

School District No.36 (Surrey)

SUNNYSIDE ELEMENTARY POSSIBLE SCHOOL CLOSURE PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING FEBRUARY 25, 2009

MINUTES

Principal Rejean Bolduc welcomed everyone and introduced District Staff.

District Staff: Wayne Noye, Secretary-Treasurer; John Ormond, 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.

The Board motion was passed on February 12, 2009 to consider possible closure of Sunnyside Elementary. This motion starts the consultation process which must continue for a minimum of 60 days.

The board motion was read.

The options in the Board motion include:

1. Renovate and expand Sunnyside for Regular Program and Montessori;
2. Replace Sunnyside for Regular Program and Montessori;
3. Keep Sunnyside for Regular Program and move Montessori to Jessie Lee or to new school Site #202;
4. Keep Sunnyside for Montessori Program;
5. Close Sunnyside and move Regular program and Montessori to new school Site #202;
6. Close Sunnyside and revise catchment west of Highway #99 to Jessie Lee while regular students east of Highway #99 and Montessori students will go to the New School – Site #202.

Whenever a project is approved in principle, School District #36 (SD36) Planning Staff must look at various options as part of the Feasibility Study process. Consultants have recommended Option #6: (Close Sunnyside and revise catchment west of Highway #99 to Jessie Lee while regular students east of Highway #99 and Montessori students will go to the New School – Site #202).

A Public meeting will be held on March 5th, 2009, to solicit feedback from the general public.

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

Question: Because the catchment area is going over the highway, do we not have to have a school bus?

Answer: The distance is within District established walk limits, therefore a bus would not be warranted.

Question: One of the options suggests keeping Sunnyside for the Montessori program? (Option #4).

Answer: Yes, that was one of the options considered.

Question: On the website, where are the boundaries shown for the new school?

Answer: There has been no catchment established for the new school site #202 yet. The current catchment for Sunnyside is shown on the website www.sd36.bc.ca, "Find a School", boundaries and maps.

Question: Has that property been purchased? Is the zoning in place?

Answer: The site has been acquired. According to the Surrey Zoning Bylaw, a school can be built in any zone.

The proposal before you right now is the possible closure of Sunnyside Elementary. This is a vibrant and growing community which is squeezed in on all sides. The recommendation is to move both the regular and Montessori programs, including staff to a new school, Site #202. This District values the Montessori program. A very positive thing that happens when we open a new school, is that you bring back a lot of families. We anticipate that with the opening of the new school at Site #202, that the school population will grow.

Question: With the high density in that area, will allowances be made for taking our children to that school?

Answer: Projected enrolment is taken into account when setting capacity for a new school. SD36 Planning Department looks at potential growth and demographics.

Comment: There will be about 1,000 new homes in that area.

Response: The NCP (Neighbourhood Concept Plan) for the Grandview area will have increased density and cluster type housing between 32nd and 28th Avenues. In response to NCP approval and the General Land Use plan, school property was purchased. Two more elementary and one high school are planned for the area. School capacities will be based on the actual numbers of people living there.

Question: How much land do you have?

Answer: The usable area of Site #202 is 2.2 hectares.

Question: Is there an adjacent park?

Answer: The City purchased land for a park across 28th Avenue. It is currently proposed as a passive type park.

Question: Do any of the elementary schools in this area use portables?

Answer: Morgan had portables until Rosemary Heights opened. On the west side of Hwy. #99, student populations are declining. If you look at the group of schools surrounding Sunnyside, there is space available.

Question: Will the students in the south portion of the catchment area go to Jessie Lee?

Answer: One of the options (#5) suggests keeping the entire catchment intact. As enrolment in the area surges over capacity, we would look at possible boundary changes, over time.

Comments: It makes for a heck of a drive especially when you have two parents working.

Question: According to these options, is there money to renovate this school?

Answer: By way of clarification, the Ministry of Education has approved in principle either renovation or replacement of Sunnyside. There would not be funding for both renovations and for a new school.

Comment: I think we also need a school right where we are (Sunnyside site) and there are a lot of kids who are not coming here because the school is run down. People have signed up to attend.

Question: Is it economical to build on this site?

Answer: No. The site poses problems, such as traffic, and poor drainage.

Question: If Sunnyside was not going to be renovated, what schools are there for that demographic area? Would they have to put a school on Site #202 anyway?

Answer: There are currently eight empty classrooms at Jessie Lee. Site #202 is in the Capital Plan awaiting approval. It would be built smaller and likely delayed a few more years if Sunnyside did not move to the new site.

Question: What happened to White Rock Elementary? Can the school be replaced on the Sunnyside site?

Answer: At White Rock Elementary the new school was constructed right next to the existing school. There have been a number of schools done this way.

