

Meeting Summary

Event Open community meeting
Topic Draft School Facilities Plan for the Slocan Valley family of schools
Date April 18, 2016
Location WE Graham School, Slocan
Time 7:15 -9:15 PM

The following summarizes key points discussed, including summarized responses to questions raised by participants, and was prepared by the meeting facilitator. It is not intended to be exact minutes of the discussion.

Agenda

7:15	Welcome and introductions
7:25	Confirm key questions from the community for discussion
7:35	Brief overview presentation – for those who have not attended previous meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What has been the process to date?• What is being proposed for school facilities in the Slocan Valley and why?
7:45	Address discussion questions
9:00	Identify any follow-up actions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Board• The District• PACs/DPAC• Others
9:15	Meeting adjourned

Background

During an earlier meeting in the Slocan Valley to review the draft school facilities plan, parents asked for a follow-up community meeting so they could have more time to review the draft plan, communicate amongst themselves, and encourage more people to engage in the process. The Board of Education for School District 8 (the Board) agreed to a follow-up meeting and asked local consultant, Cathy Scott-May, to facilitate the discussion.

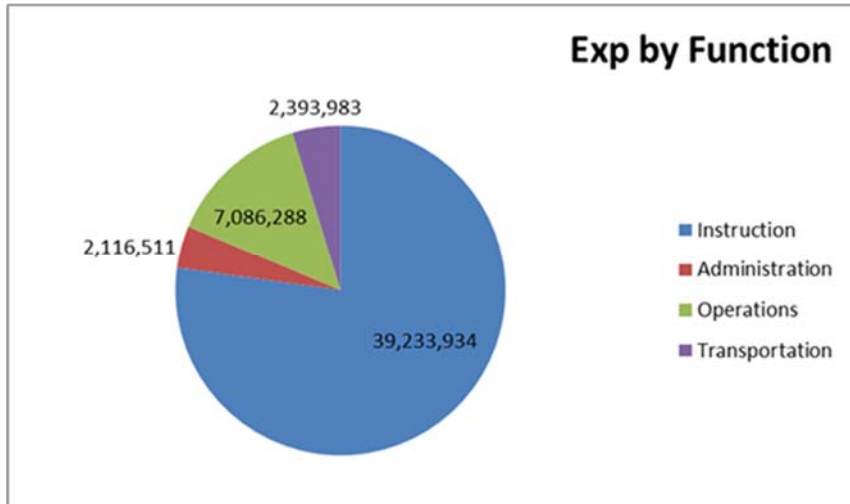
The facilitator met in advance with the Chair of the Board and Superintendent of Schools as well as contacted Chairs of the respective Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), including WE Graham, Winlaw, Brent Kennedy and Mount Sentinel and district, to define the purpose of the meeting, proposed agenda and key discussion questions. A draft agenda and list of proposed discussion questions was sent to each person for review and comment in advance of the meeting.

The Challenge

To help the Board make the best possible decisions about school facilities in order to support learning.

The Board seeks to minimize expenditures on school facilities (included in operations in Figure 1), administration and transportation in order to maximize support for instruction. As a result of declining enrolment, aging infrastructure, deferred maintenance costs, and the need to meet safety and learning needs, the Board is faced with decisions on school facilities.

Figure 1: Expenditures by the Board of Education for School District 8



Purpose of the Meeting

The Board was seeking feedback to help finalize the school facilities plan. The parent community wanted an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the draft plan and possible alternative scenarios. As a result, the two main purposes of the meeting were identified:

1. Establish a common understanding of
 - The process so far
 - The issues
 - Where to from here? – ***ensure all community members can make an informed decision about if and how they want to be involved from this point forward***
2. Respond to key community questions relating to:
 - Criteria and process used to develop draft facilities plan
 - Opportunities to modify the current options being considered
 - What happens if a school is proposed to close?

Overview Presentation

Recognizing that most participants had already heard the detailed presentation offered at earlier community meetings, district staff gave a brief overview presentation to support those who were engaging for the first time. Key questions and responses included:

1. What is deferred maintenance?
Decisions to delay non-critical maintenance of school facilities in order to maximize funding available for instruction.
2. What is the length of the draft facilities plan - how long is it intended to be in effect for?
It is a 10 year plan, which relates to our student enrolment projections.
3. What is the timeframe for the proposed cost savings?
They are the estimated annual cost savings.
4. What is included in the capital outlay?
The upgrades that would be immediately required to implement the proposed plan.

Comment from a participant: bussing is not worth it, keep the kids in their community.

