
Chignecto-Central Regional School Board

Regular Meeting

05-01 Minutes

May 9, 2001

The regular monthly meeting of the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board was held on Wednesday, May 9, 2001, in the Seminar Room at Amherst Regional High School commencing at 7:00 p.m.

Present:

Kaaren Barkhouse
Robin Bourque
Cheryl Cutler
Jim Grue
John Henderson
Mary Macaulay
Lawrence MacKinnon (7:15 p.m.)

Marilyn Murray
David Myles
Mackie Ross
Marilyn Thompson
Trudy Thompson
Raymond Tynes

In Attendance:

Karen Casey
Ann Hamilton-Wood
Elmer MacDonald
Gary Miller
Brian Murphy

Robert Renouf
Dale Sabean
David White
Bruce MacIntosh

Absent:

Mark Lavers, with regrets
Bernie Knockwood, with regrets
Ron Marks, with regrets
Robert Parker, with regrets

Acting Chair Trudy Thompson called the meeting to order.

Approval of Agenda:

It was MOVED by Marilyn Thompson, seconded by Cheryl Cutler
THAT THE AGENDA BE APPROVED AS CIRCULATED.

MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Minutes:

It was MOVED by David Myles, seconded by Marilyn Murray
THAT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF APRIL 11, 2001 BE APPROVED AS CIRCULATED.

Two questions were raised regarding the minutes. Mary Macaulay noted that the name of David White, Regional Education Officer, had been omitted from the list of those in attendance. Raymond Tynes indicated that he did not feel the minutes reflected strongly enough the concerns he raised regarding the African Nova Scotian School Board Caucus request for a seat on the NSSBA Board of Directors.

MOTION CARRIED, MINUTES APPROVED AS AMENDED

Editorial Note:

In subsequent discussions with the Board Secretary, Mr. Tynes agreed that the wording of the minutes surrounding that discussion was appropriate and an amendment was not necessary.

Business Arising from Minutes:

Two items arising from the minutes were questioned. It was indicated that, based on a motion made at the March meeting, a letter had been sent to the Minister of Transportation and Public Works regarding the poor road conditions in the region. To date, no response had been received.

A question was also raised regarding the development of a policy regarding child poverty. It was indicated that Ed Colquhoun, Coordinator of Student Services, has begun work on this project.

Correspondence:

The Acting Board Secretary reported on items of correspondence received since the last Board meeting in April.

Elmsdale School Advisory Council – a copy of a letter sent to the Deputy Minister of Education, Dennis Cochrane, thanking the Department of Education for allowing some flexibility in the new school construction project was received. The changes in the project specifically relate to technology needs in the new facility.

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Douglas Street Elementary School Advisory Council – a letter was received from the SAC Chair, Cyril MacLeod, indicating council support for the board’s proposal made to the Department of Education for a new junior high school and three geographically-placed elementary schools within the town of Truro.

Hants East Rural High School Advisory Council – SAC Chair Elva MacDonald had copied the Board on a letter sent to the Minister of Education indicating concerns with changes mandated by the Department relating to examinations and term/semester scheduling. The SAC is seeking permission from the Department for the school to revert to the former year-based term system.

Thorburn Consolidated/East River St. Mary’s SAC – The Thorburn/East River St. Mary’s School Advisory Council had written regarding the recent board decision not to close the East River St. Mary’s School. While indicating they did not have a problem with the decision, the SAC has a major concern with maintaining a reasonable student-teacher ratio at Thorburn and that filling the position at East River St. Mary’s from within the current staffing ratio at Thorburn will have a negative effect on that school.

Minister of Education – correspondence was received from Minister of Education, Jane Purves, accompanied by a draft racial equity policy statement. It was indicated that the policy is intended to compliment existing school board level policies and had been drafted by an internal Department Committee. Input and comments are to be forwarded to Mike Sweeney at the Department of Education by May 30. It was indicated that the policy statement had been forwarded to the Programs and Student Services Committee for discussion and subsequent recommendation back to the Board.

Concern was expressed with the time frame for response in light of the Board’s meeting schedule. The Superintendent indicated that he would request an extension from the Department of Education to the end of June to allow more time for the Board to submit its comments.

