

School District #5: Baie Verte, Central, Connaigre
Regular School Board Meeting
September 10, 2002
MINUTES

IN ATTENDANCE

Terry Brown, Chair
Carolyn Andrews
Clarence Brown
Randy Edison
Robert Elliott
Recorder
Raymond Gray
Albert Hodder

Debbie Armstrong, Director of Education
Terry Hillier, Assistant Director (Finance & Administration)
Bonnie Lane-McCarthy, Assistant Director (Human Resources)
Frank Norman, Assistant Director (Programs)
Beverly Wells,

OBSERVERS

Gail Hoskins
Winston Keeping
Sharon Mayne
David Morrow
Sean Power
Gregory Roberts
Mabrey Winsor

Approximately 140 People from Bay d'Espoir

1. INVOCATION

The invocation was read.

2. Presentations

There were no presentations at this meeting.

3. Program PRESENTATION

There was no program presentation at this meeting.

Bonnie Lane-McCarthy commented on Marie Pack, a 39-year-old teacher who passed away in August. Ms. Pack taught on the South Coast. A moment of silence was held.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

*On motion the Agenda was approved. (Hoskins/Winsor)
Carried.*

01-02/03

5. MINUTES OF June 27, 2002

*On motion the Minutes of June 27, 2002, Regular School Board Meeting were approved. (Keeping/Gray)
Carried. 02-02/03*

6. BUSINESS ARISING

6.1. Leo Burke Academy, Ventilation System

Terry Hillier, Assistant Director (Finance & Administration), advised the meeting that Crosbie Engineering, consultant for the project, has visited the site and is preparing specifications for tendering of the project.

In answer to Robert Elliott's question as to how much money has been spent on the ventilation system at Leo Burke Academy, Terry Hillier, Assistant Director (Finance & Administration), advised that \$395,000 had been spent and \$57,000 has now been made available to fix the system.

6.2. School Facilities in Bay d'Espoir

Terry Brown read motion 131-01/02 that states "it was agreed to upgrade Greenwood Academy, Milltown, with the intention to close Holy Cross School, St. Alban's, following the established process for school closing". He said parents and interested persons had opportunities to make presentations to the Board in writing and again orally on August 29 and September 4, 2002.

Board trustees were given the opportunity to voice their opinions on the matter of restructuring education in Bay d'Espoir. What follows is a summary of their comments:

Gail Hoskins: Said she attended a study session of the Board the previous night and began reviewing the presentations again. She said the option of status quo was discussed at the study session. Ms. Hoskins said that the Minister of Education stated that status quo was not an option if the Board accepts the offered \$1,000,000. She said the Minister did not state, however, that status quo was not an option. Ms. Hoskins said the Board is not looking into the status quo because of teacher allocations, programming and maintenance costs. She said teacher allocations and programming are determined by the number of students enrolled each year, thus, the Board is looking into the future as it pertains to declining enrollment. She said when the Board considers maintenance costs, it again is looking into the future. Why then, she asked, is the Board not seriously looking into the future as it relates to the demographics of the area and other trends. She asked why the Board is looking at long term operating costs but ignoring long term bussing costs. Ms. Hoskins said she does not agree with not considering infrastructure when making a decision on this issue. She said it is clear that politics has played a major factor in the situation in Bay d'Espoir and this has limited the Board. She said the \$1,000,000 is still an issue for some people and she respects that. However, it has never been an issue for her because education should never be about dollars and cents. She feels that the Board has been manipulated by politics.

Albert Hodder: The one community in the Bay d'Espoir area that makes a school (K-12) viable is St.

Alban's. It has the largest population with about 500 people more than any other single community and more than one-half of the present school population. Seventy percent of the kindergarten population in 2006 will be from St. Alban's. Bussing costs would be reduced. He agrees that students from Morrisville would spend a long time traveling on busses but the students from St. Alban's would spend a long time away from home as well since they would have to walk 10-20 minutes to get to the bus. Mr. Hodder said according to the school planning manual if a new school were to be built, it is little doubt in his mind that the site selection would be in St. Alban's. He said with three buildings in Milltown he doesn't believe the renovations required will be accomplished with \$1,000,000. To him, renovating is similar to building because it will mean it is the place for schooling in the Bay d'Espoir area for many years to come. He could not support the motion.

