

The Calgary Board of Education

Minutes of the Public Input Meeting Regarding Consideration of Closure of Rosscarrock School, held virtually through Microsoft Teams, on Wednesday, December 2, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE (Virtual)

Board of Trustees:

Ms. M. Dennis, Board Chair, Trustee - Wards 5 & 10
Ms. T. Hurdman, Trustee - Wards 1 & 2
Ms. A. Adams, Board Vice-Chair, Trustee - Wards 3 & 4
Mr. R. Hehr, Trustee - Wards 8 & 9
Ms. J. Hrdlicka, Trustee - Wards 11 & 13
Mr. M. Bradshaw, Trustee - Wards 12 & 14

Administration:

Mr. C. Usih, Chief Superintendent of Schools
Mr. D. Breton, Superintendent, Facilities and Environmental Services
Ms. J. Pitman, Superintendent, School Improvement
Ms. K. Fenney, General Counsel and Procedural Advisor to the Board
Ms. L. Campbell-Walters, Director, Planning
Mr. C. McGreish, Planning Analyst
Ms. B. Fraser, Principal, Rosscarrock School
Ms. E. Rae, Principal, Wildwood School
Ms. K. Dahl, Principal, Glendale School
Ms. L. Cooper, Education Director, Area 7
Mr. E. Sutlic, Director, Corporate Finance
Ms. T. Minor, Corporate Secretary
Ms. M. Geyer, Communications Advisor
Ms. M. Broda, Board Administrator

WELCOME, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND INTRODUCTIONS

Board Chair M. Dennis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and noted she would Chair the Meeting. She noted that to ensure the CBE is complying with COVID-19 related health measures announced on November 24, this meeting has been changed from in-person to virtual. Chair Dennis acknowledged the traditional territories and oral practices of the Blackfoot Nations, which includes the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai. She also acknowledged the Tsuut'ina and Stoney Nakoda First Nations, the Métis Nation (Region 3), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.

Introductions were made of The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) Trustees and Administration in attendance. The Chair also welcomed CBE teachers, staff, members of the public and Nabil Akl, an interpreter who is available to support parents and public wishing to speak.



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Chair Dennis stated that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of maintaining an accurate internal record of the proceedings, and that minutes of the meeting will be available on the CBE website at www.cbe.ab.ca prior to the Board of Trustees making a decision on this matter.

Chair Dennis reviewed the agenda for the meeting, as follows:

1. Opening Remarks
2. Meeting Purpose and Outline
3. Meeting Guidelines
4. CBE Administration Presentation
5. Questions and Comments
6. Closing Remarks

OPENING REMARKS

Chair Dennis spoke to the role of the Board of Trustees in the closure consideration process. She noted that the Board of Trustees has the sole responsibility and authority to make closure decisions, and she clarified that no decision has been made at this time.

In accordance with Alberta legislation and the Board's Closure of Schools Procedure, the consideration of closure process has many steps to it.

As part of the process, at the regular Board of Trustees' meeting held Tuesday, October 27, 2020, the Board passed a motion to commence the public input process to consider the closure of Rosscarrock School. This was a decision to initiate the consideration of closure process - not a decision to proceed with the closure.

The rationale, pertinent facts, and information about the proposed closure is available on CBE's public website and Rosscarrock School website. This information is one part of the information that has been, and will be, reviewed and considered by Trustees. Before making any final decision on the closure of a school, the Board follows a process to secure additional input from parents and the general public, including:

- convening this public input meeting to provide important and relevant information; and
- providing an opportunity for the public to share their perspectives with the Board.

Following this meeting, additional public comments or concerns may be provided in writing by Wednesday, January 20 2021. The details for written submissions are set out in the parent letter sent through School Messenger on October 28, 2020 and the details for submissions are also available on the CBE public website. Trustees are here to listen to your comments and questions as your input will inform the Board's decision-making on this matter. Throughout tonight's discussion and the entire consideration of closure process, Trustees will be paying close attention to what the public have to say.

All of the information collected during the consideration of closure process will be weighed very carefully by Trustees before any final decision is made.

The Board of Trustees tentatively anticipates debating the merits of this matter and making a decision regarding the proposed closure on Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at a public meeting of the Board of Trustees.

The Board's ongoing commitment is to provide educational programs and services in suitable facilities throughout Calgary. To honour that commitment, the Board needs to take into consideration many factors including student enrolment levels, the ability to resource instructional programming, the health and safety of students, and accessibility. The Board also considers financial factors to ensure the CBE is using resources effectively. The Board takes the information received and makes decisions, on a system-wide basis, serving the overall interests of public education within the CBE.

Consideration of closure of a school is a serious matter to the Board of Trustees. The Board also appreciates that it is very significant to the students, parents and other members of the community.