Presentation:

Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Dale Sabeau, reported that annually the Nova Scotia Pupil Transportation Association presents awards to school boards and private carriers recognizing excellence in transporting students to and from school. Awards are presented based on a number of criteria including safety, training, maintenance, compliance with regulations and cleanliness of buses and garages. Mr. Sabeau reported that both the CCRSB and our private contractor, Laidlaw Transit, won gold awards for the year 2000. Mr. Sabeau introduced Alicia Davis of Laidlaw Transit and presented the awards to Ms. Davis for Laidlaw and to Superintendent Elmer MacDonald for the Board.

Reports from Standing Committees:

Committee of the Whole

In the absence of Acting Vice-Chair Ron Marks, David Myles presented the report from the Committee of the Whole meeting held on May 2, 2001.

Presentation – Nova Scotia School Trust

John Cameron, representing the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, had made a presentation to the Board regarding the possible establishment of a Nova Scotia School Trust. Mr. Cameron had been hired by the NSSBA to conduct a feasibility study into the creation of a charitable trust that would distribute funds to school boards across the province. Mr. Cameron indicated that it is being proposed that funds would be raised in a similar manner to university foundations through corporate and individual sponsorships as well as by holding special events. Board members and the Superintendent raised a number of questions of Mr. Cameron relating to the criteria for the distribution of any funds raised and also the need to keep funds separate and apart from any areas of government responsibility to public education.

Mr. Cameron indicated that his report will be submitted to the NSSBA in early July and should be available for school boards in September.

Committee Reports

As part of Committee reports to the Board, Assistant Superintendent of Planning, Research and Technology Karen Casey had provided an update on school construction projects in South Colchester and Pictou East. Ms. Casey indicated that negotiations have been held with the Department of Education that have seen the overall size of the facilities increased and discussions are now being held between the municipal units and the province regarding enhancements for the projects.

The majority of issues raised through Committee reports were for information purposes with appropriate motions to be brought to the regular monthly meeting on May 9, 2001.

Smoking Policies

As a follow-up to a presentation made at the April 4 Committee of the Whole meeting, the Operations and Planning, Research and Technology Committee had discussed the issue of smoking policies. The Committee had agreed to continue to investigate this issue and to ask the Programs and Student Services Committee to also review the program-related aspects of the matter.

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During discussion, it was suggested that the Operations and P/R/T Committee survey school communities through school advisory councils for input and suggestions on this matter and that, if at all possible, a recommendation for future actions be brought to the Board in September.

Teacher Suspension

Following an in-camera session, it had been reported that with respect to the recent suspension of a teacher, the Board had refused to accept an offer to resign from the teacher pending completion of the current disciplinary investigation and that the current suspension, without pay for a reasonable period of time, had been extended.

It was MOVED by David Myles, seconded by Marilyn Thompson
TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE.

MOTION CARRIED

Finance and Human Resources Committee

Committee Vice-Chair, Mary Macaulay, reported on a special budget session held on April 25, 2001 to which all board members had been invited. Due to time constraints, the budget presentation commenced but had not been completed. It had been agreed to hold another special budget meeting on May 14, 2001.

Ms. Macaulay then asked Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, Brian Murphy, to present an outline to the Board on the Personnel Performance Program. Dr. Murphy indicated that the Personnel Performance Program is the number one priority of the Human Resources Department and was identified as such in the CCRSB Planning and Priorities document for the school year 2000-2001, presented to the board on January 9, 2001. Dr. Murphy added that the presentation of the summary document to each board member and the presentation of the compilation of every job description for each position within the region marks the completion of Phase I of the plan.

Dr. Murphy stated that the PPP is a 4-year initiative that, upon its completion, will provide a mechanism for every employee and every supervisor to establish the performance expectations for individual positions. It will also provide a procedure for the appraisal of performance on an annual basis, in accordance with an obligation set out in the Education Act, and will provide a process for the annual updating of the individual job descriptions.

Dr. Murphy briefly reviewed the contents of the package and each board member was provided with a copy. Mary Macaulay then presented the Acting Board Chair with the complete collection of the job descriptions for positions existing within the CCRSB.

