

Chignecto-Central Regional School Board

Regular Meeting

1-01 Minutes

January 10, 2001

The regular monthly meeting of the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board was held on Wednesday, January 10, 2001, in the Board Room at Central Office in Truro commencing at 7:00 p.m.

Present:

Kaaren Barkhouse	Ron Marks
Robin Bourque	Marilyn Murray
Jim Grue	David Myles
John Henderson	Robert Parker
Bernie Knockwood (7:25 p.m.)	Mackie Ross
Mark Lavers	Marilyn Thompson
Mary Macaulay	Trudy Thompson
Lawrence MacKinnon	Raymond Tynes

In Attendance:

Karen Casey	Brian Murphy
Ann Hamilton-Wood	Robert Renouf
Elmer MacDonald	Dale Sabean
Gary Miller	Harry Munro

Absent:

Cheryl Cutler, with regrets

Board Chair Robert Parker called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance.

Approval of Agenda:

Moved by Ron Marks, seconded by Trudy Thompson
THAT THE AGENDA BE APPROVED AS CIRCULATED.

MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Minutes:

Moved by Jim Grue, seconded by Kaaren Barkhouse
TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 13, 2000 MEETING AS CIRCULATED.

MOTION CARRIED

Correspondence:

The Acting Board Secretary reported on two items of correspondence requiring Board action.

NSSBA Pension Plan

A letter had been received from Lavinia Parrish-Zwicker, President of the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, asking that a Board member from the CCRSB be appointed to serve on the Board of Trustees of the NSSBA Pension Plan. The term, effective immediately, is for three years with a time commitment of approximately eight meetings per year. It was reported that Director of Finance, Robert Renouf, was the current representative to that group and in order to maintain a balance between elected board members and staff, the Board was being asked to nominate a board member for the upcoming term.

Moved by Lawrence MacKinnon, seconded by Trudy Thompson
THAT MARY MACAULAY SERVE AS THE BOARD'S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION PENSION PLAN FOR A THREE YEAR TERM.

MOTION CARRIED

School Insurance Exchange

Robert Tumilty, Chair of the School Insurance Exchange Board of Directors, had written to request the Board to nominate a person to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Nova Scotia School Insurance Exchange for a four-year term. It was reported that Board member Ron Marks has been filling the position on an interim basis and Mr. Marks indicated his willingness to continue to serve on the Board of Directors.

Moved by Lawrence MacKinnon, seconded by Marilyn Murray

THAT RON MARKS SERVE AS THE BOARD'S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOL INSURANCE EXCHANGE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR A PERIOD OF FOUR YEARS EFFECTIVE APRIL 1, 2001.

MOTION CARRIED

Committee Reports:

Committee of the Whole

Board Vice-Chair Trudy Thompson reported on a meeting of the Committee of the Whole held on January 3, 2001.

Courtesy Busing, Five Islands

As part of the report from the Operations and Planning, Research and Technology Committee, the issue of courtesy busing for a small group of students in the Five Islands area had been raised. The students live in Colchester County and therefore their home school is CEC in Truro. Until this school year, the eight or nine students were able to receive courtesy busing to Parrsboro as the bus driver traveled through Five Islands on his way to Parrsboro. However, that driver has since resigned and this courtesy is no longer available. A parent has subsequently requested bus service to Parrsboro that would entail additional costs to the Board of approximately \$40.00 per day. Board busing guidelines indicate that if a student wishes to attend a school other than their home school, transportation to the school and/or to the nearest appropriate bus stop is the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

Moved by Trudy Thompson, seconded by Jim Grue

THAT THE MATTER BE REFERRED BACK TO THE OPERATIONS AND PLANNING, RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE WITH THE RECOMMENDATION THAT CURRENT STUDENT TRANSPORTATION GUIDELINES BE FOLLOWED.

MOTION CARRIED

Grade Configuration, Pictou East High School

The Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Dale Sabeau, had reported that the Committee had discussed the suggestion that the new school to be constructed in the Pictou East area be designed to house Grade 9 students as well as Grades 10 – 12. This suggestion had been made based primarily on continuing enrolment declines and also the greater emphasis being placed on the middle school philosophy by the Department of Education.

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Celtic Family of Schools Supervisor, Allan MacDougall, and Eileen English, recently appointed principal of the new school, had been invited to the Committee of the Whole meeting to share information gathered in a series of discussions held with staff, students, representatives of the school advisory councils, principals and teachers within subject areas from East Pictou Rural High, New Glasgow High and Trenton High. Ms. English had reported that one of the first issues raised by staff during those meetings was where the Grade 9's would be housed when the new facility is constructed. Approximately 80% of the staff and students indicated a preference to have the Grade 9 students in the new schools.

