

CHARLTON-SAVARD PUBLIC SCHOOL
ACCOMMODATION REVIEW MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12TH, 2008
7:00 P.M.
NEW LISKEARD BOARD OFFICE

Committee members present:

Saunders Porter, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees and Chair of the ARC
Tom Henderson, Trustee
Richard Knowles, Trustee
Peter Osterberg, Trustee
Barry Potter, Englehart Public School Council member
Volker Weissner, Charlton-Savard Public School Council member
Al Fraser, Reeve, Charlton-Dack Township
Bill Laurila, Councillor, Charlton-Dack Township
Marion Catchpole, Local Business Representative
Linda Knight, Director of Education & Secretary to the Board
Barry Peterson, Superintendent of Business
Jo-Anne Plaunt, Assistant to the Director

Guest:

Rosemary Pochopsky, Vice Chairperson of the Board of Trustee

Call to Order:

Saunders Porter, Chairperson of the Committee, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. He advised the Committee that the handout entitled *Final Report to the Board's Administrative Council* should have "DRAFT" on the cover. He then turned the meeting over to Linda Knight and Barry Peterson to present the Draft for the Committee's consideration.

Discussion:

Barry Peterson reviewed the Board Policy and the Accommodation Review process as mandated by the Ministry of Education. The topics and subheadings used on the *Draft* were taken directly from the Board Policy. In response to Al Fraser's question as to who prepared the report, Barry Peterson advised that Linda Knight and he had worked on preparing this *Draft* using the facts from the various presentations and Board data. The purpose of tonight's meeting would be to review and amend/revise the *Draft* as the Committee saw fit in

order to finalize the document for presentation to Senior Administration next Tuesday.

Concerns were expressed by several members of the Committee: Al Fraser questioned the viewpoint contained in the *Draft* being that of the Administration, Peter Osterberg asked whether tonight's recommendation would be posted on the Board's website, and Bill Lauila questioned the actual path the document would take after tonight.

In response, Barry Peterson and Linda Knight clarified that the *Final Report* of the Accommodation Review Committee as decided tonight would be presented to Senior Administration (consisting of Linda Knight, Barry Peterson, Joey Plaunt Steve Pladzyk, Michelle Leigh and Ken Ryan) on Tuesday, March 18th, 2008. The Senior Administration could accept and/or revise the *Final Report* before making its presentation to the Board. The Trustees would vote on the Accommodation Review for Charlton-Savard Public School on May 20th, 2008. It was confirmed that the Trustees would have not only the *Final Report* but would have access to all the minutes of meetings, documentation presented, and relevant Board data. As to whether or not tonight's *Final Report* would be posted on the website, Linda Knight advised she would check into this request.

Regarding the **Enrolment** sub-heading (p.2), T. Henderson requested that the word "will" in the last sentence be changed to "may". To be done by Barry Peterson. Al Fraser noted that the implication in this sentence is that this is a "bad thing" while many of the parents/community representatives felt multi-grades were favourable. Barry Peterson referred to the p.9 **Summary of Community Consultation**, fifth point: "The community in general supports multi-grade classrooms".

Considerable discussion revolved around the EQAO data and results (p.4):

Barry Potter was curious as to whether or not the EQAO results could be compared by environment for both Charlton-Savard and Englehart Public School students but also acknowledged that Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act would prevent access to individual names/families and their results. Al Fraser suggested that the EQAO results appeared consistently over Board and Provincial standards; Barry Peterson reviewed the Board/School EQAO chart of results and showed the fluctuations of results. Joey Plaunt cautioned that EQAO results were a compulsory Ministry tool that only provided a "snapshot" of individual student ability on one day and only in certain areas of the curriculum for elementary students in Grades 3 & 6. Discussion regarding the Committee's impression that EQAO results were used by the Board to "rate" their schools resulted in Linda Knight and Joey Plaunt confirming that the "snapshot" is only one means of measuring individual student strengths & weaknesses and that the

Board does not judge any school on its EQAO results. Only the Ministry of Education uses the EQAO results to rate individual schools to determine and fund special programs such as “turn-around schools”. Bill Lauila reiterated that it was the public perception that EQAO results would weigh heavily in the ARC considerations. Al Fraser pointed to the successes of former Charlton-Savard students at the secondary level (specifically Honour Roll and Ontario Scholars). Joey agreed that there were many former students on the Englehart High School Honour Roll but pointed out that the Honour Roll is no longer solely based on excelling academic students – all levels of students are included.

Bill Lauila referred to Ralph Doner’s list of questions submitted at the last public meeting (January 29th, 2008; copies provided to all tonight). Specifically, Bill wanted to know how and when the questions would be answered. Saunders Porter commented that many of the questions had been answered in the first three meetings (R. Doner was not present at them) but that Saunders and Barry Peterson would review the questions and respond directly to R. Doner. Bill Lauila and Al Fraser both indicated that the people attending the January ARC public meeting were under the impression that there would be another public session for the Board to provide answers and referred to the January minutes. They felt that pressures on the community leaders to provide another public session (and prevent the feeling of the ARC closing off the public in a “secret process”) and the high level of emotion evident in the community would be alleviated by one more meeting. Richard Knowles suggested that the Committee respond to R. Doner’s questions in the format of a handout to be distributed to the community. By the end of the meeting, Al Fraser voiced the opinion that if the ARC recommended that the school stay open, there would be no need for another public meeting to answer R. Doner’s questions; if the recommendation were to NOT stay open, he felt there should definitely be another meeting. This seemed to be supported by other members of the Committee. At the end of the evening, and after the Committee’s motion was passed, Saunders Porter, as Chairperson of the Committee agreed to respond to R. Doner’s letter, providing him with copies of all minutes and documentation received and disbursed at the Public Meetings.