During discussion, questions were raised on the process utilized in the development of the program, the impact on administrative time at the school site and the need to include job descriptions for student support workers in the document. It was agreed that additional

discussion on the PPP would be included on the agenda for a future Committee of the Whole meeting.

It was MOVED by Mary Macaulay, seconded by Jim Grue
**TO ACCEPT THE REPORT OF THE FINANCE/HUMAN RESOURCES
COMMITTEE FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES.**

MOTION CARRIED

Operations and Planning, Research and Technology

Committee Chair, Marilyn Thompson, reported on a meeting held on April 25, 2001.

Distance Video Conferencing

Karen Casey had reported on a video conferencing system currently being used at Riverside Education Centre that allows the school to offer a Mi'kmaq language course for grades 7 and 8 students courtesy of host Sherwood Park School in Sydney.

Letters of Agreement

It was MOVED by Marilyn Thompson, seconded by Lawrence MacKinnon
**THAT LETTERS OF AGREEMENT FOR CENTRAL COLCHESTER JUNIOR
HIGH, ST. MARY'S ELEMENTARY AND RAWDON DISTRICT
ELEMENTARY BE ACCEPTED.**

MOTION CARRIED

Play Space Policy #OG-15

Marilyn Thompson served **Notice of Motion** that at the next regular meeting of the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board she would move, or cause to be moved, a motion that the Board accept Play Space Policy #OG-15 as presented.

Some questions were raised regarding the proposed policy focusing on removal of old equipment and after school hour supervision.

Smoke Free Policy

It was reported that further discussion on the policy had been deferred until Planning, Research & Technology has completed ongoing research into current practices and policies respecting smoking within and beyond the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board. Once the review is completed, recommendations will be made on what actions to take in respect to policy change. It was also agreed to request agencies such as the District Health Authority to provide appropriate resources and assistance as may be available.

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Operations Central Depot

Mr. Sabean had outlined for the Committee the likelihood of relocating the Brookfield garage facilities due to the proposed site for the new South Colchester High School. In examining options for relocation and considering the age of other garage facilities (including recognition of present day standards for health, safety and environment), a new consolidated facility to service bus operations for Pictou, Colchester and East Hants, as well as the Property Services functions for all of the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board had been suggested as a preferred solution.

The Committee had agreed to request the Finance Department to explore a financing model for such a facility and as well to have the Operations Department seek projected costs.

Cobequid Consolidated (Old Barns) & South Colchester Feeder Area

Further to a past Board motion regarding the examination of the South Colchester High School feeder area, a survey had been prepared and circulated to parents of the Cobequid Consolidated area to determine the level of support for having students in either grades 10-12 or 7-12 attend the new school in Brookfield.

Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Dale Sabean, reported that preliminary results from the survey show that of the 300 questionnaires circulated, 149 had been returned with 84 parents requesting the status quo (students to Central Colchester and then onto CEC) and 65 supporting the move of grades 7-12 to the new facility in Brookfield once it is constructed. It was agreed that this matter would be discussed in more detail at both the Operations and P/R/T committee level and at Programs and Student Services.

It was **MOVED** by Marilyn Thompson, seconded by Jim Grue
**TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE OPERATIONS AND PLANNING,
RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE.**

MOTION CARRIED

Programs and Student Services Committee

John Henderson, Chair of the Programs and Student Services Committee, brought forward the report from the Committee meeting held on April 17.

Presentations

Students and staff from Riverside Education Centre had delivered a multi-media presentation to the Committee. These talented students broadcast a daily morning show in their school. The broadcast can also be accessed on the web. Research, literacy, and the technical and aesthetic

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side of production are all incorporated into this initiative. The students also discussed their recent experiences attending the “3rd World Summit on Media for Children” in Greece.