Randy Edison: The process has been an eye-opener for him and one that has brought on more than a bit of soul searching. He said the reason for seeking a seat on the School Board in the first place was the children. Whatever the political limitations have been in this matter, the fact remains that he and the rest of the trustees must make the best decision for the children of Bay d'Espoir with the cards they have been dealt. Mr. Edison said it has been heart-wrenching to listen to the people who spoke out of true passion and a belief that the Board needs to get school reform in Bay d'Espoir completed—for the sake of the children. He read a quote from Gabriel Mistral about children being today, not tomorrow. Mr. Edison believes that when the dust has settled from this debate and subsequent decision, the parents of the Bay must look towards tomorrow, for the sake of the children, and he believes they will. While our world appears to be getting larger, Newfoundland areas such as Bay d'Espoir are shrinking and being forced to look within for the strength and tools to make the best of the lives there. Some have decided to stay at home while others have opted to take their families elsewhere. What remains now is for the parents of the Bay to unite under one true school system and make the best of it for their children. Academic performance, parental involvement and extra-curricular commitment has always been at a high level in Bay d'Espoir and he anticipates nothing less after a decision is made at this meeting. Mr. Edison commended the Board Chair and the senior staff on the way they conducted business throughout the process. He said it has been long, drawn-out and tiresome. He said the people of Bay d'Espoir should rest assured that the Board hasn't taken the decision lightly. He added that considering the legal timelines and restrictions the Board and staff operated under, the matter has been advanced in a very thorough and efficient manner under their leadership.

David Morrow: Involved since very beginning and has been very informed. Felt too much time has been spent on this issue and responsibility has been taken from the Board. He said if the people of Bay d'Espoir had united together, they would most likely have had a new school by now or one would have been started. A lot of schools have been closed, all with legitimate reasons. He said with respect to Bay d'Espoir, either location is quite fine to educate students. Both schools have been exceptional in the past and he would prefer a new school. He drew attention to his comments that he submitted to the Board in February and read an addendum to that. Mr. Morrow said much has changed in the Board's position on the issue under discussion. However, he believes that his comments then remain pertinent to the current situation; however, he felt there are several points that needed to be considered in light of those changes. He said some clarification has been provided to the Board regarding government's past practice when constructing or renovating schools. It would appear that, unless there are extraordinary circumstances, government will not fund the construction of a new school if a viable facility currently exists in that area which can be renovated for the proposed purpose at a lower cost. It would also appear that where more than one viable facility exists in an area, all things being equal, government will support the less expensive option. Given this apparent preference on the part of government, Mr.

Morrow personally believes that it is unlikely that government will support either the construction of a new school in Bay d'Espoir or the renovation of Holy Cross School. He said while some may feel that government's apparent preference in this issue is an interference in the School Board's jurisdiction, it must be remembered that the ultimate responsibility for public expenditure in this province rests with the provincial government as custodian of the public purse. As such, it exercises an oversight role where the management of such funds is transferred to another agency, such as a school board. Mr. Morrow said as an elected trustee, he may not like that situation, but there is not a lot he can do about it. The only way he sees of effectively influencing government to change its apparent decision would be for all parties to unite behind a single option. This would give trustees the support needed to lobby government for that option. Mr. Morrow said unfortunately, to quote the Minister of Education totally out of context, he does not see that happening in the foreseeable future.

Sean Power: He met a number of people in Bay d'Espoir and honest and sincere people come from both sides of the Bay. He said he has thought about the educational options there and infrastructure is not as important to him now as it was in the beginning. He said bussing most of the students is not a good idea either. Mr. Power said one of the two schools must be renovated and since the Minister has offered \$1,000,000 as a final deal, a decision needs to be made as to what school to renovate. He said he is not supporting the status quo since programming and teacher allocations will have to be reduced within the next couple of years. He said status quo would do nothing to heal the communities' wounds. Mr. Power said considering all options, he would vote for the motion.

Sharon Mayne: Listened to and read presentations and have heard comparisons made to other areas of our province and to several towns in our own District. She has been told that the restructuring arrangements in this District are working well. She said it has been a pleasure to visit the Bay d'Espoir area and has met some very nice people. She traveled to Morrisville so she could see for herself the distance traveled by the children and she has also been on many of the bi-roads in St. Alban's. She wanted a better understanding of what the people are saying. Ms. Mayne said Board trustees have been repeatedly asked to do what is best for the children. The previous Board made application for a new school and the present Board has been told there is no money. This Board sent a delegation of Board trustees to St. John's to talk to government officials to try to obtain additional funding to renovate Holy Cross. The Board has been told, however, that Greenwood Academy is the most structurally sound and then there's the famous "million dollar letter". She has asked about maintaining "the status quo" but how long will it be before programs are affected and the children are only getting a core program. Ms. Mayne said she feels there is an obligation on her part to try and do her best and that she has to be trusted to fulfill that obligation. She said she has not made her decision lightly. She said she doesn't know if her decision is "what's best" or "the best" but it is "her best". She will support the motion to close Holy Cross School and renovate Greenwood Academy.

