

School District No.36 (Surrey)

**EAST CLAYTON ELEMENTARY
POSSIBLE SCHOOL CLOSURE
PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING
MARCH 10, 2009**

MINUTES

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

Introductions were made for School Board Trustees: Terry Allen, Laurie Larsen, Rene Masi.

Tonight's meeting is part 3 of a 3 part process regarding the possible school closure of East Clayton Elementary. A Board motion was introduced February 12, 2009, and starts the public consultation process. There is a minimum period of 60 days for consultation with staff, the Parent Advisory Council and the community. The consultation period can go until the end of this calendar year with a final deadline date of December 31, 2009. However, it may be in the best interest of the school staff, parents and community to have a timely decision.

The Board is open to hearing your comments, concerns or recommendations and has not made a final decision. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to dialogue with the East Clayton community and ensure that the options have been explored, your questions answered and comments recorded.

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.

The Board motion was read.

The options in the Board motion include:

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.

Option #2 – Consolidate enrolment at Clayton Elementary and close East Clayton Elementary School is the option recommended by Surrey School District staff.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to write them down on the comment forms or send your comments directly to the Principal.

Hazeltown Elementary is scheduled to open in September 2009.

Questions have come up about the condition of each of the schools (Clayton and East Clayton) and why pick one over the other? In terms of growth, they are similar. Facility Audits indicated that Clayton is 59% of what it should be and requires a seismic upgrade. This upgrade will be carried out this coming Summer and Fall. East Clayton is 66% of what it should be, but the septic system has failed. A “honey truck” comes several times each week. When looking at the long term, we anticipate that, with the seismic upgrade, Clayton will be more cost effective to accommodate the student population.

Recommendations have been generated by staff based on variables. One recommendation is the preferred option, Option #2. The Board of Trustees has not identified an option. The Trustees who are here tonight are here to hear from the community. At the other two meetings, ideas have come from the community. When all the facts have been reviewed and the Board feels it has heard the concerns and comments from the community, they will make a decision based on their responsibility for governance.

Question: What upgrades will be made to Clayton?

Answer: As we move forward, we will develop a list.

Question: The gym is larger and the facilities are newer here at East Clayton. What is the cost to fix the septic field?

Answer: Approximately \$200,000. – rough order of magnitude.

Question: When Adams Road opens, are you thinking of keeping one of these schools open?

Answer: Adams Road at 18228 – 68th Avenue is being built to accommodate students on the south side of Fraser Highway. The Board motion has been introduced to consider closing the school (East Clayton) for the long term. We are hoping for an announcement soon regarding funding approval for the Adams Road project.

Question: The parking at Clayton is a big concern. Will there be improvements made?

Answer: SD36 staff need to look into this.

One of the themes heard tonight is that Clayton Elementary requires considerable upgrades. The Board needs to know what enhancements are required to Clayton for this to be a 50 year plan for the school when considering moving the student population from two sites to one.

Question: Has a demographic study been done regarding the Clayton catchment? Do students take public transportation or walk to school? There are no marked crosswalks.

Answer: We have every child plotted on our GeoSchool map. Traditionally, this area has been more of a rural area.

Question: Are there more kids closer to Clayton or East Clayton?

Answer: Students located north of 72nd are closer to Clayton.

Question: Will the catchment be altered if the school is closed?

Answer: The catchment for the new Hazelgrove Elementary follows the Neighbourhood Concept Plan (NCP). We can anticipate growth based on the NCP. Over time, a second school will be needed in Hazelgrove’s catchment and the catchment area may have to be divided. The Principal at Hazelgrove has advised that the numbers for anticipated student population at the new school are growing due to students returning to Surrey who were attending school in Langley.

Question: Can Clayton accommodate growth? Is there a reasonable amount of children in the catchment? I have a concern with parking at Clayton - it is a huge problem. There are 20 children on the south side of Fraser Highway already coming to Clayton.

Answer: Clayton and East Clayton will see a significant enrolment drop when Hazelgrove opens. This will provide space for Clayton to accommodate growth until a new school is built at Site #201. We cannot assume that the students from south of Fraser Highway are coming to Clayton. If we assume that, our projections could be low.

Question: Why not consider keeping enough of those kids from the Hazelgrove catchment to keep the numbers up at East Clayton?

