



PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING
Held at Westwold Elementary School
November 22, 2018
7:00 PM

PUBLIC PRESENTATION AND COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
WESTWOLD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – POSSIBLE CLOSURE

(Notes from electronic Transcription)

Present:

Superintendent - Alison Sidow
Secretary-Treasurer - Kelvin Stretch
Director of Finance - Trina Cassidy
Assistant Superintendent - Rob Schoen
Communications Manager - Diana Skoglund
Executive Assistant – Cindy Hauk

BOARD OF EDUCATION:
Chair – Kathleen Karpuk
Vice-Chair – Rhonda Kershaw
Trustee – Diane Jules
Trustee – Shelley Sim
Trustee – Joe Small
Trustee – Cara McKelvey
Trustee – Heather Grieve
Trustee – John O-Fee

1. Principal Mark Orr – Welcome

Principal Orr opened the meeting at 7:05 pm and provided the welcome and acknowledgement of the traditional territory of the Secwepemc people. He introduced Superintendent Sidow and Chair Karpuk.

2. Board of Education – Introductions

Chair Karpuk provided introductions. She indicated that the purpose of the meeting was to hear input from the community on the possible closure of Westwold Elementary. The meeting was called due to the fact that no students enrolled at the school in September, 2018. The Board is very committed to having rural schools open and believes that they are the heart of the community and that all communities deserve to have a viable school. The Board is open to all options and is here to listen to the community. There has been no decision made on the future of Westwold Elementary so far. The public has until January 19, 2019 to provide input. Additional information and all feedback will be posted on the SD73 website at www.sd73.bc.ca. Upon completion of the consultation period, the Board will either make a decision or ask for additional information. Chair Karpuk thanked everyone for attending the community consultation meeting.

3. Superintendent of Schools – Opening Remarks

Superintendent Sidow thanked everyone for coming and representing the community. She provided introductions of the senior administration staff present. The public was given information of what to expect from the evening. It was noted that staff are present to provide clarification to the public. If a specific question is raised that requires information that cannot be provided this evening, it will be posted online to ensure that everyone has access to all the facts. Everyone will have an opportunity to share their perspectives and opinions and can expect to have those heard by the Board of Education in a very open format. This is a difficult process and the last thing the Board of Education wishes to do is close any schools, particularly in our rural communities. We believe that schools are the heart of the community but with no students enrolled, we need to look at the viability of keeping the school open. Schools can be closed, but they can also be re-opened so the Board is open to all options. It is hoped that we hear that there are children coming to the school so that it can remain open and viable.

Assistant Superintendent Schoen thanked everyone for coming and introduced Principal Mark Orr. A PowerPoint presentation was provided with background and statistical information. There were no public presentations provided from the community, but anyone wishing to make a presentation tonight is welcome to do so, by signing in with our Communications Manager, Diana Skoglund, in attendance, who will take your name for the record.

4. PowerPoint Presentation

Assistant Superintendent Schoen provided background information for Westwold Elementary school and reiterated that after the presentation, staff and the Board of Education are here to listen and gather as much information as we can from the community. In September, 2018, no children attended Westwold Elementary school. Projected enrollment was at 10 students; however, 9 of those students went to R.L. Clemitson Elementary and 1 student went to Falkland Elementary school. Assistant Superintendent Schoen acknowledged that parents have many choices. In this case, the district was mandated to follow Policy 1115.1 – *School Planning and Organization*, to provide notice, and for the public to be given an opportunity to provide feedback. Communications Manager, Diana Skoglund will compile all feedback information until January 19, 2019.

Over the last 18 years, there has been a steady enrolment decline in the province of British Columbia until 2010, when enrolment trends began to increase. At this time, full time Kindergarten began. In the years that followed, enrolment once again continued to decline until 2016 and to current date, when enrolment trends have continued to increase province-wide.

When we look at SD73, enrolment trends are very similar to provincial trends, with a continued decline of between 300 and 400 students each year until 2016, when enrolment began to increase steadily to current date. Looking at Westwold Elementary in particular, over the last 20 years, we saw enrolment of 70 students in 1998 with a steady decline until 2010 when the district went through a re-configuration and Westwold Elementary became a K-4 school.

The District uses Baragar Systems, which is a data collection tool that provides statistical information for the area. This data shows us, for example, that in 2013, one baby was born in Westwold and in 2014, four babies were born in Westwold. However, those students did not register at the school. The District needs to consider what that means and factor in the cost of operating Westwold Elementary School.

The District receives a yearly Rural School Grant from the Ministry of Education for \$166,000. to operate Westwold Elementary, if there are students enrolled at the school. In 2017-2018, there were 11 students, with \$7,301 provincial funding per student, which creates a revenue for the school of approximately \$240,000. The Principal's salary is pro-rated. Total salaries for Westwold Elementary are \$194,000, plus expenditures of \$14,000. SD73 was in a surplus budget situation for 2017-2018, so the expenditures for Westwold Elementary is not the issue. The district has calculated that the 'break even' enrolment number for the operation of Westwold Elementary is six enrolled students.

Therefore, if we know there are children in the community and we know there are benefits of small schools, as well as larger schools, the questions are:

- Should Westwold Elementary be kept open?
- If the school is kept open, what are the consequences of that decision?
- If the school is closed, what would the community like the building to be used for, if not a school?

5. Community Presentations

Superintendent Sidow indicated that if members of the community wish to speak, please register your name with Communications Manager Diana Skoglund so that your name is recorded for our records before posing your question or comment.

(Community feedback attached)

6. Question and Answer Period

(Community feedback attached)

Superintendent Sidow thanked everyone for attending the public consultation meeting and for welcoming the Board of Education and School District No. 73 staff to the community. We look forward to seeing some of you at the Public Board Meeting on January 28, 2019, 7:00 pm at the School Board Office, 1383 Ninth Avenue, Kamloops, BC.

7. Adjournment