

Special Meeting Notes from November 17, 2009

Meeting at St. Francis Xavier School @ 7:00 pm

Has the Grade Reconfiguration been made?

No it has not been decided. I can tell you some Trustees have said they do not agree with some of the elements of the proposed plan; we have heard passionate conversation from parents at ST. Louis. This is the Superintendent's Plan to the Board; if this does not go; we will have to come up with another solution.

The first regional plan was done five years ago. The idea was to get everybody around the table; Medicine Hat Catholic, Medicine Hat Public, Francophone and CAPE along with a consultant to determine our ten year outlook for facility needs. Recommendations were dramatic; that plan had 5 new schools, schools closing and grade reconfigurations. It was a bold and courageous plan, nothing happened, it was too bold and too courageous.

The government then came to us last year for a three year outlook; the Board had established a priority for a new high school by doing an artificial grade re-configuration with the purpose to create conditions to strengthen the argument to get a new high school; grade nines to McCoy utilization then went up; the sixes to the middle schools it opened up the elementary schools for some space; the message went out we will take more children. That strategy worked because right now we have big numbers in 5, 6, 7 & 8, when you move those kids up to McCoy there will be over 1,000 students at McCoy. There are now 750 students there and it is crowded. That strategy worked.

At the very beginning of the new regional planning process; the province said we will not approve a new high school; the consultant acknowledged you have the numbers; but the government is not buying it. We were strongly encouraged to then look South; so the Board changed its priorities and looked to the South to pursue an new Elementary School.

David reviewed Page 3 of the Plan; you will note the priorities in this plan. Our priorities are six modular's we have been awarded four of those. There is no money in the budget for modular's; however, we were able to access emergent modular's (4), then it is noted there is a modernization for McCoy; and then a Sector 5 elementary school.

We received additional information on these priorities on Monday, November 02, 2009. In actuality we were informed that: there are three small lists; Modularity; Modernization and New School. We thanked the government today for the information and noted to them that going forward, that language could be better explained in the report. We are not optimistic; there is no new money for modular's or for a new school. Currently modular's are from emergent modular funds; we made this request in the spring of 2009; since that time the economic situation has worsened.

We had a meeting with the MLA's on Friday, Nov 13 and they are aware for our need for a new school; the MLA's are advocating on our behalf.

David reviewed Page 9 of the report that outlines the facility condition index. By the numbers you will see all of the schools in the City are in very good shape, previous administration previous boards have done an excellent job of being good stewards of taking care of our schools; however, government also looks at the facility condition index in making the decision for getting new schools; we should be proud but it is a factor that hurts us a little bit.

David reviewed Page 19 and 20 that outlines for adjusted enrolments and capacities and utilization rates of all of the schools in MH Public and MH Catholic. The government has a formula that determines how many children can fit into the school in accordance to meterage. All of the meterage counts including wide stairwells and hallways. Adjusted enrolment considers a child with a code being counted for three; ie special education students are counted 3 – 1 of a student requiring no additional support.

MH Public is at 75%. MH Catholic is at 79% however when you compare city to city theirs is 75% ours if 81%, when we do not consider Bow Island, however, as a regional division we have to include all schools not just those in the city.

According to Infrastructure Rules, school divisions are to begin planning for new schools when utilization is over 85%. Government says at 85% schools are full; because there has to be ancillary space. We have a strong case for a new school in sector 5; there is no promise we will be getting a new school. We must also consider that even if we got a new school today; it would not open for three years.

- David presented his one page Grade Re-Configuration Proposal.

Move back to the former grade re-configuration.

All elementary K – 6; with the exception of St. Patrick's

Grade 9's to St. Mary's, Grade 9's to ND

St. Louis School would be K-6 French Immersion with Turning Points

St. Mary's K – 9 English; dual track 7-9 French Immersion

LAP to St. Mary's

Fine Arts Academy would stay at St. Mary's

Rezone SW and SE Hill to St. Mary's; however anybody at St. Michael's would be able to continue to go to St. MH.

