

# School District No.36 (Surrey)

## EAST CLAYTON ELEMENTARY POSSIBLE SCHOOL CLOSURE MEETING WITH PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL FEBRUARY 25, 2009

### MINUTES

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Doreen Graham, Principal of Clayton and East Clayton, introduced District Staff and welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming.

**District Staff:** Wayne Noye, Secretary-Treasurer; Rick Fabbro, Assistant Superintendent; Kerry Magnus, Associate Director, Business Management Services; Umur Olcay, Manager, Facilities and Demographics Planning.

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.

Information about public meetings and the Board motion is posted on the Surrey School District website ([www.sd36.bc.ca](http://www.sd36.bc.ca)). There is also a binder held by Principal Graham containing all documentation.

*The Board motion was read.*

Four options are currently being explored:

1. Keep both Clayton & East Clayton Elementary open
2. Consolidate enrolment at Clayton Elementary (close East Clayton)
3. Consolidate enrolment at East Clayton Elementary (close Clayton)
4. Close Clayton and East Clayton Elementary.

District staff met with Clayton and East Clayton teaching staff on Monday of this week. The next meeting to be held will be with the general public on March 10<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m.

The blue comment forms are provided for your comments and feedback.

All information by way of comment forms, agendas, and minutes, will be compiled into binders for Trustees' information and reference.

Following a minimum of 60 days consultation and after sufficient meetings have been held, and Trustees have all the information they need, the Board will make a decision at a public Board meeting. There are also two other processes involved:

- a) There is a complete other process for disposing of public land. This is set out in legislation.
- b) The third process involves dealing with staff/teachers.

The meeting today is only about a possible school closure.

At present, there are 217 students at East Clayton, and 170 students at Clayton. When the new school opens, the projected enrolment for Clayton and East Clayton for the first year is 90 in total. There will be a reduced staff force. SD36 must follow the Collective Agreement to determine staffing. As far as the Ministry is concerned, we have two separate schools. Negotiations will be carried out between Human Resources and the Union. We are hopeful that very soon staff will have some clarity. The discussion on possible closure does not change the fact the two schools are going down to 90 students between them. This is a significant reduction. Human Resources has a process for hiring staff for a new school such as Hazelgrove. This process will not be affected by the decision of whether or not to close East Clayton.

The catchment boundary for the new Hazelgrove Elementary School is identified as 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to Fraser Hwy and 188<sup>th</sup> Street to the Langley border. Every student is mapped out in our GeoSchool database. We can tell how many students are registered for each grade. This information is used to review options. With Option #1, having both schools remain open, there would be maybe two teachers at each school. This would not be sustainable. A breakdown of number of students per grade can be provided.

The number one issue here is that there is a new school opening. There will be quite a lot of growth in the Hazelgrove catchment and limited growth in Clayton and East Clayton's catchment. We are making the assumption that most of those kids from the Claytons will be going to the new school. There will be significant growth and demographic changes in this area which is attracting young families.

Facility Audits were conducted in 2000. The condition of Clayton was 59%, and East Clayton was 66%. However, the septic system at East Clayton has since failed. The "honey wagon" comes 3 times per week. We are anticipating funding approval from the Ministry for a seismic upgrade for Clayton.

**Question:** Will the washroom issue at Clayton be addressed?

**Answer:** We looked at 3 options: improve access, install a wash car, or build a new washroom. The preferred option is to provide washrooms in the main block of the school.

**Question:** Does the septic problem (at East Clayton) pose a health risk?

**Answer:** No, it just has to be pumped out, regularly.

**Question:** Would the septic problem be alleviated with a bigger septic field or smaller population?

**Answer:** No, the field has failed and would need to be re-developed. It still has to be pumped out, even if the enrolment drops significantly.

**Question:** Is there going to be some sort of a vote taken?

**Answer:** All comments will be amalgamated in binders for the Trustees. The 60 day consultation process must be done in a public manner. Whatever we tell you, we tell the Trustees. It is a full public forum, with full public consultation. Mr. Olcay's numbers are very accurate. There is growth coming in this area and we are planning on more site acquisitions in the area. These will all be east of 188<sup>th</sup> Street. The Board is looking for public feedback during the 60 day consultation process. The vote will be done by the Trustees at a public Board meeting.

**Question:** How many Trustees are on the Board?

**Answer:** There are seven Trustees. After this meeting, under the new act, we must ask the community for their feedback. The Board wants to make the right decision. You may have information that SD36 staff may not know about and we need to hear your comments.

**Question:** Is the data compiled from the City Planning Department?

**Answer:** Any future land development is referred to us, so SD36 planning staff can project how quickly the area will grow. The housing market has a lot to do with absorption. Houses may be built, but not sold for a while.

