



Chignecto-Central Regional School Board



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Regular Meeting

09-00 Minutes

September 13, 2000

The regular monthly meeting of the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board was held on Wednesday, September 13, 2000 at the Enfield District Elementary School commencing at 7:00 p.m.

Present

Kaaren Barkhouse
George Bruce
Cheryl Cutler
John English
Jim Grue
John Henderson
Tina Hurley
Bernie Knockwood
Ron Marks
Marilyn Murray
David Myles
Robert Parker
Mary Stevenson
Marilyn Thompson
Trudy Thompson

In Attendance

Karen Casey
Ann Hamilton-Wood
Elmer MacDonald
Gary Miller
Brian Murphy
Robert Renouf
Dale Sabeau
Nancy Mosher
Elizabeth van den Eynden

Chair Mary Stevenson called the meeting to order and noted that all Board members were present.

Agenda

Moved by Robert Parker, seconded by Trudy Thompson

THAT THE AGENDA BE ADOPTED WITH THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENTS:

Delete: x e) 1) Conference Report - Marilyn Thompson (referred to Programs and Student Services Committee Agenda);

Add: ix b) Correspondence - Wallace Home and School, John Henderson;

MOTION CARRIED

Minutes

**MOVED BY TRUDY THOMPSON, SECONDED BY DAVID MYLES
THAT THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 14, 2000 MEETING BE APPROVED AS CIRCULATED.
MOTION CARRIED**

Presentation by Auditors

Director of Finance, Robert Renouf, introduced Gordon Moore of KPMG Chartered Accountants who was in attendance to report on the results of his firm's audit of the Board's financial operations. Also welcomed to the meeting was Valerie Gauthier, Coordinator of Finance.

Consistent with previous years, Mr. Moore reported that the audit presented fairly the financial position of the Board at the fiscal year-end on March 31, 2000 and he complimented the staff of the Finance Department for the cooperation his staff received during the audit process and also for their work throughout the year. Mr. Moore reviewed in detail the consolidated balance sheet and the statement of operations and indicated that Board funds had been spent according to the approved budget.

Mr. Moore responded to a number of questions raised by Board members including those regarding special education funding, service awards, the budgeting process and additional funding made available by the Department of Education to cover the deficits incurred by other boards. Following Mr. Moore's presentation,

**It was MOVED by Ron Marks, seconded by Bernie Knockwood
THAT THE BOARD ACCEPT THE AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE FISCAL
PERIOD ENDING MARCH 31, 2000 AS PRESENTED.
MOTION CARRIED**

A question was raised regarding budget transfer guidelines and it was agreed that the item would be placed on a future agenda of the Finance/Human Resources Committee.

At this point in the meeting Chair Mary Stevenson thanked Carol Ann MacDonald, principal of Enfield District Elementary, for hosting the meeting at the new facility. Ms. Stevenson expressed the Board's appreciation indicating Board members are aware of the disruption hosting a meeting can cause at a school.

Business Arising from the Minutes

At the previous meeting, notice of motion had been served to approve policy #HR-06, Mandatory Retirement.

**IT WAS MOVED BY RON MARKS, SECONDED BY TRUDY THOMPSON
THAT THE BOARD ADOPT POLICY #HR-06 MANDATORY RETIREMENT.**

During discussion on the motion, the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, Dr. Brian Murphy, was asked if this represents a change from current practice. Dr. Murphy indicated that two of the three union contracts contain similar language and the former boards all had similar policies. Board solicitor Elizabeth van den Eynden was asked if the policy could be challenged in the courts. She indicated that it could but that the law is not completely clear and she added that many government agencies have similar policies.

MOTION CARRIED

Correspondence

Minister of Education re: Elmsdale Elementary School

Communications Officer/Acting Board Secretary, Ann Hamilton-Wood, read the highlights of a letter received from the Minister of Education, Jane Purves, regarding the plans for the new elementary school to be located in Elmsdale. Board Chair Mary Stevenson had previously written to the Minister expressing the Board's concerns with the number of classrooms and the size of some of the common areas in the original plans for the facility. The Minister's letter indicated that, working with the School Steering Team, the concerns had been addressed in subsequent designs.

Wallace Home and School Association (John Henderson)

Mr. Henderson inquired whether a letter received from the Wallace Home and School regarding the proposed study of the North Colchester High School had been acknowledged. The Chair indicated that she was certain a response had been forwarded and that Mr. Henderson would be provided with a copy.

John Henderson

Mr. Henderson asked if a thank-you he had forwarded to the Board in appreciation for flowers received while he

was in the hospital had been received. The Acting Board Secretary responded that it had been received and was on file in the office.

Committee Reports

Committee of the Whole

Vice-Chair Robert Parker reported on a meeting of the Committee of the Whole held on September 6, 2000.