The attendance of CBE administration is to assist the Board with the presentation, to respond to the public's questions, and to help Trustees manage the process for this meeting.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Chair Dennis thanked everybody for attending the meeting.

MEETING PURPOSE AND OUTLINE

Chair Dennis noted the purpose of the meeting is two-fold: firstly, it is for Administration to outline the rationale for the proposed closure, and share information about the timing of the proposed closure and the accommodation plan for students affected; secondly, it is to provide the public an opportunity to share their perspectives about the proposed closure with the Board.

The agenda has been arranged to ensure that everyone will have ample opportunity to ask questions and make any comments they may have. The public's comments and questions at this meeting will form part of the formal material that the Board of Trustees will consider, as they review this matter and ultimately reach a decision.

MEETING GUIDELINES

Chair Dennis asked everyone to observe the meeting guidelines, which included:

- muting microphones except when called on to speak;
- comments and questions to be addressed following the presentation portion of the meeting;
- limiting questions or comments to five minutes; and
- being respectful of differing opinions and everyone's right to speak.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENTATION

CBE Planning Principles

Administration shared the factors considered when planning for student accommodation, as outlined in the CBE Administrative Regulation 1090. These principles include:

- Allow students to attend school close to home
- Provide equitable access for all students to quality learning environments and choice of programs
- Use space and resources effectively
- Provide long term sustainability

Rationale for the Proposed Closure

Administration provided an overview of the following factors considered in bringing a recommendation to the Board of Trustees to commence the public input process to consider the closure of Rosscarrock School:

- Persistent low enrolment and excess capacity for several years
- Continuous low enrolment has a harmful impact on student learning

Background

Rosscarrock School was built in 1960. The school was first identified on the Three-Year System Student Accommodation Plan (SSAP) in 2009 as having low enrolment and excess capacity. Currently, city planning guidelines state one elementary school be built per 10,000 residents. This equates to only one elementary school being built in the Rosscarrock area versus the three that are currently there.

Enrolment remained stable in 2010, with around 150 students. Between 2014 and 2016, enrolment increased due to the fact that it was an overflow school from the West Springs community, the temporary addition of Spanish and Bilingual programs, and students attending from the Cougar Ridge community. Enrolment numbers started declining again in 2017 when students were designated back to Westgate School. This was followed by students from Cougar Ridge being re-designated to West Springs.

In the 2018-2019 school year, the Spanish Bilingual program moved to Glenmeadows School. Also during the 2018-2019 school year, Rosscarrock School was brought forward for consideration of school closure. The Board voted against closure. Following this decision, the CBE implemented strategies to help to increase enrolment in the school. Actions taken were: the addition of an Early Development Centre; the Area Office supplementing the school budget to enhance student learning opportunities; and reaching out to the community association and others in order to generate greater awareness and interest in the school. This did not help to increase enrolment. In April 2020, due to low registration, Kindergarten students were re-designated to Wildwood and Glendale Schools for the 2020-2021 school year.

Current Student Enrolment

As of September 30, 2020, there were 72 students enrolled in the school. Currently, due to family movement, the school only has 65 students enrolled and 4 additional students in HUB online learning. Utilization rate of the school, as of September 30, 2020, was 18%.

Kindergarten is not being offered this school year due to low registration. Only 8 students were registered and were directed to schools within walking distance (Wildwood or Glendale).

Projected Enrolment for Rosscarrock School

Enrolment in the program is expected to decline slightly over the next five years – a decline from 69 to 64. These projections assume that the Kindergarten students that were designated to other schools would return to Rosscarrock for Grade 1.

Education and Programming Impacts of Persistent Low Enrolment

The persistent low enrolment at Rosscarrock School is impacting equitable access to a quality learning environment for students and is proving challenging in providing consistent educational programming.

With fewer than 3 teachers at the school, along with one principal and one learning leader providing instructional leadership, this translates into only 3 homeroom classrooms: grades 1 / 2 combined, grades 3 / 4 combined and grades 5 / 6 combined. A part time specialist also provides music support to the students. The principal teaches for part of the day and supports in lunch room supervision everyday. This impacts the students as there is a lack of flexibility. An example of this is the difficulty to reorganize students to provide targeted learning supports, such as separating students experiencing conflict or to reorganize students for learning such as regrouping English Language Learners or Special Education Students for more targeted learning support outside what is offered in their homerooms. There is also the inability to separate siblings in different grades as the classes are multi-aged due to the low enrolment at the school.

There has been an inability to operate a School Council or Advisory Council without enough parents to form quorum, which impacts parental voice in the school. Without parent involvement, fundraising opportunities such as the Casino are also at risk. The YMCA Kids In Motion School Program recently backed out due to low enrolment, as did Big Brothers/ Big Sisters.

