

Board of School Trustees
School District No. 57 (Prince George)

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

FOOTHILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

February 19, 2003

MINUTES

Present:

Bill Christie, Chairperson
Lyn Hall Vice-Chairperson
Michelle Marrelli, Trustee
Fred McLeod, Trustee
John Rustad, Trustee
Patricia Wick Thibault, Trustee

Bryan Mix, Secretary-Treasurer
Norm Monroe, Assistant Superintendent
Wendy De Marsh, Executive Assistant (Recorder)

Absent: Carlene Keddie, Trustee

Approximately 130 people in the audience.

1. Opening Remarks

Mr. Christie called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., reviewed the agenda and the rules of order for the meeting and then gave a brief overview of the district's budget and enrolment situation.

2. Board Presentation

Mr. Monroe gave a presentation comprised of information about:

- the consultation process
- the decline in the district's enrolment
- the district's budget shortfall
- the components of the budget solution
- the savings to be achieved by closing Foothills Elementary School
- the reasons for selecting Foothills Elementary School for proposed closure
- a summary of written submissions received to date
- when the decision about closing the school would be made

3. Foothills Elementary School Parent Advisory Council Presentation

Marvin Toma spoke about safety issues for students walking to neighbouring schools.

Steve Dalla Lana noted that the school's operational costs and physical plant were identical to those of Lakewood Elementary, and questioned the poor ranking given the school by the District Configuration Committee in regards to the need for capital improvements or upgrades.

Judy Gaiesty noted that more students would be displaced by the closure of Foothills than by the closure of Lakewood, and that the students from Foothills would have to be separated into two receiving schools. She asked the Board to look at the long term when making its decision about school closures.

Bruce Patterson spoke about the negative impact the closure of Foothills would have on the community.

4. Speakers' List

Darlene Meyers, on behalf of the staff of the school, spoke about the strengths of the school's staff and its programs and expressed concern about students' safety walking to nearby schools.

Michelle Townsend spoke about the safe location of the school and expressed concern students' safety if they had to attend other schools.

Kimberley Warrick expressed concern about student safety and the loss of community programs.

Annette Donald suggested that there would be future development in the area, which would put added pressure on the schools and require the installation of portables.

Vicki Steiniger concern expressed about the potential reduction in services to students if the school were closed.

Bernice Toma asked the Board to include administrators in the layoffs and cutbacks.

Laurel Patterson suggested that schools that are located between two other schools be considered for closure.

5. Other Speakers

Mr. Christie opened the floor to anyone who wished to speak. A number of people came forward and raised the following concerns and questions:

- Comment about the wonderful teachers at the school and request that it be kept open.

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- Concern about there being only one crosswalk across Tabor to Lakewood and request for pedestrian-controlled crosswalks at two locations.
 - Concern that Lakewood could close next year and request for a guarantee that children won't have to move from school to school every year.
 - Concern about getting children to and from school from current day care, and question about the inclusion of day care information in the demographic data used by the Board.
 - Comment about the excellence of the teachers and the community, and question about what will happen to the buildings of closed schools.
 - Concern about real estate values if school closes.
 - Question as to why Shady Valley is on the closure list when it was a receiving school this year.
 - Question about the district transfer process for students if school were closed.
 - Concern about safety of children walking past secondary school.
 - Concerns about the safety of students and the effect closing the school would have on the community.
 - Question about the transfer policy regarding the schools that remain open.

6. Closing Remarks

Trustees commented on the district's declining enrolment, the difficulty of making decisions to close schools and their concern about safety issues related to school closures. They noted that the district could not afford to keep all its schools open and that the money saved by closing schools would increase the resources available to all schools and students.

The meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.