Community Questions re: Development of the draft plan

1. How do the two scenarios for the Slocan Valley family of schools support improved learning for students?
Provides more opportunities because there will be a larger cohort of students, more professionals and can allow for different groupings of students.
2. How did we go from the top ranked scenario of rebuild Winlaw school (that was reported in local media) to potentially closing Winlaw?
The original scenarios looked at school facilities only within the Slocan Valley, whereas the draft plan looked at all the scenarios across the district. The Board feels it is unlikely that the Province will fund the rebuild of more than one school within the district within the next 10 years, so the plan reflects the district's top priority is to rebuild South Nelson at the current Trafalgar school site.
3. Is funding available to renovate Winlaw school if WEG is closed?
The Board would seek the funding, but it does not currently exist.
4. Would the closure of Winlaw improve utilization enough at WE Graham to prevent the closure of that school? Is this a first step towards closing both schools over the longer term?
The Board does not want to close both schools. There is no threshold for utilization of individual schools that is used to determine if a school might be closed. The provincial Ministry of Education is looking for 85% utilization across the district, but not within each school.
5. Were the socio-economic impacts of closing a school on either community considered? If so, how? If not, why not?

Socio-economic impacts on the community were not explicitly considered as the Board does not have a mandate to do so. Some of the criteria do address some of the socio-economic implications.

6. Has the assumption been made that if Winlaw school closes all families will send their children to WEG?
Yes, it has been assumed that all Winlaw students would go to WEG. Parents explained that an initial survey of Winlaw families suggest that 1/3 would send their children to WEG, 1/3 would send them to Brent Kennedy and the remaining 1/3 would leave the public school system.
7. What alternative scenarios have been considered and how did that impact the ranking of scenarios? Was a K-12 scenario for WEG considered? A K-12 scenario for WEG has not been part of the process to date, but this could be revisited.
8. How have out-of-catchment and out-of-district students been factored into the ranking process? Has the ranking of scenarios been based only on meeting the needs of families within catchment/district areas, with opportunities to send a student out-of-catchment/district dependent on whether there is room? Or are additions to some schools being considered based on total demand, which may include out-of-catchment/district students?
The process did factor in existing trends where a number of families choose to send their children out of catchment, for example some Bonnington parents send their children to Blewett.
9. How is enrolment predicted and have past predictions been fairly accurate?
The district uses multiple sources of information to consider trends within the district that can affect enrolment. The predictions to date have been reasonably accurate.

Community Questions re: Opportunities to modify the current options being considered

1. Are there short-term solutions that the District/Board feel might delay the need to consider closing schools while allowing more time to develop longer-term solutions?
A number of short-term actions were taken following the last time that the district reviewed school facilities and these are continuing. Creation of the draft plan considered the impact of changes in programming in Slovan Valley schools and concluded that they would not change the overall enrolment numbers.
2. As a potential longer-term solution, can SD8 enter into a partnership with local governments on ownership/maintenance of existing facilities? Might such a partnership change the range of options currently being considered?
The Board has entered into a partnership in the building a new school, but there are no partnerships on maintenance of existing schools.

3. What changes in enrolment numbers would be required to meet the needed utilization rates for both schools?

There is no threshold for utilization of individual schools that is used to determine if a school might be closed. The provincial Ministry of Education is looking for 85% utilization across the district, but not within each school.

4. Has the Board fully implemented their 2011 resolution regarding the Slocan Valley Family of Schools?

Most of the resolution has been implemented. A review of boundaries is on hold until the facilities plan has been completed.

Community Questions re: Process if a school is to close

1. What is the process for closing a school and how quickly does it take place? Would there be further discussion with the Slocan Valley community? Is there an opportunity to retain the building as an asset for the community to use?

There is both provincial legislation and Board policy that guides the process for considering a school closure. The facilities plan may suggest closure of one or more schools, but that decision is not made through adopting the plan, rather it triggers formal consultation, including meeting with the PAC of the school that is being considered for closure. The Board only makes a final decision after the formal consultation and the decision must be made before April 30th of the preceding year. Following the decision, a transition plan is required to be developed.

2. If either Winlaw or WEG school were to close, what improvements in learning and programming could be expected at the remaining school? If this hasn't been decided, what will be the process for considering changes in programming, how will families be involved, and when will such decisions be made? What happens with teachers when a school closes and two are amalgamated?

No decisions on programming have been made. The Board, district and school staff will work with the new school community to make such decisions. This is the focus of the transition plan. The contract with teachers determines what happens with teaching positions.

Follow-up actions

Winlaw PAC

- Has created a working group
- Developed a survey that is being circulated to all families
- Will submit data to the district
- Will be making a presentation to the Board on April 19th

WEG PAC

- Winlaw has shared their survey and so are circulating it to parents
- Are sharing information with Winlaw PAC
- Working with the Village of Slocan to communicate with the Board

District PAC

- Facilitating people from different PACs/schools talking with each other

Mount Sentinel and Brent Kennedy PACs

- Mostly listening to determine how they can be supportive of the discussion
- Encourage people to avoid allowing the discussion to divide people within the Valley

The Board

- Are meeting on April 19th and will be receiving presentations
- Final plan will be developed by May 3rd
- Will continue to read all input received