

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

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

SOUTH FORT GEORGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

March 26, 2003

MINUTES

Present:

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

Norm Monroe, Assistant Superintendent
Alan Reed, Manager of Finance
Lori MacIver, School Operations Officer (Recorder)

Approximately 100 people in the audience.

1. Opening Remarks

Mr. Christie called the meeting to order at 7:04 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 South Fort George Elementary School
 - the reasons for selecting South Fort George Elementary School for proposed closure
 - a summary of written submissions received to date
 - when the decision about closing the school would be made
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3. South Fort George Elementary School Parent Advisory Council Presentation

Cathy Gordon indicated that parents' main concern was the safety of students walking from the neighbourhood to either Ron Brent or Carney Hill Elementary School; areas of concern included Queensway, the Hudson Bay Slough and the VLA subdivision. She spoke of the importance of the school to the neighbourhood and the services provided to students and their families. She asked the Board to take into account the fragile nature of the community when it considered the closure of the school.

Ms. Gordon reported that the parent advisory council had surveyed parents as to which school they wished their children to attend, with the majority choosing Van Bien Elementary School.

4. Speakers' List

Jennifer Gloger expressed concern regarding the money spent on renovations to the school and students being sent to a school that needs improvement. She stressed the importance of keeping students safe.

Deb Ewen commented on the positive improvements in the community and the importance of the school to the community.

Monica Jaye expressed concern about the negative effect closing the school would have on the community.

Samantha Tyler noted that the school is an important part of a heritage area.

Maria Novak expressed concerns about traffic, street people, crack houses, prostitutes and drug dealers in the area.

Anna Dellaire displayed a map and outlined the safety issues on the walking routes to neighbouring schools. She expressed concern about closing the school when it had been renovated very recently.

Lori Olson expressed concerns about the dangers for children walking in the area around the slough and spoke of the importance of the school to the neighbourhood.

Merle Martin commented on the value of neighborhood schools.

Debbi Banzer reviewed the dangers facing students walking to Ron Brent or Carney Hill and questioned whether consideration was being given to safety issues. She noted the importance of the school to the community.

Cathy Gordy spoke about the support her family receives from the school and community and the many extra-curricular activities the students take part in.

Dom Demarzo thanked the school and community for allowing the school to be used for various adult programs.

Cindy Reed expressed safety concerns regarding the VLA area.

Tim Hayes suggested that consideration be made for a special needs center within the school.

Shelby Marquette noted that the school was the centre of the community and expressed concerns about children's safety.

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:

- Comments about the help and support provided by the school and the negative impact closing the school would have on the community.
- Comments about the generations of family members that attended the school, the support provided by the school and concern about safety issues.
- Concerns regarding the dangers students would face walking to another school.
- Concerns regarding safety.
- Comments regarding the friendliness of the community and the school's heritage value.
- Comments on the support provided by the school to families.
- Comments about the excellence of the teaching staff.
- Comments about how well the staff look after the students.
- Comment that if school closes her children will be home schooled.
- Commented about the positive atmosphere of the school and its impact on students.
- Comments about declining enrolment and the dangers for children walking on the trails.
- Comment about how great the school is.

- Suggestion that Carney Hill Elementary be amalgamated with South Fort George instead.
- Question about who pays for school use privileges.
- Suggestion that the board go after more money from the government.

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 9:45 p.m.