Carolyn Andrews: Has always felt sad for parents who face having the school in their community closed and it makes decision making tough. She said the Board needs to make a decision that will enable it to move ahead with education in Bay d'Espoir. She does not consider the status quo to be a viable option due to the impact financially and its affect on personnel, program and resources. Ms. Andrews said there is an argument to be made in renovating either school and the Board has had the unenviable task of looking at all the information and making a decision with the focus on education for the children. She said the Board involves government dollars so how can it avoid politics? That's the reality to take into consideration, but not the basis for decision. Ms. Andrews said she would vote for the motion, with respect for all of Bay d'Espoir and an appreciation for the passion shown for the position they have

taken. She said she has heard that students from both sides of the Bay enjoy being together. She is convinced they will get a good education at either location. She believes the building in Milltown is the better building in many ways and the cheaper to renovate. The infrastructure and parental support will still be available to the students.

Clarence Brown: Known governments to have changed their minds and expects during the next election that government will change. He is voting against the motion. He said the demographic center is in St. Alban's. He would support a new school. Mr. Brown said the Board could get extra money by politicking. He could live with the status quo since governments come and governments go. Mr. Brown said the St. John's Board received a large amount of money when they restructured but have not spent that money. He said the people in Bay d'Espoir deserve a new school and he would like to prolong the fight.

There was no interest in voting by secret ballot on the motion.

<p><i>On motion it was agreed to upgrade Greenwood Academy, Milltown, and close Holy Cross School, St. Albans. (Andrews/Roberts) Carried. (9 for/4 against)</i></p>	<p><i>03-02/03</i></p>
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One half of the observers left at this time.

6.3. Smoking Policy

Terry Hillier, Assistant Director (Finance & Administration), said a draft smoking policy has gone to the Finance and Properties Committee and they will take another look at it. In the meantime it will be discussed at the next PRC meeting.

The other half of the observers left at this time.

6.4. Student Transportation

There are two big issues with student transportation: the provision of late buses at no cost to the school and/or the school board in order for students living outside the 1.6 kilometer regulation to access after school activities such as extra curricular, tutoring, etc., and the amendment to the Transportation Policy to reduce the seating capacity on a 72-passenger bus to take into consideration the size of students, the distance traveled and the varying road conditions. This Board presented a resolution to NLSBA at its AGM in July covering those two issues asking them to pursue the matter with the Department of Education. Clarence Brown said the resolution was passed unanimously with an addendum to have space for carrying student supplies.

The Board Chair also wrote a letter to the Minister of Education regarding this issue after the June Board meeting. A response was received and circulated to Board trustees. The Minister said that the Department's policies with respect to seating capacity are in line with the Highway Traffic Act and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) guidelines for the manufacture of school buses across the country. She said it was also important to note that the Newfoundland policies are also consistent with school busing policies and practices throughout Canada. The Minister said that any additional bus runs, including lunch-time or evening runs, are the responsibility of school boards, schools or parents, but she would lobby for additional monies at the next round of budget consultations.

The Finance and Properties Committee suggested that the Chair write the Minister asking her for a copy of the guidelines she referred to in her letter.

David Morrow said the CRSC has also discussed problems with bussing at its meetings. It is hoped that school councils will take on this issue as well. Randy Edison agreed that the more people who are involved the more likelihood of achieving results. Clarence Brown and Carolyn Andrews said they want comfort and convenience for the students.

7. Reports

7.1. Director's Report

There was no Director's Report for this meeting.

7.2. Executive Report

There was no Executive Report for this meeting.

7.3. Financial Report

There was no financial report. The auditor is currently preparing the annual audited report for the Board.

7.4. Finance & Properties Report

The Finance and Properties Committee met on September 9, 2002.