Answer: We have to project out 40 to 50 years. Another 2 or 3 school sites are being purchased for the long term including one for a secondary school. We don't want to end up with a hodge podge of schools. One key piece of information here is that we do not own this school (East Clayton), the City does. We work with the City for the long term plan, 20-30 years. There is a long term vision that has to be pulled out.

Question: When is the lease up at East Clayton?

Answer: There is no lease on this property.

The Ministry of Education will not fund a building based on what we think is happening. Two things happen:

- 1) We have to get into the funding line-up;
- 2) Choice – Parents can choose for their children to go to any school in any district of the province. If there is room, they have to take you. We are experiencing situations where we have enough kids in the catchment area, but they are going elsewhere.

Having two classes of 12 kids in neighbouring schools is not efficient. We have to keep our operations as efficient as possible so the Board can use funds efficiently. All kinds of variables factor in. We don't know if we got the projections right until school opens. Is it reasonable for us to accommodate all students from Clayton and East Clayton in a single site? Should we make a long term decision and put the funds into Clayton? This could be a multiple plan for long term Ministry funding.

Question: If we are looking at upgrading Clayton, is there a timeline? Can we get this done in time?

Answer: At the last meeting with the Parent Advisory Council, a clever suggestion was made to consolidate both schools here at East Clayton until Christmas when the upgrades should be complete at Clayton and then move back to Clayton.

Question: Have the costs been weighed? Between the two schools, would it not be better to keep East Clayton open?

Answer: The costs of upgrading East Clayton and Clayton are likely similar. Costs for washrooms at Clayton are offset by septic costs at East Clayton. East Clayton is not owned by SD36, whereas Clayton is owned by SD36.

Comment: In my mind, it would be better to do the work on the school we own. I would want to see a proposal of upgrades that are going to be done at Clayton. For health concerns, I would like to see what needs to be changed. If the school is going to be open for the long term, then let's put some good money toward it.

Comment: Nothing has been done for years at Clayton and it worries me that this won't get done.

Response: There has been some work done over the years. SD36 staff are working on plans for the washroom renovation. The first time we have heard about parking is tonight. This is an issue we will definitely work on.

Comment: I don't think it is unreasonable to see what improvements will be made.

Response: We are in a consultation process right now. No decision has been made. Tonight we are identifying impediments to Clayton being the desirable site. One thing that is to our benefit is that it is ours. There are some deficits. As the Board hears this consultation, they will be asking what are the costs to bring it up to standard and looking at other issues such as safe passages, sidewalks. What is our progress and our potential? Do staff support the option or not? No decision has been made yet.

What we have heard tonight will help trustees and myself in pushing staff on what are the costs, timelines, and other construction issues.

Comment: We are happy that you are listening to our concerns.

Question: Are there any key areas or issues that have not been addressed that the school district can enlighten us on as to each of the sites?

Answer: No everything you have heard and received is shared with the Trustees.

Comment: There is a \$50,000 playground being installed at Clayton this Spring. As far as this school goes, the majority of this school's population can't wait to go to the new Hazelgrove school. There are those of us staying here at Clayton and East Clayton by either geography or choice. We want to see the same consideration given to us as to a new school. Let's make it great, whatever building it is and give our kids as much attention as they would get at a new school.

Response: There is a viability of a single site K to Grade 7 school. You will have a consolidation of staff and a lot of things, as you come together, will be better as one school.

Question: Will there only be two grades in a class?

Answer: Some of the possible configurations have been discussed. We would be looking at combined classes. On September 8th, when kids line up at the door, we will know what our resources need to be.

The earliest the consultation period can end is April 12th. The theme we are hearing is for the Board to make a decision so parents and staff can make a decision.

Question: When is the next meeting?

Answer: Any meeting we have on this issue has to be held in a public context. As a group, the Board may only meet together publicly. We are hearing, "the earlier the better".

Question: Can we send in our comments online?

Answer: You can submit questions through the website link, or email the Principal or the District Secretary-Treasurer. We will investigate having the comment form put on the website.

Comment from Trustee Laurie Larson: It would not be a good idea to invest money for septic field upgrades at East Clayton when it is not an SD36 field.

Trustee Terry Allen – On behalf of the Board of Education, we appreciate you taking time out of your busy day to tell us your concerns. No decision has been made and your comments are extremely beneficial. We have spent hours working with our community. We are simply here to hear what you have to say in order to provide the best education and facilities for your children. We will take your comments and make a decision.