

School District No.36 (Surrey)

ANNIEDALE TRADITIONAL ELEMENTARY POSSIBLE SCHOOL CLOSURE PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING MARCH 4, 2009

MINUTES

Introductions were made for District Staff: Mike McKay, District Superintendent; Wayne Noye, Secretary-Treasurer; Bob Coventry, Assistant Superintendent; Kerry Magnus, Associate Director, Business Management Services; Umur Olcay, Manager, Facilities & Demographics Planning.

Introductions were made for School Board Trustees: Shawn Wilson, Vice Chairperson; Terry Allen, Trustee; Ijaz Chatha, Trustee.

All questions and comments at this meeting are being recorded in order to give the School Board Trustees all the information they will need to make a decision on the possible school closure of Anniedale Traditional.

Surrey is one of the few districts in the province that is growing, unlike Vancouver or North Vancouver where enrolment is declining. Despite this growth, there are three schools that are facing possible closure, and each one has very different affecting issues: whether shifting demographics, change in land use or traffic issues. The Ministry of Education sets out legislation for school closure and the Surrey School Board has established policy around potential school closure. Both are available for viewing online.

The process starts with the Board motion on February 12, 2009, and continues for a minimum of 60 days to allow adequate time for consultation.

We will not be discussing the fate of the Anniedale site if the school is closed. Property disposal requires an entirely separate public process.

The Board motion was read.

Three options are currently being explored:

1. To leave Anniedale Traditional at the current site (status quo);
2. To move Anniedale Traditional to M.B. Sanford, Port Kells, or Latimer Road;
3. Move Anniedale Traditional to McLeod Road Elementary as soon as practical after completion of infrastructure upgrades.

Comment sheets are available for feedback to the trustees.

The Board motion is posted on the Surrey School District website, www.sd36.bc.ca . As set out in legislation, there must be a minimum 60 days for consultation with staff, parents and the public. Meetings have been held with teachers and the Parent Advisory Council and tonight we are consulting the community. There has been no decision made yet. It is important for the Board to have feedback from the community to help them to make an informed decision.

Question: Where is MB Sanford located and why is it not considered appropriate to move there?

Answer: MB Sanford is located north of 72nd Avenue and west of 144th Street. There was a boundary change made to reduce the number of portables out of Chimney Hill. There is not enough space to accommodate Anniedale's Traditional Program at this school.

Question: What efforts are being made to build another school in the Anniedale area?

Answer: The city has adopted a General Land Use plan. When the city starts moving forward on the NCP (Neighbourhood Concept Plan), we will be looking at possible future school sites at that time.

The Ministry will recognize new school projects based on capacity. Surrounding schools must be at or over capacity to qualify for funding. If the decision is made to move Anniedale to McLeod Road, planned renovations will create a positive space for students. There are issues of accessibility and difficulty having two programs on the same site. Access to Latimer Road is not as good as to McLeod Road. McLeod Road is more centrally located for attracting population from the district.

Question: How much money for renovations is being put into McLeod Road?

Answer: Approximately \$4.2 million. Renovations will include seismic, mechanical and electrical upgrades, as well as renovations to the parking and drop-off areas. We are working with the Principal at McLeod Road to explore the possibility of expediting construction in order to move the Traditional Program into McLeod Road by September, 2010.

Question: Will McLeod Road continue to have dual track programs?

Answer: The staff and students of McLeod Road will be moving to the new Woodward Hill school which is currently under construction. McLeod Road will be vacant and the Traditional Program or another program can be moved in.

Question: There isn't a school closer in this area? It is quite a distance to drive.

Answer: At the present time we don't have any schools that are vacant in this area. We are also looking at possible closure of East Clayton. When we look at where Traditional students come from, there is quite a number from Newton area. We are sure that moving it to McLeod Road will encourage enrolment growth for the Traditional program.

Question: What about moving to Fleetwood Elementary?

Answer: There are similar traffic issues at Fleetwood as at Anniedale. Fleetwood has reached the end of its' economic life. McLeod Road is a significantly better school.

Question: Is McLeod Road vacant right now?

Answer: No, construction is underway on a new school, Woodward Hill, located on 142nd Street and 61st Avenue. It should open in the Spring of 2010. McLeod Road will be vacant once staff and students move to the new school.

Question: Is it a bigger school than Anniedale?

Answer: McLeod Road is similar in size to Anniedale.

The intent is to move the whole school, including students, and staff. According to the Collective Agreement, this would be treated as a relocation, therefore, all students, teachers and the Principal will be moving to the new school.

One of the reasons we are not being definitive is that this is a consultation process. After the 60 day period, if the Trustees recommend that after McLeod Road students and staff move to the new school (at Woodward Hill), the school that they vacate becomes another asset for the District. We have looked at that asset; it is in pretty good shape. It is a good choice with good access routes and potential enrolment recruitment. We can attract population from the area. It is far easier to get to McLeod Road than Anniedale with all the adjacent truck routes so close by.