Baie Verte Middle School was discussed. During late summer, one of the employees mentioned to Mary Bungay, Operations Manger, that there was some problem with the gym walls and supporting columns deteriorating. Terry Hillier, Assistant Director (Finance & Administration), later discovered that an engineering report had recommended that repairs be made in 1989. However, the repairs were not undertaken. Now it has to be done for safety reasons. The gym has been shut down. Gary Hatcher, Senior Director at the Department of Education, has since been advised of the problem and the money needed for remediation. After discussion the following action was taken:

*On motion it was agreed to immediately apply to the Education Investment Corporation for emergency funding of \$48,875 in order to undertake structural renovations to the gymnasium walls at Baie Verte Middle School, Baie Verte. (Brown/Roberts) Carried unanimously.
04-02/03*

7.5. Personnel Committee Report

The Personnel Committee has not met since the last Board meeting.

7.6. Programming Report

The Programming Committee met on September 10 but no proceedings were available for this meeting.

7.7. CRSC Report

David Morrow will present a written report at the next School Board meeting.

7.8. School Board-Teacher Liaison Committee

The School Board-Teacher Liaison Committee has not met this school year.

7.9. NLSBA AGM

Carolyn Andrews will present a report at the next Board meeting.

7.10. CSBA Conference

Carolyn Andrews will present a report at the next Board meeting.

Meanwhile, Randy Edison had written his report earlier and it was circulated to Board trustees. Mr. Edison highlighted his report, thanked the Board for providing him the opportunity to attend, and recommended that others should take the opportunity to attend future conferences.

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.1. Nominating Committee

The Board's Constitution states that elections for Board officials must be conducted no later than November 30 every year. It has, however, been the practice of holding nominations for the Board in October and it was agreed to do the same this year.

Randy Edison, Gregory Roberts and Raymond Gray agreed to be the Nominating Committee. They will bring a report to the next Board meeting.

8.2. Atlantic Conference, January 30 – February 1, 2003

The Atlantic School Boards Conference will be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from January 30 to February 1, 2003. The Board will send the Director, the Board Chair and two trustees. Rooms have been reserved at the Citadel Inn. Those who are interested in going should contact Beverly Wells by November 30. David Morrow encouraged trustees to attend.

9. Correspondence

9.1. Distinguished School Administrator of the Year Award

The Distinguished School Administrator's Award is co-sponsored by the District and the School Administrators Council Regional Committee. The Award is for a deserving administrator at the school level showing outstanding leadership. A screening committee, consisting of Gary Boyd, District #5 School Administrators Council; Terry Hillier, the Senior Administrators Team; and Sean Power, School Board trustee, perused the applications and made a decision. The winner, Harvey Rice, Vice-Principal, Indian River High, Springdale, will receive this Award at the Administrators' Retreat later in September. A letter has been sent to Mr. Rice notifying him of his winning and an invitation has been extended to his family to attend the presentation.

9.2. Tracey Perry/School Board Trustees

Tracey Perry wrote a letter to the Board on September 9 offering a solution for the restructuring of education in Bay d'Espoir. Ms. Perry suggested the status quo and the renaming of both schools. The Director didn't see the letter until Gail Hoskins, Board trustee, brought copies of the letter to a study session of the Board on September 9. On September 10, another letter was received from Ms. Perry. That letter accused the District staff of leaking the letter to people in Milltown. However, the Director ascertained from the people in Milltown that they did not receive the information on Perry's letter from District staff.

Gail Hoskins said she had spoken with Perry who is very upset about this matter and will be taking the matter further. The Director said she had also spoken with Ms. Perry and advised her that the information was not leaked from the District Office.

Copies of the correspondence from Ms. Perry were circulated to Board trustees.

10. Outstanding Business

- 10.1. Home Schooling Policy (pg. 4, 00/01)**
- 10.2. Sale of Board Office (pg. 23)**
- 10.3. By-Laws**
- 10.4. Renaming Schools (pg. 22, 00/01)**
- 10.5. Policy on Partnerships (pg. 33, 00/01)**
- 10.6. Renovations at Windsor Academy (pg. 42)**
- 10.7. Harbour Breton Trustee (pg. 73)**

10.8. La Rochelle Property in Brent's Cove

10.9. School Review Committee – Springdale, (pg. 79)

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on October 15 at 7:00 p.m. at the School Board Office in Grand Falls-Windsor. The November meeting is scheduled for November 19 and the December meeting will be held on December 10.

12. Motion to Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Beverly Wells, Recorder

Terry Brown, Chair of the Board