Continuing on the review of the *Draft*, under the topic **Teacher Interaction** (p.5), clarification was provided regarding interaction with teachers working in the same division (primary/junior/intermediate). The word “grade” is to be changed to “division” and the phrase “as a result of declining enrolment” is to be removed.

Value to the Board - Student Outcomes (p.6) included Barry Potter’s discussion on student outcomes and the “measuring stick” approach to measure school success. Further review of the reliability and use of EQAO results ensued. The “other classroom data” referred to could not be published as Linda Knight

indicated the low numbers of students in each grade could result in the individual data being identified.

At this point, Tom Henderson stated that there was no where that the VALUE TO STUDENT was reflected; he felt that the many comments regarding the successes of students should be reflected in the **Value to Student**. Linda Knight referred to p.9, item #3, "The community has pointed out that some graduates of the school have excelled in high school, college and university and gone on to be exemplary citizens". In discussion, Al Fraser commented that, although Barry Potter is correct in advising the publicly proclaimed figures regarding student successes are not "empirical data", the strength of the community's conviction with regard to student successes is not adequately reflected in the *Final Report*.

Bill Lauila asked, "Does the Committee agree that the level of education is good to excellent at CSPS?" Joey Plaunt commented that all employees at CSPS contribute to the quality and improvement of education at CSPS (and other Board schools). Barry Peterson reflected that the parents who spoke at the public meetings certainly felt strongly that their children got a "good education"; there was no intention of having the *Final Report* be subversive in its format. Barry Potter spoke of the difficulty of the decision-making process faced by the ARC; the passion felt by the individuals and community contrasted by the facts that had to be analyzed made this a very difficult process, especially as some felt the escalation of emotion pitting Charlton against Englehart (and individual schools-CSPS, EPS, Holy Family). All discounted the validity of the recent comments made on *Facebook*. Volkner Weissner spoke of the support he would have toward any school facing closure; the focal point of many communities is certainly their elementary school.

Barry Peterson suggested moving the **Summary of Community Consultation** into the appropriate sub-headings of the main document. The Committee agreed that this would be the preferred format.

The Committee also requested that, in reference to statements regarding declining enrolment/provision of programs, etc., the word "will" be changed to "may" and the words "as" and "when" be changed to "if" (enrolment declines). Barry Peterson agreed to do such changes to wording.

Further revision of the *Final Report* would include altering the reference to "rural communities" to read "community and rural area" (p.6, p.7, p.7, p.8, p.9).

Attracts or Retains Families in the Communities (p.8): Discussion followed regarding whether or not families would re-locate to Charlton if the school closed. There were differing opinions regarding whether bussing to Englehart would be such a negative as to deter families from Charlton. The Committee

recommended that the entire clause be moved to be included under the **Proximity of the School to Students/Length of Bus Ride to School (p.5).**

School Value to the Community (p.8): The following additional sentence was approved:

“The school’s contribution to municipal services is significant.”

Saunders Porter then requested the Committee to consider a formal **Recommendation** to complete the *Final Report*.

Much discussion ensued following Richard Knowles suggestion that the ARC advise the Senior Administration and Board that they have completed the process and would recommend that the Board NOT close CSPS at this time but do so when enrolment fell to a specific number of students. Volkner Weissner and Bill Lauila suggested the recommendation should include a delay for a specific number of years (varying from 2-5). Peter Osterberg asked Linda Knight of the legal implications of an ARC recommending a school be closed conditional on either a specific enrolment number or year. The concern felt by all was that no one wanted another Accommodation Review Committee to have to go through this “ugly process” or deal with the same issues for the same school in another couple of years.

By including the enrolment figure in the recommendation, it was generally felt that the school community would have been fairly served by this Committee’s mandate; the entire community would then be aware of the possibility of closing CSPS if and when enrolment dropped to a specific number, and the community would then have some ownership over its future. The insertion of a specific year could result in the potential of one or more years with extremely low enrolment (i.e. if there were only 40 students in one year, 2- and 4- grade splits would result; concerns about the quality education for any school faced with four-grade splits was expressed). Barry Peterson commented that the Ministry looks directly at two “qualifiers” when considering schools – teaching the teachers and curriculum outcomes. Tom Henderson and others expressed concerns regarding whether the suggested recommendation would be precedent-setting. Richard Knowles and Joey Plaunt reinforced that the Ministry policy is that each school’s ARC exists independently of others and focuses only on the factors leading up to that specific school having to face an Accommodation Review. The Committee could not & would not commit this or any future Board to follow a poor recommendation or one that went against Ministry guidelines/Board policy.

Ultimately, the following recommendation was put forward to be inserted in the *Final Report*, page 9:

Richard Knowles/Peter Osterberg

MOVED that this Committee, having completed the Accommodation Review, recommends that Charlton-Savard Public School remain open until such time as the student population reaches the number of sixty (60) students.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Abstentions:

Linda Knight

Barry Peterson

Joey Plaunt

Concerns regarding the entire Accommodation Review Process as mandated by the Ministry of Education had occurred throughout the meeting. The Committee members felt that the adversarial and confrontational elements inherent in the process needed to be addressed with the Ministry. Suggestions that the Committee attempt to relay the frustration and negativity of the process to the Ministry resulted in the following motion:

MOVED that this Accommodation Review Committee write to the Ministry of Education expressing its disapproval of the Accommodation Review process and incorporating a list of reasons why this process is flawed and strongly suggesting the Ministry change its policy with respect to the entire process.

MOVED by Tom Henderson

SECONDED by Peter Osterberg

CARRIED

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

Moved by Peter Osterberg, seconded by Richard Knowles that this meeting adjourn at 10:46 p.m.