

Board chair Gardiner upset at call for director's removal

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board can be ruled operational," meaning it doesn't need trustee approval, she said.

Gardiner, trustee for Halton Hills, was appalled by Russell's accusations.

"We will be going through the (trustee) Code of Conduct with a fine-tooth comb" to see if she has contravened any regulations, said Gardiner.

"We know this is the 'take-back-the-board coalition,'" she said of Russell's words. "Take it back to what, the days of dysfunction and bickering?"

"Trustees are constantly told by the director that if you have any questions 'please call me'. In three years I don't believe Peggy Russell has called a staff member or the director on any issue, because she chooses not to.

Russell disagreed, in part, with Gardiner's claim.

"I don't need to speak to the staff regarding policy governance; I've spoken to the other trustees," she said. "(But) I've spoken to staff on other things," she added.

Nevertheless, Gardiner was unhappy with Russell's comments.

"I am overwhelmed. I can't believe someone would say our communication is (lacking). We get (internal) communications even if we don't ask questions."

The longtime chair of the board further defended director Papke.

"There is an opportunity for every trustee, when it comes time for the director's performance appraisal, to comment. Certainly that is done in-camera (privately). I don't recall any trustee commenting on the appropriateness of the evaluation."

Russell said three trustees had voted against policy governance—herself, Oakville's Drew Currah and Burlington's Mike Ellis. Ellis has left the board and Currah is not running for re-election as trustee, opting to run for town council in Oakville in the Nov. 10 municipal election.

Russell read a list of names of

trustee candidates she has spoken to around the region to gauge their feelings on policy governance. She told the EAs which ones said they disagreed with policy governance and that she was advocating for those candidates to be elected.

Russell also expressed frustration with the pace of negotiations between the board and its EAs.

The 600 or so special education and large class-size teaching assistants have been without a contract for more than a year and on strike since Oct. 7.

"I'm a trustee and I'm receiving a lot of conflicting stories" about contract negotiations, said Russell.

"So what's happening now is the director is telling me one thing and the union representative another thing. I can't say who is right or wrong. If we were there, we'd know what was going on."

Among the drawbacks of policy governance, according to Russell, is the lack of direct trustee connection to contract negotiations.

She said that prior to the adoption of the new governing model two trustees sat in on collective bargaining sessions; now, they only receive communication from a strike management committee rep—currently Oakville Trustee Annette Kirk—who does not participate in negotiations.

Papke, whose contract ends in June 2004, reluctantly replied to some of Russell's comments.

"I'm proud of the record of this board in the last number of years, and at this point in time I don't have any plans to leave.

"If there is a trustee who is unhappy with my performance, they've certainly had plenty of opportunity to voice those concerns during the performance appraisal process—and I didn't hear any from her," Papke said of Russell.

Meanwhile, the Halton District School Board and the union representing the striking EAs are back in mediation this Friday.

—By Tim Whitnell, special



ETHEL GARDINER

Around town...in pictures



Ready to rally

The seventh annual British Car Rally drew approximately 70 cars this year and for many participants it was the final tour before owners put their cars away for the winter. Roy and Elizabeth Stevens began their run from Miller's Scottish Bakery on Guelph St. in their 1969 Morgan.

Photo by Trish England

Garden friends

The Friends of the Old Seed House Garden will be able to proceed with the initial construction of the garden's pavilion this fall as a result of a generous donation of \$25,000 from Mattamy Development Ltd. On hand to accept the cheque were (from left) Friends of the Old Seed House Garden committee members Sarah Burrows, Jane Fogal, Mattamy vice-president Frank Doracin, Belinda Gallagher and Barbara Baron.

Photo by Ted Brown



Dog days

The annual Georgetown Lions Walk for Dog Guides drew about 100 people recently including Kathleen Williams (left) and Sarah Bell from Georgetown who followed the lead of their dog Roxanne. The 5K walk is in its 19th year and raises funds to support Dog Guide for Canadians with visual, hearing and physical disabilities. This year's walk raised more than \$14,000 and donations are still being accepted by calling 1-800-768-3030 or visiting their Web site at dogguides.com

Photo by Trish England



Got a scary story to share?

If you know of a local legend or ghost story we'd like to hear your story.

We're asking readers to submit their weird and scary tales (250 words or less) and we will publish them in the Wednesday, Oct. 29 edition—just in

time for Halloween.

Drop off your stories at our office, 280 Guelph St. Unit 29 (Georgetown Market Place near Zellers) or e-mail them to jmcghie@independentfreepress.com before Wednesday, Oct. 22.

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