St. Pat to K-5; eventually K – 6 as soon as the new school would open in Southridge

Notre Dame would be grades 6- 9 with the academy programming; we would ask for a new core 250 seat elementary school in Southridge ; a core of 250 plus six modular's.

Provide new modular classrooms

Sell St. Thomas

Lease St. Louis to CAPE

Modernize McCoy

1. Why are you not taking back St. Thomas?

- a. Only has capacity of 120 students

- b. The Board in the Three Year Plan is considering taking back St. Thomas; however; a government official noted that causes us problems if we take back the school, in that they have to find the Francophone's a school; we need to know that the government has never not given them a school, that means they would need to build them a new school, then our request for a new school and our priority for a new school goes down; this is a Constitutional Right of a Francophone
 - c. You need to expect that Trustees need to think strategically and into the future; we need to keep asking the government; we need to keep building a case for it; if we take that school back would hurt our case to a great degree.
- 2. When the Board makes the decision; they could say we like part of the plan; none of the plan or the entire plan; or they could present something completely different.**
- 3. If at 85% we are at capacity; the government says you should be making plans for a new school; if that's the government's recommendation and we are at 100% in sector 5 what is their rationale for saying no?**
- a. The province needs a lot of schools; there is a finite amount of dollars they also consider allocating to issues of safety and high population areas.
 - b. If you were to take the last seven years of infrastructure in the province; the SE corner of Alberta has not received anything here; the government is aware
- 4. What did the MLA's say they are doing for their us both Public and Catholic**
- a. We met with the MLA's on Nov 13th; it was a good positive meeting; they hear what we are saying and they are advocating for us.
 - b. They have put forth in a conversation on that day; a P3 concept to build schools. In other parts of the province they could proposed P3's; extending beyond education; for example if we need two schools in MH, there could be a P3 partnership; and if there is a need for a New Hospital; A Drug Treatment facility; and perhaps some of the same needs are in Brooks and Bow Island; can we look at P3's as a consideration for multifunctional facilities funded by private and public sector.
 - c. The Board is very comfortable in saying they are advocating on our behalf
 - d. We need to help Mr. Renner and Mr. Mitzel; we realize what we are up against and we are wanting to help us
 - e. There are other pressures in the Province
- 5. Your plan, might cut programs what does that mean?**
- a. For example at St. Mary's let's say the enrolment has trended up; FI is growing a grade a year; even with no grade reconfiguration there is another grade next year; we could see next year the dedicated dance, drama, band and art rooms are going to have to become classrooms again; that is what I mean that programs are going to suffer.

- b. When we look at Notre Dame; it was interesting when it opened up, we coordinated the class list at Notre Dame and St. Mary's and we had students double registered waiting to see if they would get into ND.
- 6. How many kids from the public system went to ND?**
- a. It was a large number; we are saying that we may need to pinch that; we may need to say there is no room at the inn...depending on how enrolment trends go; we may need to cap classes. Maybe we have to make some changes.
- 7. Why is K-9 French Immersion not possible at St. Louis; rather than splitting it?**
- a. French Immersion K-9 will not work due to the lack of extra curricular
 - b. Options and CTS available at St. Mary's-they need to have this experience to enter McCoy
- 8. Notre Dame will be a 6 – 9; if that is the case is ND going to remain an academy in grade 6; there were cross-attenders to get in line to attend?**
- a. Right now we are reviewing the issues with academies
 - b. There has been hard feelings in the division leaving schools early to get in to St. Patrick's to get into the academies at Notre Dame
 - c. One of the ideas to consider; no academy in grade 6
 - d. Entry point is division wide – or lottery
 - e. None of the solutions here; are ideal...if we don't get space some body is going to be upset; expectations might change; no perfect solution if we don't get space
 - f. Currently we are no longer accepting non-resident students at St. Patrick's School; this is not criticizing; what I am saying is that strategy worked; however, the only problem is the government did not buy it; now we have to change the plan again
- 9. What about middle school philosophy?**
- a. JR High set up is the most archaic; middle school philosophy attempts to meet the needs of adolescence; we will continue to do this philosophy.
 - b. One of the basic contacts of Middle School is students have at least one strong relationship with an adult.
- 10. Selling of St. Thomas; not a believer in selling assets. I see what your reasoning is behind it can we not keep leasing it out?**
- a. I don't think it is likely we will be selling ST. Thomas; we get approximately \$120,000 per year for the lease; the assessed value is \$1.5 million; in terms of business management it would not be a good decision
 - b. We also lease St. Louis to CAPE. If we have excess space in our division we need to make it available to others as outlined in the School Infrastructure Manual.