In a second presentation received by the Committee, the Chair of the School Advisory Council at Cobequid Educational Centre, Jim Campbell, and Principal Wayne Barrett had expressed their concerns regarding Department of Education directives on examination schedules and on a uniform Provincial calendar. Particular concern was expressed regarding the need for a September orientation for Grade 10 students at CEC. Several hundred Grade 10 students enter CEC each fall. The presenters encouraged the Committee to support having an orientation day for Grade 10 students without having Grades 11 and 12 students present. A Grade 10 student, Helen Scammel, was also present to testify to the importance of the orientation. It was agreed that these concerns would be discussed at the next Committee meeting.

Middle School Grade Configuration

At the March Committee meeting, staff had been directed to prepare a Regional profile on “middle school” grade configurations. A copy of that profile was attached to the minutes and had been discussed at length by the Committee. In order to give all Board members an opportunity to participate in the discussion,

It was MOVED by John Henderson, seconded by Raymond Tynes
**THAT A PRESENTATION BE MADE AT A FUTURE COMMITTEE OF THE
WHOLE MEETING BY PRINCIPALS WHOSE SCHOOLS HAVE VARYING
GRADE CONFIGURATIONS, ALL EMBRACING MIDDLE SCHOOL
INSTRUCTIONAL PHILOSOPHY.**

MOTION CARRIED

Atlantic Canada Examinations

In response to several inquiries from Board members, staff, and the general public, a document prepared by the Department of Education entitled “*Atlantic Canada Examinations*” was circulated and was attached to the Committee minutes. It contains useful information regarding the external assessment of students.

It was MOVED by John Henderson, seconded by Marilyn Thompson
**TO ACCEPT THE REPORT OF THE PROGRAMS AND STUDENT SERVICES
COMMITTEE.**

MOTION CARRIED

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Superintendent's Report:

In his opening comments, Superintendent Elmer MacDonald complimented the student transportation section of the Operations Department as well as Laidlaw Transit on receiving gold awards from the Nova Scotia Pupil Transportation Association. Mr. MacDonald also extended appreciation to the Human Resources Department and all those employees who worked towards completion of Phase I of the Personnel Performance Program.

After sharing statistics quoted in a recent Department of Education summary that indicate recent reductions in enrolment, number of teachers and number of schools in the province of Nova Scotia, Mr. MacDonald briefly reviewed information from the various department and families of schools and responded to questions raised by Board members on his report. Among the issues raised were harassment workshops and race relations issues, the teacher assistant budget and budget matters. Mr. MacDonald encouraged Board members to review his report in detail and contact him directly with any additional questions.

Nova Scotia School Boards Association:

Board representative to the NSSBA Board of Directors, Ron Marks, was not in attendance at the meeting to present a report. Those members planning to attend the NSSBA's annual general meeting and conference were reminded that the group would meet at some point prior to the AGM to discuss the resolution package.

New Business:

Board member Raymond Tynes suggested that it would be prudent for the Board to participate in sensitivity training in light of the myriad of issues that it is required to deal with on a regular basis. It was suggested that this training be included on the agenda as part of a future professional development or priority-setting session.

Public Question Period:

Parent Laura Baker-Burbine raised the issue of teacher assistant assignments and the allocation of TA hours to schools. She indicated that her child, who is confined to a wheelchair, was not receiving the teacher assistant time that she, as a parent, felt was required. The Superintendent responded that the Board spends almost 50% more on special education than it receives from the Department of Education and each year, as part of budget discussions, the allocation of teacher assistants is a topic of concern.

Following the question period at 9:05 p.m.,

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It was MOVED by Cheryl Cutler, seconded by Marilyn Murray
THAT THE MEETING MOVE TO IN-CAMERA SESSION.

MOTION CARRIED

At 9:58 p.m.,

It was MOVED by Raymond Tynes, seconded by Cheryl Cutler
THAT THE MEETING MOVE OUT OF IN-CAMERA SESSION.

MOTION CARRIED

It was MOVED by Lawrence MacKinnon, seconded by Marilyn Murray
**TO CONTINUE THE SUSPENSION OF A RECENTLY-SUSPENDED TEACHER
PENDING FURTHER CONSIDERATION AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
BOARD TO BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 2001.**

MOTION CARRIED

Adjournment:

On motion, the meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Trudy Thompson, Acting Board Chair

Date

Ann Hamilton-Wood
Communications Officer/Acting Board Secretary

Date