

Discussion with Superintendent Meeting Minutes

November 4, 2015.

In attendance:

Introduction to Mike Bethune, Superintendent of Education. Also in attendance was Francine Pilon

Went over history surrounding the closing of Junior school building. During annual spring tour of schools issues of building roof as well as drainage problems came to light. It was deemed that these repairs were critical and needed to be addressed before September. A decision had to be made ASAP. In addition to the condition of the roof and drainage issues, there were other repairs needed (issues with brick, insulation and walkway) as well as approximately a 50% occupancy rate in both buildings, the decision was made to close the junior school and move everyone to the senior building.

The Ministry of Education provides funding based on need as well as occupancy and with the way things were with two separate schools that were operating around 50% we would not have qualified.

Addition on senior school looks like it will go through and is a priority for the board. Mike expressed the hope for Catholic Education to continue in Mildmay and expressed that decision makers had the best of intentions when making these choices. He acknowledged that this is a unique situation in our school board, but something that has happened in Toronto. Concerns and feedback regarding the situation followed...

Questions

When is the junior building would come down? Hoping for spring/summer 2016, but nothing has been confirmed at this point.

Do you really feel this is the best long term solution? This is not ideal, but working with what we have. The addition is expected to accommodate the current population. Plans are only beginning, but discussions of adding 3 full classrooms and office space have taken place.

Why are we not building up and keeping the current green space for a playground? When the senior building was constructed, the proper footings were not installed. They will be added to this addition to allow for future accommodation to build up if need is there.

Why are there no washrooms being added to the junior property? (Concerns for little ones who have already had accidents during recess were expressed. It is a long process for them to find teacher and make their way to senior building washroom. Not as simple as running to door and entering quickly). This would be costly and is not being considered.

A strong desire to keep younger students at senior building was expressed. There is no plan to do this because of staffing for yard duty, as well as a desire by the principal to keep the school population together as one during recess.

Are we not concerned about declining enrolment as a result of this setup? Are we just banking that people will continue to put their children in this school strictly because it's Catholic? People need to make that choice and hopefully they will choose the Catholic system.

How many people are choosing the Public school, or Formosa French immersion, instead of ours? None have been reported.

Are we planning for any future growth? Census data has shown no significant decline, although a slight decline has occurred.

Have there been board discussions with the municipality to add a sidewalk to allow for students to walk the "back way" for recess? Conversations have begun with municipality, but nothing specifically mentioned about a sidewalk at the last municipal meeting.

Question about safety at recess during the walk down, during recess if anyone needs to use washroom, and back up to senior building. There is a lead teacher heading out and students follow. A teacher is on the road to assist in crossing. A 3rd teacher follows the group down. Educational assistant on yard duty to assist with supervision as well.

What happened to the idea of having all kindergarten students holding a rope and teacher leading the rope, as discussed and agreed upon at June meeting? They have found it is not necessary to introduce the rope. Students are told the rules for staying on the sidewalk and are trusted to follow them.

How many students are being sent to meet the road teacher during recess to use the washroom unattended by a teacher? None. Nobody goes alone. Concerns regarding unattended children making way to road teacher reported to a parent who brought to group. Personal experience of child being pushed onto road by another student. Can't guarantee safety with such a low student to teacher ratio.

Is keeping kids together at recess more important than student safety? Absolutely not, safety is of utmost concern. It is felt that the recess routine is going very well and students are safe at all times. There are only so many minutes of supervision that can be assigned to staff and it can't work for both locations.

Would we be able to hire a crossing guard? This would free up one teacher for yard duty? No. That is usually a municipal position. School would still be responsible for student safety.

Can we consider renting classrooms from the Public school where there are two empty classrooms? (keeping Catholic traditions and teachings, just renting rooms?) No. There is a major concern of "watering down" the Catholic Education system. Entering their building could start the movement toward a combined system. Our separate system is something we are fighting to preserve.

Have considerations been made to accommodate other school populations that may close in the future? For example, what if a smaller school within our board, such as Teeswater, were to close? With the addition planned and set up we are going with, could we accommodate that need? The addition will be planned with the proper footings to build up if need be. The cost of the addition is estimated around \$1.5 million.

Although it would obviously be costly, if we are confident and hopeful of the future of our Catholic school in Mildmay, why are we not considering building a new school now? People have built homes on the same level, (just across the closed road) as the back of the junior property. Just not possible. Mike is sure that engineers would have looked at the entire property of the junior school.

Municipality needs to be approached again to request a sidewalk. This past week Al Hastie, Supervisor of Maintenance

What is the capacity now? Approximately 110%.

Reported at municipal meeting in October by board that we are at 97% capacity.

Music classes are being held in the Church. Are we paying rent? If so, how much? Yes. Approximately \$5000 for the year.

Parents questioned why we are paying anything for use of the Church. This is possibly an agreement based on a policy with the Diocese as well. Heat, hydro and washrooms, etc. are things that we are using that the Church needs help paying for. The school is just happy that Father did in fact agree so no argument was made as to paying a fee for Church rental.

How much does it cost to keep the empty junior building? Approximately \$50,000/year

Amy Kieffer- Religious Consultant

Presented on how we will be approaching the new Physical Education Curriculum in our Catholic School. (which is where the new Sex. Ed. Curriculum can be found)

*see Power Point by Amy (will be sent by Monique)

Committee Meetings:

Turkey Luncheon: December 16, Turkey Dinner (lunch time). Nicole Wise doing chicken, CWL needs to be contacted with date.

Outdoor learning: a committee needs to be set up. "Evergreen" is an association we are connected to, a place to learn "best practices".

Fundraising dates for Elmira Chicken and Harriston Meats:

Side note: Muskoka Woods will be the grade 7/8 trip this year. Things have gotten behind as a result of work to rule. When we do our next fundraiser, we may need to leave the percentage going to trip open, as it will be uncertain how much will be going to the trip.

Motion to go forward with fundraisers by Holly, seconded by Courtney.

Other fundraisers discussed:

Gift certificate fundraiser. Ann-Marie will contact businesses to ask about their interest. Nicole Wise has notes and sample letters to businesses from last year that can be altered.

Scrapbooking sale- Selling tables to scrapbookers who want to get rid of supplies (held in the gym).

Clothing swap- Evening of Nov 19th and Morning of 20th.

Vendors sale- possibility for the New Year.

Grocery tape fundraising- Stewarts not yet asked? Stewarts will be asked if this is something they would be able to do. If not, Walkerton and/or Hanover stores can be asked.

Christmas Event-

Teachers all voted and were happy with last years' event. A "Christmas Fun Day" will take place on Dec. 16th. There will be centers in each classroom with different games, skating (half school in morning, half in afternoon), turkey dinner, Kindergarten concert and cookie decorating.

Spring concert instead of Christmas- School community volunteer tea/spring concert where each class can perform something. Most schools have stopped doing concerts, except Chepstow.

November 27 is Hanging of the Green- students can dress festive and school will participate in caroling (downtown during set up?) School presence that evening? Rent popcorn machine and have students do prep and sell during the evening. Charlotte will look into rental of popcorn machine. We will also sell treat bags. Nicole W. to price candy from her supplier.

Family p.j. party (evening) no time last week of school to do Christmas theme, so into the new year this will be planned. Feb. 4th is a P.D. Day, so event could take place Feb. 3rd. Crafts and pizza as well? Details to follow closer to date.