11. What are the chances the Francophone would purchase?

- a. We sent a communication to government, if we were going to sell it; the answer back is we don't have the resources this year to do that; money is not available from the Francophone's. Francophone's have a constitutional right to education in any community.
- b. Frankly we have the same constitutional right; our rights are for Catholic education.

12. Of the understanding the Public has a school for purchase?

- a. They have put Earl Kitchener up for sale
- b. The government came to us if we are interested in Earl Kitchener; the location; the size ; the poor condition of the building would not meet our needs
- c. In the past they wanted to give us part of Hat High; we said no thank you under the Regional Facility Plan from five years ago as part of the Skills Centre Concept. It was a beautiful school in the 50's; but the space offered did not meet our needs.

13. St. Michael's MH and the reason for modular's if we are at 80%

- a. ST Michael's Medicine Hat is trending up
- b. Boundary will probably remain where it is
- c. Historically there was a trend that St M MH students would come to St. Francis; if we would rezone this school would be maxed out.
- d. Looking at the trend, with high enrolment in kindergarten this is where we decided to put the modulars.

14. Doesn't St. Francis need the modular's more than St. Michael's.

- a. There will be a need here for modular's as well.

15. St. Michael's MH parents this year to accommodate the students, have zero extra classroom space; and next year where are they going; we have already lost our drama room.

- a. We need the portables at St. Michaels School.

16. What about bathroom facilities with modulars; or lunch room facilities?

- a. According to code; we meet code
- b. We could need up to 18 modular's in this Division in the next few years; we may need to also ask for modular bathrooms

17. Are you seeing enrolment at St. Francis going up?

- a. It has trended down but is expected to go up

18. Where is Ranchlands Zoned?

- a. St. Michael's Medicine Hat

19. One of the issues that is going to be a problem if students are rezoned is bussing

- a. Yes bussing is a reality.
- b. Kids in other cities are bussed far from their residences to schools, although not ideal

20. You are now talking re-zoning?

- a. There is a division possibility that we may need to rezone if we don't get relief in facilities.
- b. There is a tremendous cross attendance in the Division overall; for example over half the St. Francis students come from other areas; (that is just an example), there are similar numbers in other schools too.

21. Where would the population come from for modulars at St. Francis?

- a. We can talk as if we are going to get modular's, but no guarantee
- b. The population would come from Ranchlands and newer areas

22. With St. Louis School in your plan it says French Immersion; but if you take Turning Points out and LAP out; is there room for dual track there?

- a. No there is not enough room there.

23. Can you add on modular's where you want to?

- a. Essentially yes, but they need to be well coordinated with the overall space of the building; the entire property and have approval from the municipality.

24. You are leasing to CAPE; would it be possible to end our lease with CAPE to accommodate French Immersion to CAPE; then St. Mary's to Jr. High; ND to Jr. High.

- a. That is a possibility
- b. There is not much of a yard left at CAPE; they have since added modular's and an office; we would not need to keep those there however
- c. Would have six classrooms and so it would be tight for FI; they need seven classrooms; might work

25. What is the Board's long term plan for French Immersion?

- a. K – 12. We just submitted a four year program expansion grant for French Immersion.

26. Is there room at McCoy for that presently?

- a. No, that is one of the reasons we need to change the grade re-configuration
- b. Either way; 141 right now in French Immersion
- c. Once you get into grade 10; most divisions offer French Language Arts component rather than French Immersion; those classes would be 15 or 16.

- d. McCoy does not have this presently under the current grade structure; if we change to a 10 – 12 McCoy would have lots of room; in four years they will have the same number students now in four grades as would be in three grades.