The persistent low enrolment has also had an impact on staff feeling isolated and being the only teacher teaching two grades. Due to the small staff numbers there is diminished opportunities for team teaching and collaboration. Because the principal teaches a portion of the day, there is a lack of support available for students with complex behavioural needs and limits the ability of the principal to address emergent student safety concerns throughout the building. Other specialist areas like physical education and fine arts are also taught by the homeroom teachers.

Proposed Student Accommodation Plan

Should the Board of Trustees decide to close Rosscarrock School, all Kindergarten to Grade 6 students will be accommodated at a school within walking distance of their homes, either Glendale School or Wildwood School, effective September 2021.

This accommodation plan was informed by engagement sessions held in 2018-2019 and the online survey conducted. There is space at both Glendale and Wildwood to accommodate students attending the regular program from Rosscarrock School in a safe way.

Glendale and Wildwood School – Capacity, Learning Opportunities, and Transition Plan

Both Glendale and Wildwood Schools have enough capacity to accommodate students from Rosscarrock School, with the projected 2021 utilization rate at both schools being at 80%. With the increased utilization rate, there is some additional Operation & Maintenance funding that would be received by each school from the government. Both schools will still have lots of space for future growth within the communities. The students from Rosscarrock School will still be able to walk to the newly designated schools.

Glendale and Wildwood Schools offer more support and resources for students which include: physical education specialists; outdoor classrooms and naturalized gardens; and residencies such as Calgary Opera, Aussie Rules, and Engineering for Kids. Both schools also have diverse populations with families from across the globe and a larger compliment of staff, both of which would be able to provide additional opportunities and support to students. Glendale and Wildwood schools offer frequent extra-curricular activities such as hand-bells, choir, cross-country running, gardening, robotics, and soccer clubs. Each school currently has before and after school care programs on site as well. The schools have strong and welcoming school councils that support and enhance the student learning.

Should the Board decide to close Rosscarrock School, a thorough transition plan was proposed which takes into consideration the academic, social and emotional, and community transition of the students.

In support of the academic transition of the students, the CBE proposed a number of actions including: holding transition meeting between students and future teachers; meetings between current and future teachers; meetings with future administration; and dividing the educational resources between the receiving schools.

To support the social and emotional transition, the CBE proposed: tours of the new school; practicing walking or biking to the new school which would include continuing Rosscarrock School's Bike to School program; continuing to develop students' self advocacy skills; and communicating frequently with parents which could include family transition meetings.

In order to support the community transition, the CBE identified continued communication with parents and stakeholders as key. Other actions included the principal from Rosscarrock meeting with the school councils at both Wildwood and Glendale to discuss culture building activities and needs, and to ensure the funds from the School Society at Rosscarrock follow the students. There will also be meetings held with the receiving school councils for the parents from Rosscarrock.

Financial Impacts

For the 2019/2020 school year, operating costs to the CBE were \$1.4 million, which includes a combination of staffing costs, supplies for delivering the program, and miscellaneous operating costs. For the 2020/2021 school year, the Resource Allocation Method (RAM) total is approximately \$896,000. The allocation for the 2020-2021 year is about \$900,000 less due to lower amounts from changes in Early Development Centre funding.

If the school were to close, the CBE's cost would be reduced by approximately \$420,000 to \$450,000 per year. These costs include \$280,000 in school administration, and \$150,000 to \$170,000 in building operating and maintenance costs. The remaining RAM funding would be provided to Wildwood and Glendale Schools with students in the amount of about \$19,000 total.

CBE Capital Plan Impacts

A decision to close the Rosscarrock School would advance the CBE's Ten-Year Student Accommodation and Facility Strategy, which projects the need to close approximately 16 elementary schools between now and 2029 to maintain utilization rates within the mid-to-high 80%. If closure is decided, overall Elementary School utilization is projected to be at 70%. Ten-Year Students Accommodation and Facility Strategy, informed by City census and CBE data, has seen fewer elementary school students enrolled since 2015. City census data projects 9,500 fewer students in elementary schools between 2020 and 2029.

A decision to close Rosscarrock School does not impact the Three Year School Capital Plan.

Future Use of Facility

If a decision to close Rosscarrock School is made, the school and site would likely be returned to the City of Calgary for \$1. This is the mechanism that is in place for school boards.

Proposed Timeline for Implementation

The proposed timeline for implementation, should the decision be made to close the school, was reviewed:

- Public input meetings scheduled for December 2, 2020 and January 6, 2021
- Board of Trustees' public meeting, decision for Rosscarrock School on January 26, 2021
- If the Board of Trustees' decision is to close Rosscarrock School, transition planning for students will be initiated between February and June 2021
- Implementation for students re-designated to Wildwood School and Glendale School September 2021/2022

OPEN DISCUSSION, QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PARENTS AND PUBLIC

Chair Dennis reiterated the Trustees were present to hear public input and that they will ultimately be the sole decision makers regarding the status of Rosscarrock School. She pointed out it would not be appropriate in the middle of the process for Trustees to respond directly to questions or to

engage in debate. She asked that questions or comments be indicated in the chat box, and as the meeting Chair she would direct the question to an appropriate CBE staff member for response. She asked the public to state their first and last name and spell it for the record, and identify their interest or relationship to Rosscarrock School. She also reminded participants that Mr. Nabil Akl, an interpreter, was available to support anybody in voicing their comments and asking questions of the Board.