For the last few years, School District staff have talked about sustainability. We don't have limitless resources. The population is starting to flatten out and we have to make sure the Traditional program is sustainable. The population of this school has dipped because of access issues and a decrease in population. Sustainability means attracting more numbers while being serviceable and accessible. If the Board adopts this recommendation, and a move is made to McLeod Road, you will be moving to a place where people can say, "I can get to the school". It won't be a brand new school, but it will be a good anchor point.

Question: What is the size of the school? Will it get bigger with population growth in that area?

Answer: McLeod Road is 40K/200 students which is two classrooms larger than Anniedale. There is currently no plan to expand the program past the capacity of the school.

Question: Can we support extra students?

Answer: The process of registration for the Traditional program is to phone in January. Enrolment would be capped to fit the school. Parents with siblings in the school, have first choice. The Traditional program does not have a designated catchment area.

Question: If we don't want to make the trek, would we get preferential registration at Cloverdale Traditional?

Answer: There are two avenues to follow: a) let the Trustees know this is an issue by filling out the comment form, b) approach your Traditional Program advisory committee to make similar consideration.

Question: So would we have at least one more year here?

Answer: One of the positive reasons for Anniedale to move to McLeod Road is to sustain that population. With clarity around the long term future, we will encourage the community's support. This is a program of choice and parents vote with their feet. In the end it will be parent choice.

Question: Will a decision be made in 60 days?

Answer: A decision will be made in no less than 60 days; if we need more time for consultation, the decision will be delayed to take all information into consideration. We have a window until December 31st, 2009.

We encourage you to write down things that really matter to you. If you really value a quick decision on this, or clarity on whether McLeod Road will be ready for September, 2010, please put these comments on the comment forms and return them to District staff or to your Principal.

Question: What happens if construction takes a little longer?

Answer: McLeod Road staff have talked about moving into portables to help expedite construction. After they move into the new Woodward Hill school in Spring 2010, construction will proceed at McLeod Road. If the construction is not absolutely complete by September 2010, there will still be portables on the site to accommodate the Anniedale program.

Question: Has a survey been done of existing schools to see if they want to amalgamate with the Traditional Program?

Answer: No, a survey has not been done. We don't know of any schools in this immediate area that would be interested.

Question: Is there any way to see how much of a waiting list there is for the other Traditional schools?

Answer: We have data which shows Surrey Traditional has considerable wait lists. The lists are being cleaned up. Some families have moved, but are still on the waiting list. Cloverdale Traditional would be able to tell you if you phone them. The lower grades would have larger wait lists than the higher grades. You could phone the Principals of the Traditional schools to find out about their wait lists. Some of the kids that go to Cloverdale or Surrey Traditional live right next door to the McLeod Road site. Adjustments will be made. You could suggest to the Board that you want to have first choice to attend the other schools.

Question: Has there been a survey carried out of the existing population at Anniedale about the possibility of moving to McLeod Road?

Answer: No, but we'll take that under advisement.

Question: Are Options #1 and #2 viable?

Answer: No decision has been made. These are the options reviewed by and recommended by School District staff. We could be completely wrong. Leaving Anniedale at its' current site is an option. District Planning staff advise it is not viable as access has become a big concern. The Traditional Program staying at Anniedale is not sustainable. Option #2, to move in to another school will give some capacity, but it is difficult to have the Traditional program with a neighbourhood school. It would not meet some of the needs and would be hard to sustain the values of the Traditional program in a dual track school.

Question: Why do they have to be dual track? Can we survey parents there to see if they want to join together with the Traditional Program?

Answer: SD36 wants to provide accessible programs by locating them in schools that also serve the neighbourhood.

Question: Could you do a survey of parents in the district who want the Traditional Program?

Answer: To go out and do a survey would be a challenge. We face significant budget challenges while trying to grow. Although the District maintains wait lists, the enrolment population for Traditional Programs has declined.

Question: Is there a survey that can be done – something that parents can take on?

Answer: We recognize the community's right to explore more options. That is why this process is in place providing a minimum of 60 days to allow for public consultation.

Comment from the PAC President: With respect to surveys being carried out, we have 75 families affected by this process and look how many people have come to the meeting tonight.

The Vice-Chair, Shawn Wilson, adjourned the meeting: Thank you for coming out. It is important to hear your questions and comments. The Board has not made a decision yet. Whatever we hear, we will consider. We are trying to come to the best possible outcome for this school. We are very proud that we have been able to provide different programs and we recognize that it is hard to do something that can make such a major change. We will bend over backwards to make it work, but there are always complexities. We are trying to achieve a positive outcome.