response, Principal Paré assured School Council that no SRO speaks to a student without prior parental/guardian consent and that such interaction would only take place if the student were breaking the law. School Council will inform the AVPS community if the OCDSB holds further consultations re. SROs.

With respect to the current move to remote learning, Principal Paré said he learns about such closures at the same time as everyone else. AVPS has loaned out 60+ Chromebooks this week, and he and Vice-Principal Le Madec are working on staffing for next year.

Gr. 8 photos will no longer take place April 28, due to the school closure, but the Gr. 8 leaving ceremony will go ahead because it is being planned as a virtual event.

Following a discussion about remote learning, Principal Paré confirmed that he and Vice-Principal Le Madec will talk to educators, students and parents/guardians about compassionate leniency during remote learning. For example, educators want students to participate and complete their homework but not to the detriment of the students.

**5. Teacher’s Report (Kathleen Connelly, Teacher’s Representative)**

School Council approved the following funding requests.

Recognition awards for Asian History Month Missions	\$325
Motivation speaker Jeff A. D. Martin for Grs. 7/8	\$1,400

**6. Treasurer’s Report (Kathleen Wrye)**

The current balance is just over \$35,000. To date, we have allocated just under \$16,000 and distributed just over \$6,000.

**7. Community/Event Report**

The virtual Spring Book Fair will be May 3-17.

The virtual fundraising campaign was postponed due to the return to remote learning.

Janice provided an overview of passive fundraisers, for which a volunteer is needed.

Mais Kiryakos was nominated for the OCDSB’s 2021 Volunteer Awards (see Appendix 1).

Parents/guardians of Gr. 7s are needed to volunteer for the Gr. 8 leaving ceremony.

No results are available from the April 12 COVID-19 OPH rapid-testing clinic.

The OCDSB’s proposed elementary calendar for 2021-2022 is available.

**8. Next Meeting**

The next School Council meeting will take place via Google Meets on Wednesday, May 19, at 7 pm. All parents/guardians of AVPS community are welcome to attend.

## Appendix 1

### Nomination of Mais Kiryakos for the OCDSB Distinguished School Council Service Award

Short version (this text was submitted with the nomination)

For more than seven years, Mais Kiryakos has led School Council fundraisers, which have engaged dozens of volunteers and significantly enriched the school environment. She organizes the Scholastic Book Fair, with sales increasing annually over the past five years. Mais collects items for the Spring Fair's silent auction. She coordinates used sports-equipment fundraisers and the sale of spirit wear and serves as Assistant Treasurer. One year, she came in every Friday – her day off! – to serve pizza and train a new generation of pizza-lunch volunteers. These successes are thanks to Mais's quiet determination and professional experience as co-owner of a Byward Market boutique, which was closed for months due to a nearby fire and was about to reopen when COVID hit. Despite these struggles, Mais remains positive and committed to volunteerism. Her dedication, humour and generosity of spirit are the backbone of what School Councils bring to public education.

Long version (this text more fully outlines Mais's contribution to School Council)

School Councils thrive on the lived experiences of their volunteers. Mais Kiryakos has been generously sharing her professional and personal experience with Alta Vista Public School's School Council since she became a voting member in 2014.

"I like being involved with what my children are doing," says Mais, who joined School Council when her eldest of two children was in Junior Kindergarten. "If I could volunteer full-time, I would. I enjoy the variety of work, and my kids like seeing me in the school."

Shortly after joining School Council, Mais shadowed the outgoing coordinator for the Scholastic Book Fair with a view to taking over the much-needed role. Since then, Mais has coordinated the annual event, which relies on the help of at least 20 volunteers.

"Mais is amazing to volunteer with as she is collaborative and organized," says Janice Chamberlain, School Council Vice-Chair. "She is inclusive of all volunteers and goes out of her way to make new and returning, young and old volunteers feel welcome by providing them with an overview of how the fundraiser works, which enhances the volunteer experience."

Under Mais's tenure, Book Fair sales have grown to more than \$8,000 each year. Scholastic then provides credit to the school for the purchase of books. The library and educators access the credit to the benefit of every student. During the pandemic, Mais organized a virtual Scholastic Book Fair in late 2020, which grossed an amazing \$4,300.

"Congratulations!" said Maria Infanti, consultant for Scholastic Book Fairs. "You have to share your secret to success!"

While COVID protocols are rendering fundraising next to impossible for School Councils, these funds are crucial for our educators to be able to provide COVID-friendly access to reading material for our more than 600 students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8.

Beyond Book Fairs, Mais has served as Assistant Treasurer since 2018. Mais is an incredible asset to School Council by keeping all the expense records well organized, regularly providing updates on expenses received from the school administration and always being willing to coordinate cheque signings, sometimes on short notice!

“She also makes the job fun with her great attitude and outgoing personality,” says Kathy Wrye, School Council Treasurer. “I have really enjoyed getting to know her through our work together on School Council’s finances, and I’m always keen to help out on an activity that Mais is organizing. I know it will be well-run, low-stress and fun.”

Mais also established new fundraisers, such as a spring and winter sale of used sports equipment, and ignited interest in more traditional fundraisers, such as the sale of spirit wear. For our school’s Spring Fair, Mais volunteers to collect items for the silent auction. She even volunteered every week for the pizza lunch fundraiser in 2015-2016, when her youngest child was in daycare.

“We had no one running the pizza lunches on Fridays, which was my day off, so I went in every week and was able to train new volunteers,” says Mais. “This way we had a whole group of volunteers for the next year.”

Ultimately, the funds generated through these events help pay for teacher requests for such items as robotics equipment and art supplies as well as specialized student workshops. These successes are in part thanks to Mais’s quiet determination and professional experience as co-owner of Milk Shop in the Byward Market.

Mais opened the boutique in 2005 with her sister. Located on William Street, a four-alarm fire in April 2019 that devoured a neighbouring historic building forced the store to close for almost a year. While waiting for the store to reopen, Mais approached the temporary closure with her signature pragmatism. The coordinator of the in-school Breakfast Program, for example, needed volunteers. Mais quickly answered the call by donning an apron and helping with food prep, serving students and cleaning up.

Mais and her sister were about to reopen Milk Shop when COVID hit. Since March 2020, headlines repeatedly remind us of how small businesses are struggling. Despite these struggles, Mais maintains the same positive outlook and unfailing commitment to volunteerism that have defined her seven years of service to School Council. The pandemic has revealed many truths. One truth is constant: the dedication, good humour and generosity of spirit of volunteers such as Mais Kiryakos are the backbone of what School Councils bring to public education.