Moved by Trudy Thompson, seconded by Marilyn Murray

THAT THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AND FAMILY OF SCHOOLS SUPERVISOR HOLD MEETINGS WITH THE SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS OF EAST PICTOU RURAL HIGH, NEW GLASGOW HIGH AND TRENTON HIGH TO DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF DESIGNING THE NEW PICTOU EAST HIGH SCHOOL TO INCLUDE GRADE NINE STUDENTS.

and that, THE PUBLIC BE ADVISED THAT THE BOARD WILL CONSIDER THE OPTION OF INCLUDING THE GRADES NINES IN THE PLANNING PROCESS BASED ON INPUT FROM SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS AND THAT PARENTS AND INTERESTED CITIZENS CONTACT THEIR RESPECTIVE SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL OR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS ON THE MATTER,

and that, THE AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE IN NEW GLASGOW AND THE FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY AT PICTOU LANDING BE CONSULTED TO DETERMINE THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE OPTION.

When asked how the information was to be shared with the public, the Superintendent of Schools, Elmer MacDonald, indicated that an advertisement would be placed in the New Glasgow Evening News as soon as possible. After expressing concerns with the process, it was

Moved by John Henderson, seconded by Marilyn Thompson

THAT THE MOTION BE TABLED UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE SITE FOR THE NEW SCHOOL IS ANNOUNCED AND DETAILED INFORMATION IS PROVIDED TO THE BOARD ON HOW PARENTS WILL BE ADVISED OF THE PROCESS.

After it was clarified by the Board Solicitor that the motion was only debatable as to length of time for the motion to remain tabled, there was discussion on the short time frame available for a decision due to the necessity to begin planning for the new facility that is scheduled to open in September 2002.

A question was raised as to how the school advisory councils would be making information available to parents and it was stated that each council would develop their own way of gathering data. It was noted that each council had indicated it was their intention to consult with their feeder schools on the issue also. It was also reported that the chairs of the councils had offered to attend a Board meeting in order that the input from each council could be shared first-hand with Board members.

MOTION DEFEATED – TIE VOTE

**In Favour – Robin Bourque, John Henderson, Bernie Knockwood, Mark Lavers,
Mary Macaulay, Lawrence MacKinnon, Marilyn Thompson, Raymond Tynes**

Discussion continued on the original motion and the issue of optimum school size was raised with reference to information quoted by the Superintendent as part of a previous administration report. The Superintendent reminded Board members that the information quoted on optimum school size was only one piece of data and that there are many studies available that support various school sizes. There was also some discussion on the impact any change to the grade configuration would have on feeder schools. It was

Moved by Mary Macaulay, seconded by Lawrence MacKinnon

**THAT INFORMATION ON OPTIMUM SCHOOL SIZE AND HOW ANY CHANGE
WOULD AFFECT FEEDER SCHOOLS BE PROVIDED TO SCHOOL ADVISORY
COUNCILS.**

MOTION CARRIED

With reference to the SAC Chairs attendance at a Board meeting to share information, it was agreed that representatives of New Glasgow's African Nova Scotian Education Committee and the Pictou Landing First Nations would also be invited to attend the meeting.

ORIGINAL MOTION CARRIED

Nay Vote Recorded – John Henderson

Moved by Trudy Thompson, seconded by Marilyn Thompson

TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE.

MOTION CARRIED

Finance and Human Resources Committee

Committee Chair Ron Marks reported on a meeting held on December 20, 2000. There were three items arising from the Committee meeting to be brought forward to the Board.

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Substitute Management

A presentation had been made by Kendra Long, Human Resources Programmer, updating the Committee on the substitute management web site. A report on utilization of substitutes for the first three months of the school year was also presented to the committee. Further discussion regarding the shortage of substitutes in rural areas will be on the agenda for the January 31, 2001 meeting.

Negotiations

Lawrence Currie, Coordinator of Human Resources, had updated the Committee on the progress with negotiations and indicated the CUPE contract expires March 31, 2001 and the NSGEU contract expires June 30, 2001. A proposal has been developed for CUPE and dates in January for transfer of proposals are being considered.

Procedures for Assigning Permanent NSTU Contracts

Committee members discussed the projected shortage of teachers, shortage of specialized teachers and strategies on how to entice teachers to stay in Nova Scotia.