27. What about full day kindergarten?

- a. This will be a budget decision; the provincial budget will come down in February and we will approve a budget in May 2010.
- b. The Minister has asked us to look at programs that are not fully funded; Kindergarten is under funded by \$300,000; also Transportation is under funded; and it is these kinds of programs that will need to be addressed.

28. Perhaps we need to charge a fee for full day kindergarten?

- a. This would be another consideration

29. If you are looking at pure economics; it just doesn't make sense to fund a service that is not funded especially when the revenue source is being cut.

- a. There is something called a special education profile; we are given funding for 69 students; we are serving 84 students; we need to provide services to those students; it is our priority in our division; that money has to come from somewhere; (that is just another example) of underfunded programming it is not just full day kindergarten.
- b. Other underfunded Areas are Transportation;
- c. Special Education - these students are part of our community; and we need to serve them.
- d. The Special Education Program at St. Michael's School for students with severe disabilities; if we were to look at the economics of that program; it would not balance; but we need to offer the program and those students have a right to be in a classroom.

30. If you look at utilization and half day program; if we take away will there be a drop in enrolment. Why do we have full day kindergarten?

- a. We opened up because the public opened it up and we were losing students to the public it was a strategic decision
- b. If we dropped it and they kept it we would lose kids; we lose them in Kindergarten in grades 1 – 12....some of the students do not come back in grade 1
- c. This is also the reason for pre-schools in schools to get the students in the school and then they return for Kindergarten and grade 1 and so on....

31. If you start rezoning and beyond the funded distance, parents would pay transporting fees; do you have any ideas if you would charge parents?

- a. Possible

32. Are we not in the business of offering Catholic Education?

- a. Yes, we agree it is about Catholic education

33. Couldn't a solution be get together and talk about the logistics of half day kindergarten in both divisions?

- a. It is not my place to comment on that; we have asked about it; and recently we had a meeting with their Superintendent; we brought up the issues of fees; we respect each other's position. They are not funded either; they are taking money out of surplus and reserves.
- b. This division has a tough budgetary decision to make; we have to make our own decision based on the program; we may need to compromise with fees

34. Notre Dame drew kids from the public system; how many have gone back to the public system?

- a. Approx 20 – 30 students in ND in grade 8 have returned to the Public System
- b. Approx 18 – 20 would leave 8 or 9 to go to Hat High for cosmetology
- c. Last year very few students left St. Mary's to go to the Public system
- d. About 15 or 20 leave every year; for various reasons on average

35. Are Fine Arts going to continue to McCoy?

- a. Yes, but we will not be able to offer 15 periods of Fine Arts in grade 9; we have been working on option blocks and how it might work; the fact of the matter is there is not lots of time to prepare before February registration

36. Would rather have grade 9's take Math Full Year.

- a. Recommendations it is taught in 60 minute blocks recommended by the Province.
- b. In our division we have a lot of choice; we might not be able to chunk them together for 60 minutes of Math; but for you to get FI and Math; you have a choice.
- c. Time allotted is important; how it is taught is more important

37. What can we do to help our MLA's

- a. Contact the MLA;s for a new school for MH Catholic
- b. Contact the Premier's Office for a new school for MH Catholic
- c. Contact the Minister of Education for a new school for MH Catholic
- d. Letter's to the editors

38. Would we run into negative pressure if we take back CAPE

- a. Yes we would have the same reaction; the government would have to find space for CAPE as well; also the CAPE lease generates revenue and we have a very good relationship with CAPE.

39. Are you not worried about overcrowding St. Mary's?

- a. No, there is still a possibility we will need modular's at St. Mary's in the future
- b. Taking out 120 replacing with about 60 students

40. Do you not think once St. Mary's is an English school it will not get overcrowded?

- a. There will be people that will look for a K-9 elementary school on the SE Hill as a good option for their family, we will wait and see.

41. Can we purchase modulars?

- a. Yes at about \$150,000 plus transportation, plus connecting fees that is not counting the interior design.
- b. We have talked about using the revenue to buy modular's; if we start buying modular's it takes the government off the hook and it is the responsibility of the government to provide us facilities; we don't want to further compromise our position for a new school.

Thank you for coming. Approximately 45 in attendance.