Chair Dennis opened the meeting to questions or comments from the public.

Muhammed Qureshi, parent of a student attending Rosscarrock School, asked if families would be able to choose which of the two designated schools their child attends if Rosscarrock is closed.

Superintendent Breton stated that the student would be designated to the school in their boundary area and if they choose to attend a different school, there is already a process in place to apply to attend an out of boundary area school. Education Director Cooper provided more details about the process.

Garrett Baki, parent of two students attending Rosscarrock School and member of parent council for the last few years, shared his opinion that the community has been fighting to keep school interest high and the school open, but there has been a lack of help from anybody in putting up signs and advertising and he thinks that parents have been scared away by the potential school closure again. He also expressed concerns with having kids cross busy streets (17th avenue or Bow trail).

Superintendent Breton spoke about the efforts the CBE has undertaken to increase enrolment at the school. Some of the actions noted were: the introduction of the early development center; the area office injecting additional funding to the school to enhance learning opportunities; signage in the community to increase awareness; and outreach by the principal to be more visible in the community. Superintendent Breton also stated, that across the city, many students cross major roads in order to get to their designated schools.

Aurelie Maerten, community member and board member of Rosscarrock Community Association, asked when the community would learn the future use of the facility after a decision was made.

Superintendent Breton spoke about the likelihood of a proposal by CBE Administration to sell the building back to the City if a decision was made to close Rosscarrock School. He provided details of the processes when notifying the government of the closure of a school and the disposal of land.

Mohammad Alhaddad, parent of two students attending Rosscarrock School, shared his concerns about small kids crossing main roads and asked about alternative options for the school instead of closing it.

Superintendent Breton spoke about the students from Wildwood Elementary already crossing Bow Trail. He stated that there were limited alternative options as the census data shows fewer children being born in Calgary. With 10,000 fewer children anticipated in the next 10 years, there is far fewer elementary students coming into the school system. Superintendent Breton spoke to the slide on common questions received as they related to alternative uses and alternative

programs at the school. He stated that there are currently 55 students from the community that attend an alternative program elsewhere so even if the kids were brought back to Rosscarrock, the utilization rate is still very low. If students are brought to Rosscarrock from other schools, then the other schools in the system will have lower enrolment and may need to be considered for closure. Rosscarrock School has two community schools in very close proximity which is great.

Garrett Baki, parent of two students attending Rosscarrock School, expressed his opinion that it felt like the decision had already been made and thanked the school, teachers, and everyone in the community. He appreciated the opportunity to provide input.

Mohammad Alhaddad, parent of two students attending Rosscarrock School, questioned if the main reason for the consideration of school closure was the high cost to run the school or the low enrolment rate.

Superintendent Breton spoke about dropping enrolment triggering when schools are monitored on the Three-Year System School Accommodation Plan. He spoke about the many factors considered when thinking about initiating a school closure process such as grade configurations, other community schools, and solutions available. He stated that, in this case, the impact on learning is a huge factor, with grades being combined, which ultimately reduces the ability and flexibility the teacher has available to support and challenge students who need it.

CLOSING REMARKS

Chair Dennis reiterated that following this public input meeting the public has until Wednesday, January 20, 2021 to provide further written submissions for the Trustees regarding this closure consideration, to the following:

Attention: Lori Cooper
CBE
3445-37 Street SW
Calgary AB T3E 3C2
t | 403-777-8750
e | Area7@cbe.ab.ca

Email directly to BoardofTrustees@cbe.ab.ca

Chair Dennis thanked everybody for attending the meeting and for providing respectful comments and input. The Board of Trustees tentatively anticipates debating the merits of this matter and making a decision regarding this school closure consideration on or about Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at a public meeting of the Board. The observations, comments and questions by the public are valued and will form part of the material that Trustees will consider as they review the matter and ultimately reach a decision. She noted that the public's input at this meeting has been an important contribution to the Board of Trustees' decision-making process.

Chair Dennis declared the meeting closed at 8:21 p.m.

Note to Reader:

The Minutes of the Public Input Meeting Regarding Consideration of Closure of Rosscarrock School, held virtually through Microsoft Teams on Wednesday, December 2, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. include the major points of discussion - they are not a verbatim transcript of the meeting.

DRAFT



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