**Question:** So you don't see development happening in this area for a while?

**Answer:** The NCP (Neighbourhood Concept Plan) has some development happening north of 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. There will be some growth in the Clayton catchment in 2011/2012. We are planning for another new elementary school in the Hazelgrove catchment area, and then the catchment would be split. We can keep Clayton Elementary active, enrolment will go up and down.

**Question:** What is the student capacity of the new school?

**Answer:** 400 grades 1 – 7, and 80 Kindergarten.

**Question:** Do we see the new school being full right away?

**Answer:** We don't expect it to be full right away, but maybe by 2010.

**Question:** Do you see Adams Road opening up soon?

**Answer:** Adams Road (site #153) located at 18228 68<sup>th</sup> Avenue is currently before the Ministry for funding approval. Watch for an announcement this Spring.

**Question:** This seems to be an area that is constantly being shuffled.

**Answer:** We recognize there are big land use changes happening in this growth area.

**Question:** What information can be found on the website?

**Answer:** The School Board motion is posted on the website right now. We are also engaging the media in this process, so look for information through news releases and newspapers. Information is also sent home through the school newsletter.

**Question:** What will be the opening day attendance at the new school?

**Answer:** Hazelgrove is projected to open with 464 students, however, there may be students from Latimer Road who will also be registering at Hazelgrove.

**Question:** And that number is with a lot of development not finished?

**Answer:** We use trends of historical absorption, numbers might be adjusted. We have identified all of the students attending in the new catchment area. Letters have been sent home to families in the Hazelgrove catchment asking them to declare by March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, where they wish their children to attend school. This will give our Planning Department a good handle on numbers, however, we can't hold people to it.

**Question:** When Hillcrest opened in 2000, the boundaries were about half that for Hazelgrove. I have a concern that Hazelgrove will be very full. I think that both these buildings are going to be full, and we are going to have too many kids. The density in Hazelgrove is higher. It may be small for one year, but how much can be accommodated? Is the catchment for Hazelgrove too large?

**Answer:** If we compare Hillcrest enrolment, the catchment for Hillcrest was originally a larger area. There are many students who will move to Adams Road. Some students from Adams Road future catchment are going to Don Christian and some to Hillcrest. Once the new school opens, at Adams Road, you will find Hillcrest enrolment reduced to capacity very quickly. Hillcrest capacity is large enough to accommodate the growth within its' catchment after Adams Road Elementary opens.

**Question:** Can the Claytons accommodate this growth?

**Answer:** Development within the NCP and expansion plan is proceeding and population in these areas is growing. The question is whether a new school at site #201 is a high priority. Once the decision is made on possible school closure, SD36 will be pushing the Ministry to get another school built at site #201 (east and south of Hazelgrove).

**Question:** Why put out the money?

**Answer:** Indications are that there will be 30,000 people in this area. We have identified where the new schools should be in the Clayton Area NCP, with two schools as the focal point.

**Question:** Is the number of 90 based on current enrolment?

**Answer:** It is based on expected enrolment in the rural area. Some families may choose to attend the new school or, alternatively, some families expected to attend Hazelgrove may attend Clayton.

**Question:** What about the development that is already done north of 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue?

**Answer:** That will be developed over the next few years and future expansion and long term expansion of the NCP is expected. SD36 will be acquiring other school sites north of 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in response to development in the area.

**Question:** Will you be looking at the enrolment numbers when the letters come back?

**Answer:** SD# 36 Planning Department reviewed the number of new students expected in the catchment area and looked at various scenarios that could occur to base the numbers on.

**Question:** What are the numbers in intermediate grades?

**Answer:** Student projections are 90 in total, (38) primary and the rest (52) intermediate.

**Question:** How will the students get extra curricular activities?

**Answer:** That is one of the issues that could be addressed by consolidation.

**Question:** Will there be two divisions of primary grades?

**Answer:** There are a number of schools in the district with multigrade classes.

**Question:** When would the closure happen?

**Answer:** Subject to the Board making a timely decision, the earliest would be June 30, 2009.

**Question:** With all things that need to occur, is it realistic to believe this will happen quickly? Can we keep the teachers here? The process doesn't really start early enough. Some of us want to stay. How can we create a really cool school for our kids, maintain staff, community and playground atmosphere?

**Answer:** Staffing changes have nothing to do with the possible school closure. The School District staff schools according to enrolment.

As far as staffing goes, whether it will be the same depends on enrolment. There are other considerations to take into account such as seniority, one staff or two staffs. We will be going from 16 divisions down to 4 or 5, so it is going to change.

**Comment:** I think that to be fair if you said next year you were to close East Clayton, that it would be fair to teachers. Then address the washroom situation, and give people the opportunity to think about what they really want.