Moved by Ron Marks, seconded by Mary Macaulay

TO ACCEPT THE REPORT OF THE FINANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE.

MOTION CARRIED

Operations and Planning, Research and Technology Committee

Marilyn Thompson, Chair of the Operations and P/R/T Committee, reported on a meeting held on December 19, 2000. The Committee had discussed several issues that had subsequently been discussed in detail at the Committee of the Whole meeting on January 3, 2001.

Willow Street Realignment

Moved by Marilyn Thompson, seconded by Mary Macaulay

THAT THE PARCEL OF LAND IN FRONT OF WILLOW STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BE DECLARED SURPLUS TO THE NEEDS OF THE BOARD AND RETURNED TO THE TOWN OF TRURO IN ORDER TO ALLOW FOR NECESSARY STREET REALIGNMENT.

Moved by Mary Macaulay, seconded by Lawrence MacKinnon

TO AMEND THE MOTION SO THAT THE BOARD REQUEST THE TOWN OF TRURO TO SHOW DUE DILIGENCE DURING THE PERIOD OF TIME WHEN CONSTRUCTION IS UNDERWAY TO ENSURE THAT EMERGENCY ACCESS AND APPROPRIATE SERVICES AND UTILITIES ARE MAINTAINED TO THE WILLOW STREET SCHOOL.

Board Solicitor, Harry Munro, indicated that in accordance with the Education Act [93(1)], the Board cannot attach conditions to a motion involving the transfer of property.

ORIGINAL MOTION CARRIED

Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Dale Sabeau, indicated that he had previously written to the Town of Truro expressing those concerns as the matter had been raised at the Operations and P/R/T Committee. Mr. Sabeau read portions of correspondence received from the town indicating their willingness to address the Board's concerns.

AMENDMENT CARRIED

South Colchester Grade Configuration

It was reported that the issue of grade configuration for the Brookfield area had been discussed in detail at the Operations and P/R/T meeting as well as at the Committee of the Whole on January 3.

Moved by Marilyn Thompson, seconded by Kaaren Barkhouse

THAT THE RENOVATED JUNIOR HIGH FACILITY IN BROOKFIELD HOUSE GRADES P-6 (BROOKFIELD STUDENTS ONLY) AND THE NEW SCHOOL HOUSE GRADES 7-12 (WITH GRADES 7 AND 8 BEING SEPARATED FROM THE GRADES 9-12).

The issue of middle school philosophy was discussed at length with the suggestion being made that at some time in the near future, the Board should have a detailed discussion on the matter and attempt to reach a consensus on whether to support that concept or not. There was also extensive discussion on the impact that the establishment of a middle school in Brookfield could have on the feeder schools. It was noted that the time frame for a decision on this matter is similar to the Pictou East project as the new school is scheduled to open in September 2002.

MOTION CARRIED

Nay Votes – John Henderson, Marilyn Murray, Trudy Thompson

Moved by Marilyn Thompson, seconded by Marilyn Murray
**TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE OPERATIONS AND PLANNING,
RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE.**

A question was raised regarding the study being initiated for the Springhill, Oxford and Pugwash high schools and where the request had originated that building audits be completed for the three facilities. It was reported that the recommendation came from the report on high schools in Cumberland County and North Colchester as completed by John Murley. In a related matter, information was shared on the efforts being made between Springhill and Oxford to share staff and resources through cooperative timetabling. Comments were shared by the Superintendent regarding upcoming changes to distance education offerings from the Department of Education and the positive impact those could have on all rural schools.

MOTION CARRIED

Committee Appointment

The Board Chair announced that Board member Bernie Knockwood would be serving on the Finance and Human Resources Committee. Mr. Knockwood had not been in attendance at the Organizational Meeting on November 8 and therefore had not been appointed to a standing committee.

Programs and Student Services Committee

Programs and Student Services Committee Chair John Henderson reported on a meeting held on December 5, 2000. There were four information items to bring forward to the Board.

Student Support Worker Project Evaluation

It was reported that the evaluation of the Student Support Worker Project was distributed at the Committee meeting. Discussion had taken place on the background of the report and of the Student Support Worker program. It had been agreed to release the report to all schools, School Advisory Councils, the Region's Black Communities and to any other interested party. The Committee is now seeking reaction to the evaluation.

