



**Blind River Public School  
Accommodation Review Committee (ARC)  
Final Public Meeting**



Location: Blind River Public School - Gym  
Date: Thursday, May 4, 2017  
Time: 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

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**Attendance:** 21 public attendees listed

**Welcome & Introduction of ARC**

- Principal Ellis Nyman welcomed and introduced the Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) and reviewed the agenda for the evening.

**ARC Members**

Brent Vallee	Superintendent of Education (ADSB)
Ellis Nyman	Principal (BRPS)
Tanya Mitchell	Chair of School Council (BRPS)
Mayor Sue Jenson	Municipal Representative (Blind River)
Adrienne Edwards	Staff Member (BRPS)
Melanie Lees	Community Member (Blind River)
Ryne Boyer-Denis	Mississauga First Nation

**Other Board Staff**

Nicolle Schurrman	Principal, Chapleau Elementary & Secondary School
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**1) Overview of Questions/Comments/Feedback from March 6, 2017 ARC Meeting:**

- Superintendent Brent Vallee provided the following summary of information presented at the First Public Meeting on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017:
  - Declining enrollment coupled with aging infrastructure requires careful planning to maintain effective programming while maximizing the enrolment capacity of our school buildings. There is a need to review the potential for operating within consolidated spaces. Recent consolidations in Chapleau, Hornepayne, and the Central Algoma areas of the Board have resulted in JK-12 facilities within these areas.
  - BRPS was placed on review status in June, 2016. This review was to focus on *“the possibility of school closure, accommodating the JK-8 program and students currently housed at Blind River Public School as a JK-12 facility on the W.C. Eaket*

*High School site. Capital investment would be required to create spaces within the school conducive to JK-8 classrooms.”*

- Information from the Initial Staff Report was reviewed, including the following
  - Original Building built in 1928, additions in 1963, 1973, and 1988
  - Facility Condition Index is 79% (0.79) The Ministry standard considers a school with an FCI of 65% or greater to be ‘critical’ or Prohibitive to Repair
  - Over next 5 years, \$ 9,858,182 would be required for renovations/upgrades vs. a projected replacement cost of the entire building at 12, 449, 220 (pg. 8 SIP).
  - School Boards require Ministry approval for expenditures over \$1,000,000. This is something that is not usually supported for Prohibitive to Repair structures, especially when the capacity to accommodate students in neighbouring schools of the board is available.
  - Enrollment in the school has fluctuated over the past decade; and has been trending downwards for the past five years. Currently the student population is “top heavy” with larger numbers of Gr. 7s and 8 students, smaller numbers in primary grades.
  - Classroom Utilization factor is determined by dividing the school’s Average Daily Enrollment (ADE) by the On the Ground Capacity (OTG). Blind River Public School’s Utilization Factor is 35%
- Based on these factors, the recommendation identified in the Initial Staff Report is to consider the consolidation of Blind River Public School students within a JK-12 setting on the W.C. Eaket High School site. This would allow the board to submit a proposal for capital funding to retro-fit the W.C. Eaket site to accommodate JK-12 students.

Public Questions/Comments/Feedback that arose at the First Public Meeting on March 6, 2017 were also summarized as follows:

a) JK-12 Model: While the comment was expressed that the “*K-12 school is a good model; it just needs to be done right*”, concerns were expressed by some attendees in regard to having older and younger students together (e.g. negative influences, exposure to inappropriate language).

b) Operational Issues regarding JK-12 Model – Questions and comments were also made concerning operational questions about the K-12 model (e.g. separate entrances, timetables, sharing of gym space, and number/role of administrators on site).

As was suggested at the First Meeting, Mrs. Schurrman, principal of our K-12 school in Chapleau was invited to the Final meeting to provide some insight into her experience with the model. However attendees were informed that it is important to remember that each site is unique and these questions would need to be addressed as part of the transition process should the recommendation be approved.

Principal Nicolle Schurrman (Chapleau Elementary and Secondary School) provided the following information in regard to Chapleau K-12:

- Two wings – K to 8, 9 to 12

- Distinct division between elementary and secondary students in terms of use of space
- Schedules provide for different lunches (cafetorium used by both)
- Interaction takes place through planned activities (e.g special events)
- Secondary students have benefited from increased leadership opportunities
- Community service hours have been obtained by helping with activities for elementary students
- Older students act as role models – interactions have been positive
- Shared spaces such as shop classes/computer labs/bigger library with more resources are available
- Secondary teachers assist elementary teachers with programs/minimize transition moving from Grade 8- to Grade 9.
- Collaborative work takes place between panels – i.e. mathematics
- Cross curricular learning opportunities – i.e. electricity unit in grade 5/6
- Athletics program – skill development for younger students
- Larger staff – more support and collaborative work takes place
- Activities shared/showcased between two schools

Mrs. Schurrman also fielded questions from attendees:

Question: Is there a secondary and elementary gym on the Chapleau site?