**Question:** If East Clayton closes, it will be too far for us to walk.

**Answer:** You may want to apply for out-of-catchment registration to a closer school.

**Question:** Is there any way to see what the actual enrolment will be at Hazelgrove?

**Answer:** The District has a “no catchment” policy. We don’t force students to go to their neighbourhood school.

**Question:** How is it that the catchment boundary is determined?

**Answer:** Boundaries are established based on logical barriers (busy roads, train tracks) and anticipated enrolment generated by the type of housing in the area.

**Question:** What about a new high school?

**Answer:** The new secondary school in this area is another priority. The Ministry will not approve a new secondary school until there is sufficient population. SD36 has partially acquired the secondary school site. By 2025, Planning staff expect there will be 5 elementary schools. The Neighbourhood Concept Plan for the area north of 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue still needs to be approved.

**Question:** Where will the Adams Road Elementary students go to secondary school?

**Answer:** To Lord Tweedsmuir.

**Question:** What is the next step in this process?

**Answer:** The next step is the Public Meeting scheduled for March 10, 2009. Please fill out the comment forms. We will compile all the feedback in binders for the Trustees in order that they can make an informed decision.

**Question:** Where is the next meeting?

**Answer:** It will be held March 10<sup>th</sup> at East Clayton. It has to be held at the school facing closure.

**Question:** Could this process all have been decided before the first round process? Is it not wrong for staff to not to have all the information?

**Answer:** It is unfortunate that the timing of the possible closure was delayed. SD36 staff were awaiting clarification regarding new legislation.

**Question:** Why didn’t the Board say, “Let’s put it off”?

**Answer:** There are other sites and issues making it more complex. All information has to be considered. The process has taken 1 – 2 years, this didn’t just come together. This is a long term plan, we are projecting out 15 to 20 years.

**Question:** Are the boundaries going to change?

**Answer:** We are trying to effect minimal changes. The Board makes 4 or 5 boundary changes a year due to growth.

**Question:** When Hazelgrove reaches capacity, will enrolment be capped? Will the excess students not come down to Clayton?

**Answer:** We will make arrangements to accommodate students and siblings enrolled at Hazelgrove. When capacity shifts in an area, we want to fill up the school and may need portables to accommodate siblings.

This process is open to public consultation in order to make the best decision. When the time comes that there is a little more clarity, a transition committee will be formed, chaired by the Assistant Superintendent and matters such as downsizing and resource allocation will be addressed.

**Question:** Either way, it has to be done before September?

**Answer:** No, it could be done over Christmas if it makes sense. This is a consultation period. We have to consider what the classrooms look like, what kind of staffing would we have and establish balance.

**Question:** This school has functioned well over the years as a small school, that doesn't mean it can't function in the future.

**Answer:** If we are only looking for efficient, effective schools we would close both schools. However, we value rural schools and want to provide parents with choice. We also must involve the public in the decision making process.

**Question:** While the process is ongoing with land disposal, can we keep the school open?

**Answer:** Land disposal involves a separate consultation process. The long term capacity has to be looked at. When two schools are under capacity, it is harder to get funding, especially for a new school that may be needed to relieve overcrowding at Hazelgrove in the next few years.

**Question:** Before we close this school, can we ensure Clayton is fully prepared?

**Answer:** The direction on the washrooms will be to construct new washrooms onto the main school block.

**Question:** So not jumping the gun is the biggest thing?

**Answer:** The consultation process is important: discussing issues and soliciting feedback from the community.

**Question:** Is cross catchment on a first come first serve basis? How do you decide on out-of-catchment registrations?

**Answer:** SD36 has a policy on priority placement. Siblings come first. There are also considerations for students with special needs. Check out [www.sd36.bc.ca](http://www.sd36.bc.ca).

**Comment:** It is hard to prepare our kids for a change in schools when we don't know what is going to happen.

**Question:** If the Board picked Option 4, would it happen in September?

**Answer:** The Board will make the decision on the best option and the timing with regard to that option. The Board may want to even consider a 5<sup>th</sup> Option.

**Question:** Can we keep the schools open and make improvements to them?

**Answer:** The final decision will be made by the Board. Please feel free to use the comment forms to make your preference known.

**Question:** Is the Clayton school on a heritage site?

**Answer:** The 1920 schoolhouse at Clayton is on the City of Surrey Heritage Register. However, it is not a protected site. There is a process involved if changes are proposed to the exterior of the building. The City architect must approve these on behalf of the Heritage Commission. Planning staff have already been in consultation with the City regarding this and they have agreed to work with us on it.

Please bring forward questions through your Principal. All comments will be included in binders which will be forwarded to the Trustees for their information. The consultation process is set for a minimum of 60 days.

**Question:** When the Board makes a final decision, can we attend the meeting?

**Answer:** Yes, the Board will make the final decision at a public Board meeting. You can attend all public Board meetings.

Thank you for attending. It is wonderful for us to have this feedback to present to the Trustees.