Comment: The City is planning to install a roundabout at the intersection of 28th Avenue and 153A Street to slow down traffic, exiting down by the pub. The only traffic at the school now is created by us (the school). Traffic is diminished here.

Question: With the Montessori program and the way the kids learn, we need the bigger classrooms. Will we get bigger classrooms in the new school?

Answer: SD36 works with very creative architects. The Ministry establishes Area Standards that must be met. Classrooms may be bigger, however, other areas must be made smaller to meet overall area limits. If the decision is made to proceed with Option #5 or #6, we would set up a transition committee, chaired by the Principal, with teachers and parents to consult on what is needed for the new school.

Question: With our student population, we may not get as much money for the renovations for Option #3?

Answer: The Ministry will only provide funding based on a) whether a new school is built on the new site or b) Sunnyside is renovated/replaced. They won't provide money for both.

Question: What about improvements to the playground? Does the PAC have to pay for moving playground equipment?

Answer: Playground improvements can be addressed by a transition committee. The capital project would fund relocation for the equipment that is appropriate to move.

Question: If I were to move to the Grandview Heights area, which school would my kids go to?

Answer: Pacific Heights, or the new school (site #202), depending on which catchment area you move to.

Question: With regard to Option #3, would the new school site be dual track?

Answer: Yes.

Question: After Rosemary Heights opened, were there still some students attending Morgan?

Answer: A boundary adjustment was made to divide Morgan's catchment once Rosemary Heights was completed. The boundary move was phased, as Grade 6 and 7 students stayed at Morgan Elementary.

Question: Is there a bylaw for walking distance to school?

Answer: Surrey School District Policy #5400, Regulation 5400.1 states the "walk limit" for Kindergarten to grade 3 is 2.5 miles and for grades 4 – 7 is 3 miles.

Question: Does the new school have capacity for 1,000 students?

Answer: The elementary school will be sized to suit. If the final decision is to proceed with Option #6 (close Sunnyside and move), the school would be 80 K/350 students. A future secondary school is planned for the Grandview area and it will likely be a 1,000 student capacity.

Question: How old is Jessie Lee?

Answer: Jessie Lee was originally built in 1974. Additions were made in 1980, 1981 and 2000.

Question: Are there any health and safety concerns here?

Answer: There is asbestos in Sunnyside, but it is all encapsulated. We are not aware of any other problems.

Question: Are there timelines here?

Answer: There is a legislative order that states there must be a minimum of 60 days for public consultation. The next meeting is March 5th. There must be a minimum of one meeting. All information, minutes, comments will be provided to the Board.

After a decision is made, staff will proceed with design and preparation of a "Project Agreement" to request funding for the preferred option. Depending on whether the decision involves renovations or replacement will determine construction time. We anticipate opening Fall 2011.

Question: Would we move at Christmas?

Answer: If the school is ready by September, we recommend moving in then. If construction is not complete until December, the school could move at the Winter break.

Site #202 is in the Capital Plan. The Ministry is requesting that districts submit an interim plan in May, 2009. The Capital Plan is a 3 year rolling plan. Projects approved next year receive funding two years later. If Sunnyside does not move to Site #202, the earliest it would be complete is Fall 2012, subject to Ministry approvals.

Question: How do we encourage the general public to attend meetings?

Answer: Staff will work with the SD36 Manager of Communications to get the word out.

Question: If we do move the school, is there anything the city can do for sidewalks or a bridge to cross? Would we go to City council meetings to request these types of installations?

Answer: Pacific Heights was successful in lobbying the City for sidewalks along 26th Avenue. A transition committee may help with this. School District #36 has a good relationship with the City.

Question: At the meeting next week, are they going to talk about what happens to this land?

Answer: The process we are talking about tonight is possible school closure. A second, completely separate public process is required for disposal of school land.

Question: Is next Thursday's meeting open to the general public?

Answer: Yes, it is open to everyone.

Question: Is there a notice being sent out?

Answer: There will be advertisements in the local papers, it is also posted on the School District's website and noted in the school newsletter. At least two trustees will be in attendance.

Question: How do we know when the trustees will make a decision?

Answer: The decision will not be made before the 60 day consultation period has ended. The decision will be made at a public Board meeting. The earliest Board meeting date following the 60 day period would be April 16, 2009. The public is welcome to attend all School Board meetings.

Question: If the choice is made to renovate or rebuild on the Sunnyside site, would a new school still be built at the new site (#202)?

Answer: If the Board chooses to renovate or replace Sunnyside on the existing site, development of the new school at site #202 would be delayed several years until growth exceeds capacity for the schools in this area.

All questions and answers will be forwarded to the Trustees.