Student Suspension Workshop

Mr. Henderson reported that the previous Board had requested that a workshop be held for Board members and staff to discuss several issues surrounding student suspensions with one of the topics being Region-wide consistency on the application of student suspensions. The Committee had directed staff to proceed with the organization of the workshop and a date of February 16th at

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10:00 a.m. in the Board Room in Truro had been established with all Board members who regularly serve on the Review and Appeals Committees particularly invited to attend.

Provincial Special Education Policy Implementation Review

The Committee has submitted a report on the Board's behalf to the provincial review committee. The inadequacy of the present funding given to Boards to fully implement the province's policy was central to the submission. Committee member, Mark Lavers, and Operations Committee Chair, Marilyn Thompson, participated on December 15th in a Board member focus group set up by the Province to receive direct Board input into the process.

Textbooks

It was reported that a spokesman for the Department of Education recently indicated in the provincial press that the issue of texts for students was being addressed and that the Province had taken over funding for texts in certain Department initiatives. It was stated that no new funding for texts accompanied the introduction of Provincial initiatives such as the Early Literacy program. In fact, following receipt of the Board's Book Bureau allocation last spring, 50% of that allocation was then "clawed back" to fund initiatives like Early Literacy. Schools were left scrambling to redo book orders with the reduced dollars. Schools have been doing their best to wisely use their allocation, but a serious issue on the adequacy of provincial funding for texts still exists.

Moved by John Henderson, seconded by Trudy Thompson

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

Several questions were raised on the report including some members expressing concerns that they would not be able to attend the student suspension workshop. It was agreed that the Assistant Superintendent of Programs and Student Services would attempt to reschedule the session. Also raised were questions regarding the on-line ordering procedures for the School Book Bureau and impact this will have on the work load of principals and school secretaries.

MOTION CARRIED

Superintendent's Report

Due to the lateness of the hour, Superintendent Elmer MacDonald did not review his administration report in detail and asked Board members to read it at their leisure and contact him with any questions.

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One question raised referred to statistics included in the report showing the Nova Scotia's low ranking in education funding when compared to other provinces. In a related matter, it was noted that a recent media release from the Atlantic Ministers of Finance referenced inadequate funding at the post-secondary level but did not address the funding for Primary –12 education.

Moved by Mary Macaulay, seconded by Jim Grue

THAT CORRESPONDENCE BE FORWARDED TO THE MINISTER OF FINANCE EXPRESSING THE BOARD'S CONCERN REGARDING EDUCATION FUNDING AND REQUESTING CONFIRMATION THAT FUNDING FOR PRIMARY TO GRADE TWELVE PROGRAMS HAD ALSO BEEN DISCUSSED AT THE ATLANTIC MINISTERS OF FINANCE MEETINGS.

MOTION CARRIED

Nova Scotia School Boards Association

Ron Marks, Board representative to the NSSBA Board of Directors, reported that the Director's meeting in December was postponed and the next meeting will be held on January 17, 2001.

Question Period

The Board Chair clarified the procedure to be followed during question period and then opened the floor for questions.

With reference to the South Colchester grade configuration issue, Sherry Budd of Stewiacke asked why public meetings were held to seek input and then the Board did not listen to public opinion. She indicated that at the meetings it appeared that 66% of those who expressed an opinion did not favor the P-6 and 7-12 configuration. The Assistant Superintendent of Operations indicated that his assessment of the results of those public meetings differed from Mrs. Budd's.

Kathy Downey of Stewiacke indicated that she also had attended the public meetings and had taken notes on the comments made. She also indicated that she felt the majority of those in attendance were not in favour of the P-6 and 7-12 option. Ms. Downey then asked Kaaren Barkhouse, Board member for the South Colchester area, how she had determined that there was majority support for the option as approved by the Board. Mrs. Barkhouse indicated that the individuals she had spoken with, primarily with children attending the feeder schools, had expressed concerns with losing their grade six students and had therefore been supportive of the P-6 and 7-12 configuration.

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Mabel Barber of Brookfield asked if the Board normally makes decisions based on the opinions and recommendations of the Board member from the area rather than on statistics and public input. The Board Chair indicated that while the opinion of the local member was, and is, considered as part of the decision-making process, lengthy discussion at the standing committee, committee of the whole and board level plays a large part.

Paula Altenburg of Stewiacke asked why the Board did not take into account the input from the school advisory councils. Mr. Sabeau indicated that all information gathered had been shared with Board members during discussions at the committee and board level.

Adjournment

On motion, the meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Trudy Thompson, Acting Board Chair

Date

Ann Hamilton-Wood
Communications Officer/Acting Board Secretary

Date