Response: We have one gym with a moveable wall that can separate the gym so it can be used for two groups at once (e.g. for both elementary and secondary students). Gym time is scheduled to accommodate activities for all students.

Comment: I am concerned about elementary students not having their own gymnasium. Younger students also look forward to going to the secondary school. They have an identity here. They have an opportunity to become leaders in elementary school. Secondary school students may not want to involve themselves with the younger students. I would prefer to keep this school open. Public schools seem to be short changed in regards to Ministry funding –other schools (boards) getting money for new schools with fewer kids, i.e., French Boards.

Response: In Chapleau, we operate as two distinct schools within the same building. Certain areas are open to everyone, but students have an opportunity to develop leadership at all levels.

Comment: How many administrative staff would there be in a JK-12 school

Response: In Chapleau, during the first year of the transition there was a Principal and Vice-principal of the secondary school, and a Principal and Vice-Principal of the elementary school. This helped sort out issues as the transition took place very quickly due to the roof issue and the need to move students in right away. Currently there is 1 Principal and 1 vice-principal for about 160 students. As discussed at the first public meeting, the number of administrators and the model used is different in each of our K-12 sites. For example, Hornepayne has 1 principal and 1 teaching vice-principal for about 100 students. Central

Algoma K-12 has 1 secondary principal, 1 vice-principal, and 1 elementary principal for about 550 students. This would be examined as part of the transition plan.

Q: What would happen with custodial staff – two separate groups?

Response: Cleaning models are dependent on how many students are in the building and the number of classrooms that are utilized in the building. As North Shore works on a contract basis, specifics would be discussed with the ADSB Plant Department as part of a transition.

Comment: It would be difficult to be principal of a school from K – 12. Experience with a different set of students – how is this able to work? Don't you need a different mindset when dealing with younger students?

Response: I had taught in elementary schools for a number of years before moving to the secondary.

Superintendent of Education Brent Vallee continued with summary of public questions/comments/responses that arose at the First Public Meeting

c) Issues with the WCE site: Questions and comments were made in regard to retro-fitting WCE as a JK-12 site. These included questions about the age/facility condition index of WCE, access to a field/playground (adjacent field owned by the town), that there is currently a roadway separating the school and field, and there is close proximity to the water (although this is also true of the current BRPS site).

Response: These issues would need to be addressed as part of the transition plan; discussions/ negotiation with the town would need to take place as part of the transition if the recommendation to consolidate on the WCE were to go forward.

d) Other Options: Comments/questions were also made in regard to other possible options that might be recommended as part of the ARC process. Some of these included

- a) Demolishing much of the existing building while maintaining the newer wing as a K-6 school.

Response: Unlikely funding would be provided for such a scenario. Very expensive to demolish parts of a building, and this scenario does not account for underutilization at the WC Eaket site. Usually considered a better use of money to fund upgrades as opposed to demolition costs.

- b) Maintain the Status Quo (Fund upgrades to each site).

Response: This is not really considered a viable option for the reasons contained in the Initial Staff Report. Currently, BRPS is considered prohibitive to repair. A significant amount of money would be required to upgrade and this would still fail to address the problem of underutilization at both sites. We also want to take advantage of the opportunity to obtain funding for an upgraded facility; it is uncertain if this will be an option in the future.

- c) Building of a New K-12 School: Comments/feedback at the First Public Meeting revealed a community preference for a recommendation to support building a new K-12 school on a new site rather than retro-fitting the WC Eaket site.

## **2) Review of Possible Recommendations**

Based on the feedback from the First Public Meeting, the ARC would support an option to make a recommendation for the board to submit a request for funding to build a new K-12 facility through the Capital Priority process. However, such a recommendation would be dependent on Ministry funding to meet the request. There are funding parameters that need to be met within the process, including the recognition for existing school assets to be utilized and renovated as a viable option to ensure that Public Assets are not wasted throughout the Province.”

While a new build could be presented as a preferred option, and a recommendation included in the Final Report to reflect this, such a recommendation would depend on Ministry approval. If the Ministry was not willing to fund construction of a new facility, the recommendation contained in the Initial Staff Report would be the closing of BRPS and relocation of students into a K-12 facility on the site of WCE. Capital funding would then be required to retro-fit the facility as a K-12 site, and discussions/ negotiations would need to take place with the town in regard to resolving the site-based issues that have been raised.

