

Well, another Langley School District board meeting where everyone was in agreement - wonders never cease. All debate was probably held behind closed doors, in the "planning meetings" **If not**, we have a herd of sheep, not an elected board.

The tone of the meeting was unchanged since the election of this board. All were complaining about declining enrolment, not having money, and the Ministry that they say is mandating what they do with the money. (I wonder why we need a board at all, the way they talk.)

Langley Fundamental Elementary's School Plan presentation highlighted their Social Responsibility goal. The school's performance in this area is not where they would like it to be and will be a focus area. Glenwood Elementary's principal was unable to attend.

The two delegations that spoke against moving LEC(Langley Education Center) to a secondary school environment were passionate, and their words, heartfelt. During all this, the Board looked as if they could not wait till the delegations were finished. Mr. **Burton** was a ready timekeeper at hand. When the 3 minute mark hit, so started his '3 minutes left, better summarize', '2 minutes, better wrap it up', and '1 minute left, should be closing' prompts. I view Mr. **Burton's** treatment of both of these delegations as rude and impatient. These people came out in inclement weather to participate in the process with the hope that they would change the board's minds. It appeared obvious to me that the trustee's minds were already set as I witnessed the tapping of toes, fidgeting of feet; rifling through papers, and curious eye movements. There are a total of 5 delegations permitted per meeting. Each delegation is allotted 10 minutes. It seems a bit questionable why **Burton** felt he had to cut these people short. (Personally, I thought Mr. **Dave Hall's** suggestion regarding Langley Prairie sounded like a very economic and practical solution.)

What shocked me was that after the delegations were done within their allotted time of ten minutes - no more, we had to sit and listen to Mr. **Burton** complaining at length about staff members who called him about not closing the schools on Monday. He stated that he made it to work and would not be paid if he didn't. What was interesting was that he did make it to a 7:30 am breakfast at Ricky's with two local MLA's to complain about the government mandating things and then not funding them. As usual, no real resolutions were found except to blame the Ministry. I wonder if the breakfast was compliments of the Ministry of Education money, more than likely. (I wonder how many musical instruments could have been bought for music programs with that bill.) Then off to his office that is less than a block away - probably could walk the short distance.

Then we were told that the **Superintendent** spent the night in a hotel so that she could make the decision of whether to close schools or not. Funny, that the staff that she must confer with could not have advised her of the situation over the phone at her home. What would have happened if she were out of town at a conference? (Savings of about \$142.00 for the night would buy about 14 recorders, enough for half a class).

(a) COURSE FEES JUDGEMENT

The report on the School Course Fees Judgment seems to contribute to the confusion that there is around this issue.

Simplified is if the teacher uses it to grade the children there is no fee. If it is not required and is optional then it is not covered. Simply stated for example field trips are nice but are not required to meet the curriculum standards. Elementary should not be really affected but Secondary electives will be hardest hit. This is my interpretation and may not be in agreement with board.

(b) 2006/2007 OPERATING BUDGET UPDATE

The November 2006 statement is saying it's not done and waiting for funds to be able to say we are balancing. Right now they are taking from Mary to pay Paul.

(c) BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE ALDERGROVE AREA

Recommendation #1: The report was verbally given and full details can be found at: www.sd35.bc.ca/future. We listened to **Mr. McAvoy** present recommendations to the trustees about the Aldergrove area. As the closing of an elementary school was discussed, there were comments were made about having NIMBYs (their word not mine) to deal with. Again, there is no mention of looking in their own backyard/reducing 2 trustee seats and the \$50,000.00 saving; and no mention that it would be prudent on their part to revoke the next raise they will receive in December.

Recommendation #2: The Board requested Senior Management to prepare a report with recommendations on Aldergrove. If history repeats itself, there is a high possibility of things being passed at the January 23rd, 2007 Public Board meeting without giving any notice to the community for input. I suggest that any delegations that wish input on this get in line for the December 12 meeting and maybe make a suggestion that they look in their own backyard too. Amalgamation and reduction of two seats comes to mind. Interesting to note that the public was **NOT** presented with information about the student capacity at each elementary school - just the aggregate capacity, the age of the facilities, the cost of upkeep and running for each school, etc. **Mr. McAvoy** certainly looked at this. It should be a consideration and they should be upfront about it. It costs more to heat and repair older schools.

(d) COMMUNITY CONSULTATION – SOUTH/CENTRAL LANGLEY

This was simply advising of the next set of community meetings open to the public. Coffee at 6:30 pm. Meeting begins at 7:00 pm. Everyone should attend regardless of whether you are in the catchment area. It is good to hear how others feel about their communities.

January 17th Brookwood Secondary

January 31 H.D. Stafford Secondary

February 21 Langley Secondary School

What I find amazing is that the Board is supposed to make decisions about the whole district and they have chosen to do snap shots so that when the second and third areas come into play the likelihood of any money being available is nil to none. Any decisions

they make have financial impact and there is only one budget. Again they are operating in separate little sand boxes trying to band-aid things instead of restructuring the system as a whole to become a better service to all the students in SD35. They have chosen the norm of the "let's plug this hole and then the next". Instead of looking at it all and restructuring to operate within your means. The dam will give out because it will be so full of holes there will be nothing to keep it together. It amazes me that a group of educated people will continue to do things the same way and expect a different result.

(e) CLASS SIZE AND COMPOSITION REPORT

This contained the classes that were exceeding the Special needs (IEP) enrolment numbers there is an increase.

(f) EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND RELATED FACILITIES PLANNING

Recommendation #1: That the report on Educational Opportunities and Related Facilities Planning was accepted.

Recommendation #2: APEX (Alternative School) to be moved to former Otter Elementary site (residents in the area have been advised that the elementary school will be opened again, in what detail is unknown.)