Presentation - Thorburn Home and School re: East River St. Mary's School

On behalf of the Board, Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Dale Sabeau, had welcomed four parents from the Thorburn Home and School who had previously attended the Operations/Planning, Research and Technology Committee meeting to share their concerns regarding the Board's decision to keep the East River St. Mary's School open. The parents had subsequently been asked to attend the Committee of the Whole meeting to make their presentation to the full Board. Parent Connie Clark shared with the Board their concerns regarding the impact they felt the decision had on the Thorburn School and raised a number of questions as part of the presentation. Superintendent Elmer MacDonald had then provided an update on the actions that led to the decision to keep East River St. Mary's open and also indicated that the situation has changed in that it is anticipated that only two students and not four will be in attendance at the school when classes begin on September 7. Mr. MacDonald had also indicated that under a section of the Regulations of the Education Act, the Board does have the authority to allow the temporary closure of a school building for a period of less than twelve months. There had been lengthy discussion on the matter particularly focusing on transportation arrangements and length of bus runs.

It was MOVED by Robert Parker, seconded by Cheryl Cutler

THAT THE BOARD APPROVE:

A) THE TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF THE EAST RIVER ST. MARY'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE 2000-2001 SCHOOL YEAR BEGINNING MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2000;

B) THE TRANSPORTATION OF THOSE STUDENTS TO THE THORBURN CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL BASED ON THE ASSURANCE THAT THE BUS RUNS WILL BE WITHIN THE SIXTY MINUTE GUIDELINE; AND

C) THE INITIATION OF THE PERMANENT SCHOOL CLOSURE STUDY PROCESS FOR THE EAST RIVER ST. MARY'S SCHOOL.

Board member John English indicated that while he felt he had to support the motion, he questioned why transfers were accommodated from East River St. Mary's after the normal deadline and why Board members were not informed earlier that the enrolment had declined to two students. The Superintendent indicated that during the summer he had e-mailed each Board member to share his concerns with the viability of keeping the school open with only two students and also had advised that planned renovations at the facility had been put on hold.

Staff were asked how the parents of the two remaining students had reacted to the news of the Board's actions and the Superintendent advised that neither family was surprised as they had been expecting some change would take place. A concern was raised with how the Board was interpreting the Education Act and the supporting regulations and whether low enrolment numbers was an adequate reason to proceed with a temporary closure.

Following discussion,

MOTION CARRIED

IN FAVOUR - 11

AGAINST - 4 (JOHN HENDERSON, TINA HURLEY, MARILYN THOMPSON, TRUDY THOMPSON)

Development of Policy

A motion to initiate the development of a policy to set guidelines for the minimum number of students at which point it is feasible to continue operation of a school building had been tabled until such time as the Board solicitor can determine the legality of such a policy. The Board was advised that the Board solicitor had not yet responded to the matter.

Moved by Robert Parker, seconded by David Myles

TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE.

MOTION CARRIED

Finance/Human Resources Committee

Committee Chair, Ron Marks, reported on a meeting held on August 29, 2000. The major items of discussion had been staffing and the audited financial statements. Mr. Marks noted that a copy of the staffing report had been distributed to all Board members and that the item would be included on the October 4 Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

Moved by Ron Marks, seconded by Jim Grue

TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE FINANCE/HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE.

A question was raised regarding a comparison of substitute costs for this year over last. The Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources indicated that historical information is not readily available to make those comparisons but that changes being instituted in the Human Resources database will allow that information to be provided in the future.

MOTION CARRIED

Operations/Planning, Research & Technology Committee

George Bruce, Chair of the Operations/Planning, Research and Technology Committee, reported on a committee meeting held on August 30, 2000.

Site Selection Recommendations

It was MOVED by George Bruce, seconded by Tina Hurley

THAT THE SITES IDENTIFIED BY THE SITE SELECTION COMMITTEES FOR THE NEW AMHERST ELEMENTARY AND CUMBERLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS BE FORWARDED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR ASSESSMENT.

MOTION CARRIED

Hilden School Property

It was MOVED by George Bruce, seconded by Kaaren Barkhouse

THAT THE BOARD ALLOW THE NEIGHBOUR OF THE FORMER HILDEN SCHOOL PROPERTY TO ESTABLISH A RIGHT-OF-WAY ACROSS THE PROPERTY AND THAT THE LOT BE ADVERTISED FOR SALE.

MOTION CARRIED

Moved by George Bruce, seconded by Jim Grue

TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE OPERATIONS/PLANNING, RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE.

With reference to an item in the committee report, the issue of third parties requiring liability insurance when renting school facilities was raised. The Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Dale Sabean, indicated that while many groups already have appropriate insurance, an amendment would be drafted to incorporate the change into the use of schools guidelines to ensure the requirements are met. It was suggested that the Board consider acquiring the proper type of policy and have the costs included in rental fees. Mr. Sabean was asked to investigate that option.

A question was also raised regarding the site approval process for the two new high schools in Pictou County. The Superintendent stated that the Department of Education had indicated that information should be available before the end of September. Regional Education Officer, Nancy Mosher, reported that the Department of Transportation and Public Works is in the process of completing the evaluation of a number of sites across the province and the recent decision to move away from P3 construction and have projects funded by the government has had an impact on that Department's workload.

