

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

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

**WILDWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**March 31, 2003**

**MINUTES**

Present:

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

Bryan Mix, Secretary-Treasurer  
Kerry Firth, Assistant Superintendent  
Wendy De Marsh, Executive Assistant (Recorder)

Absent: Carlene Keddie, Trustee  
Michelle Marrelli, Trustee

Approximately 55 people in the audience.

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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. Firth 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 Wildwood Elementary School
- the reasons for selecting Wildwood 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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Mr. Mix gave a brief overview of the problems that had been encountered with the school's foundation. He explained that the potential solution was to rebuild the entire foundation and replace all of the soil under and around the building, which would cost approximately \$2 million.

3. Wildwood Elementary School Parent Advisory Council Presentation

Krista Dawson asked the board to consider repairing the building and keeping the school open. She noted that Wildwood was the only school in the area that was likely to grow to 300 students, the enrolment established by the district as the most efficient for an elementary school.

Ms. Dawson reported on the many positive programs in place at Wildwood and the close relationship between the school staff and the parent advisory council. She expressed concerns about children's safety walking to Glenview and crossing Highway 97 to attend Springwood and requested 100% busing for Wildwood students if the school should close.

4. Speakers' List

Steve Johnson commented on the district's declining enrolment and increasing costs and the importance of small class sizes. He suggested that the Board should request more funding from the provincial government and also find a way to use the capital proceeds from the sale of school property to balance the operating budget.

Robyn Thrift expressed concern about where the area resource team would be relocated if Wildwood were to close. She explained the team's need to be centrally located to the area it served and the need for storage space for resource materials.

Doreen Klages commented on the positive atmosphere of the school and expressed concern about the walk routes to other schools; she noted that parents would insist on 100% busing for Wildwood students if the school were closed.

Amanda Warn spoke about her attendance at Wildwood, the safe, positive atmosphere of the school and the importance of school being close to home.

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:

- Concern about children getting divided.
- Concern about safety issues.

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- Comment that the students do not want to see their school close and do not want to go to Springwood or Glenview. Positive comments about the school and the parent advisory council. Suggestion that the district should put money into repairing the school rather than divide up 150 students.
  - Concern that Springwood and Glenview parents have impression that Wildwood parents are criticizing their schools. That is not the intent; parents just want Wildwood kept open.
  - Concern about safety on the frontage road and that people will move because they don't want their kids to cross the highway. If school is closed, the community and students will be jeopardized.
  - Question about what will happen to the property and grounds if the school closes, and whether children will have access to the playground.
  - Comment about how much the school is loved and that it is a sweet place to be every day.
  - Question about what happens to the proceeds when a school is sold.

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 8:48 p.m.