Recommendation #3: The board approved LEC to be moved to LSS and PASS to Anderson Site and that a report in April of 2008 is to be delivered on how the students are doing in their new environment.

One trustee stated that in regards to the relocation of LEC and APEX, "Well, we didn't consult with you but maybe next time." Through one side of their mouths they say – we are consulting the public, and on the other side they say – oh, we're sorry we didn't consult, maybe next time. It sounded like a broken record that repeats itself more than once where consultation is concerned with this current board. Later during question period, when an audience member asked for clarification and further information about the Trustee mentioning there was consultation actually happening and with whom, he was rudely chastised. He was informed they were not prepared to re-debate it. He was told to ask the particular trustee what they meant by that, after the meeting is adjourned." What is question period for, I ask? Check your policy **Mr. Burton**. Didn't you help write it? My goodness, what does the Board think their role is if not to listen to their constituents and to respond respectfully? Isn't that what they are trying to teach our children?

(g) SAFE, CARING AND ORDERLY SCHOOLS

The report on Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools is basically a compilation of the district's related policies and each school's code of conduct, as well as a listing of supporting programs within our schools. You can go during business hours to the School Board Office and go to the front desk and you can only look at it. They give copies to the partners groups but do not post the document on their website. Maybe DPAC will take the lead and post their copy on their site so parents and public can be informed. Since the Board seems to have problems getting things posted in a timely fashion. I wonder what they spend all that money on technology for.

(h) LEARNING ASSISTANCE AND RESOURCE SUPPORT

The report basically stated we have an increase of identified students with learning differences.

The district reports that these students have always been in our schools and were provided service, but did not always meet the criteria for a Ministry designation. I'm not sure if the parents of these students would agree with this statement that service was provided.

(i) 2007/2008 FIVE-YEAR CAPITAL PLAN

Well it appears Mountain will still have to wait at least 3 years before the expansion plans are initiated. I wonder which secondary school will be up on the chopping block to acquire the approval for expansion. Since all these facilities will have to be at 110 per cent capacity before the Ministry will approve expansion or a new school. DW Poppy, HD Stafford or Aldergrove would be my guess. The other remaining secondary schools are already at capacity. With the move of LEC to LSS that will bring them back into the percentile needed. That is, if the students still use our facility for alternate education and if all the sports programs are maintained; which will only happen if the school is able to cover the fees for them. Then of course there is the Fundamental middle/secondary - will it be to capacity? It is questionable. Will this choice program have to be moved again or considered for the chopping block?

(j) POLICY #3601 – DISPOSAL OF REAL PROPERTY

Recommendation: That Notice of Motion to introduce new Policy #3601 – Disposal of Real Property

From my perspective (and I could be wrong because it wasn't exactly well explained at the meeting), this new policy appears to allow for a variety of behind the scenes deals to sell or swap property without going through a full public tender or public bidding process. I can guess this is so that they can quickly dispose of land since the Fundamental expansion bill is due and over budget. How much do you want to wager that very few people will object?

(k) POLICY #4010(A) – USE OF ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY MATERIALS

The proposed policy looks to “make all reasonable efforts to purchase non-toxic material” and other eco-friendly initiatives. The policy sounds good but how much will it cost? Yes, the environment and health is important but has there been a cost analysis? It is the Board's obligation to find out before making decisions. Non-toxic materials often do not work as well and take more staff time to use. There is increased staff time for product review and training. Something to think about.

(l) POLICY #4010(B) – INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

I believe this is a good step forward but I would like to know the effectiveness and the cost though. I would also like to be assured that the professionals doing the appraisals are trained in the area to do so.

(m) **LOCALLY APPROVED TITLES:** If trustees were asked on the street I wonder if they would be able to name any one of the titles they approved. Better yet, tell us the content of the book. There is an approval process but its not clear if this is ever applied to these lists the lambs approve. By the way, there are only 3 books listed this time. I wonder which Trustees reading this are now shuffling through their papers to find out what they approved. The district says it believes in parental involvement but this is one area in which they do not practice what they preach. Parents, even DPAC representatives, are not presented with the list for input prior to it going to the Board. It is less useful to provide input after the resources have been approved. Should parents trust the professionals? Perhaps, but there is validity in consultation with parents.

Writer's comments:

The Trustee comments were a first for this board in that everyone stated they attended committee meetings etc. You are never told for what purpose they attend, they never seem to bring back relevant information. With the exception of **Bech** who is on the Aboriginal Advisory Committee. The rest, I guess they go for the food for that is all some comment on.

Why are there not more people interested in protecting the funds the Ministry allocates for the education of students; the same monies that are being used for trustees' raises, donations to the School District Foundation and loans to School District Business Company that has made very little return? Maybe every constituent should be asking to know what exactly Trustees are doing behind those closed doors.

If you are interested in the amalgamation of the trustee electoral area for the School Board and reduction of 2 trustees as a viable option that would put approximately \$50,000 annually back into the budget, you can find the petition at:
<http://members.shaw.ca/amalgamateschoolboard>

The district is geographically one of the smallest district areas and trustees have easy accessibility to all schools. There is declining enrolment and they are closing schools. They are required to attend no more meetings than any other board in BC. Five (5) Trustees could easily do what they are supposed to be doing. Surrey has 7 and twice the number of schools and population. According to a newspaper article from February 5, 1976, increasing the number of trustees would increase the work for staff and time for meetings. This has been proven to be true. The actual cost for trustees places them in line with other trustees in BC, if not costing the district more.

During Trustee comments, one trustee stated that there are policies to follow and everyone should follow them. (This, I find a travesty for I would suggest that the Board itself is not following its own policies especially regarding the automatic raises they have procured for themselves effective this December. Ask for a copy of their June Board meeting minutes if you are a doubter).

Susan Semonick