As part of related discussions, Ms. Mosher indicated that the Department has asked all boards to re-submit their prioritized capital construction and major renovation request lists prior to the end of September. Concern was expressed with the tight timeline for submissions and whether that allowed sufficient time for input. Mr. Sabean assured the board that the list would be submitted on time.

MOTION CARRIED

Programs and Student Services Committee

On behalf of the Programs and Student Services Committee, Committee Chair Trudy Thompson, reported on meetings held on June 21 and August 30, 2000. Among the items discussed at the meetings were multi-aged grouping at Chiganois Elementary, an update on the cooperative project between Springhill Junior/Senior High and Oxford Regional High, teacher assistants and related issues and an update on the BEST program.

It was MOVED by Trudy Thompson, seconded by Marilyn Murray

TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE PROGRAMS AND STUDENT SERVICES COMMITTEE.

Assistant Superintendent of Programs and Student Services, Gary Miller, was asked if the teacher assistant abeyance assigned to each Family of Schools has been allocated for the school year. Mr. Miller indicated that a meeting of the Family of Schools Supervisors would be held on Monday, September 18 and that issue would be reviewed and addressed.

A question was raised regarding the composition of the recently-established provincial committee to review special education issues. The initial information received on the committee indicated that there were no classroom teachers and very few, if any, school board representatives in the group and that there was no representation from the northern and eastern sections of the province. Nancy Mosher reported that the Nova Scotia Teachers Union had been asked to appoint two individuals to serve on the committee.

Following discussion,

It was MOVED by Robert Parker, seconded by Marilyn Thompson

THAT A LETTER BE FORWARDED TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION PROTESTING THE LACK OF SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTATION ON THE SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE.

MOTION CARRIED

Cheryl Cutler left the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Conference Attendance Report

Board Member George Bruce gave a report on his attendance at the Canadian School Boards Association annual conference and meeting held in July in Charlottetown, PEI. Mr. Bruce highlighted the details of the keynote addresses and also workshops attended. Board Member Marilyn Thompson also provided information on workshop sessions she attended at the same conference.

Jim Grue left the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Elmer MacDonald reviewed the highlights of his report as distributed. He noted that the start-up of school had been successful with early indications being that enrolments will be down slightly from projections. Mr. MacDonald provided comments on restructuring within the Department of Education, new staff appointments at other provincial school boards and the cooperative efforts being undertaken by the education partners in Nova Scotia - ANSEA, the NSSBA, NSTU and the Nova Scotia Federation of Home and School Associations.

The Superintendent reported that senior staff had reviewed projected cost pressures for the next budget with preliminary projections indicating that to provide "status quo" programs and services for fiscal year 2001-2002 we will need a minimum of 5 million additional dollars to meet mandated salary, benefit and other increases that are basically externally driven. If projected cost pressures are relatively accurate, school boards across the province will require in excess of 25 million additional dollars (not including Department of Education, community college or university cost increases) to maintain current levels of programs and services.

Mr. MacDonald also highlighted initiatives being undertaken by individual departments within the Board and, as part of that information, indicated that staffing for the 2000-2001 school year has been completed.

Mr. MacDonald noted that the death of Ralph Blaikie, former Coordinator of Student Services, has created a large void in the Programs and Student Services Department. Ralph's commitment, compassion, expertise and understanding of the needs of students (and their parents) will be a lasting legacy. He served this Board - and its young people - with dedication and distinction and he will be missed by the school system.

Everyone was reminded that the election of school board members is scheduled for Saturday, October 21, 2000 to coincide with municipal elections. The deadline for filing nomination papers is Monday, September 18, 2000.

Changes effective with this election will increase the number of board members on the CCRSB to 17 with the election of a member to represent the African-Nova Scotian community in our region and will also see term of office for board members increased to four years. Information and nomination papers are available from local returning officers.

Nova Scotia School Boards Association

Ron Marks, CCRSB's representative on the NSSBA Board of Directors, reported that the Association has relocated its offices from Scotia Square and is renting office space from the Halifax Regional School Board located at Dartmouth High School.

Mr. Marks also reported that the School Insurance Plan is moving towards a reciprocal insurance format at the request of the Superintendent of Insurance for the province. Approval will be sought from each school board in the near future. It was indicated that this change will take away responsibility for the plan from the NSSBA and create a separate entity.

New Business

Board Chair Mary Stevenson indicated that a letter of resignation had been received from Board member Lloyd Gibbs to be effective July 31, 2000. As this was the first regular meeting of the board since that time, it was necessary to declare the seat vacant as required in the Education Act.

It was MOVED by Trudy Thompson, seconded by George Bruce

THAT THE SEAT ON THE BOARD HELD BY LLOYD GIBBS BE DECLARED VACANT.

Under the terms of the Municipal Elections Act, it would normally be necessary to hold a special election to fill a vacant seat but since a regular election is scheduled within six months, that action is not required.

MOTION CARRIED

Public Question and Answer Period

There were no questions from those in attendance at the meeting.

Adjournment

On motion, the meeting adjourned at 9:59 p.m.

Ann Hamilton-Wood
Communications Officer/Acting Board Secretary

Mary Stevenson
Chair of the Board

Return to Governance