## **3) Questions Arising from the Overview of the March 6 Meeting and Possible Recommendations**

Question: Is the French Immersion option still available?

Response: This is a programming issue that the school has brought forward on an ongoing basis. It would need to be considered and discussed as a programming need rather than a capital need.

Question: If the town doesn't give the option of providing space, would the plan be to retro-fit both schools? Would this be Plan C?

Response: As discussed at the first meeting, the Ministry doesn't usually provide such funding for facilities that are prohibitive to repair, particularly when space is underutilized at a neighbouring school. The odds of the Ministry providing funds to retro-fit both schools is probably very slim. Moving forward, if it was not possible to obtain funding or effectively resolve issues regarding either recommendation moving forward, further discussion would likely be necessary to look at future options for our students.

Question: Has the town been approached about the land?

Response: Discussions have not taken place yet. When the ARC process begins, a letter is sent to the town to notify them of the process and invite them to meet with Board staff to provide input. No response has been received at this point.

Comment: Why wouldn't the town have been approached first in regards to the field? Wouldn't there be a better chance of getting a new school if they just said they aren't willing

to discuss this? Could we not get the town to say no to leasing or buying land so that we remain status-quo?

Response: The ARC process needs to be completed prior to having that discussion, as trustees make the final decisions in regard to the recommendation. The Ministry expectation would be that school boards and communities work together to find solutions.

Comment: There is some limited but viable space on the WC Eaket site, i.e., courtyard for play area. There are probably some potential areas for expansion even without the field.

Comment: Eaket was originally built with a foundation that would enable expansion and/or a second floor.

Question: Does the board have any other schools that lease extra space?

Response: In Blind River, a lease agreement is actually in place already as students from Eaket use the field for sports etc. Not certain as to other lease agreements that may be in place across the Board. In Chapleau, space was purchased by the ADSB and is currently used as the playground. The community also uses the field outside of school hours or when students are not on the playground.

Comment: Concerned that retro-fitting is just throwing good money after bad.

Comment: There is a high rate of Aboriginal kids in the system – has it been considered as a joint project with other funding options available for a new school?

Response: The Chief of Mississauga First Nation approached one of our superintendents at a session several weeks ago to indicate a willingness to support funding requests. Having the support of our community partners is always helpful when looking for solutions.

Comment: Two or three meetings will not solve any concerns.

Response: Once the Final Staff Report is completed and recommendations are made, it goes to the Trustees for a final vote. They can support, modify or vote no to a recommendation. However, the Ministry would eventually make the final decision as to available funding.

Question: Why are trustees not part of the ARC committee? Were trustees in attendance during the meetings?

Response: Trustees are not part of the ARC committee as their role is to make the final decision in regard to recommendations that are made. Several trustees were in attendance in the audience at the first public meeting. All of the minutes and reports arising from the ARC process are available to the trustees when they are making their final decision.

Question: With the cost of a new building vs. retrofitting – is energy usage, etc. factored in the decision?

Response: Yes.

Question: Is there an estimated cost to retrofit Eaket?

Response: Not at this point. We would have to look at what the specific needs would be and what capital funding was available.

Comment: How often is a building checked for structural issues? If repairs were made on an ongoing basis, then it wouldn't come to the point of spending a lot of money.

Response: The Facility Condition Index is not just based on day-to-day maintenance needs but larger issues that occur as a building ages. These are larger cost items. The school building looks great because of the efforts of care staff but there are still issues that will require significant dollars to address. Mr. Nyman addressed a recent issue with roof leaks. When a building becomes prohibitive to repair, obtaining funds to invest in these projects becomes more difficult.

Question: Projected enrolment numbers – are they going down?

Response: Enrollment has declined over the past few years. Enrollment numbers are looked at as part of the process.

Comment: Our enrolment would go up if we had different programming at our school, i.e., French Immersion.

Comment: The lack of French Immersion programming has had a significant impact on the enrolment of our school. Lots of parents choose to go to the French school.

Comment: It's not an option for some parents to have their children go to St. Mary's and St. Joseph. I feels that the ADSB is going to do what they want, regardless of the input from meetings.

Response: The purpose of the public meetings is to seek input from the community and discuss options. We appreciate having people attend to provide their input. This is an important part of the ARC process.

Comment: It seems as though the board listened to some of the concerns raised at the first meeting and took some steps.

Question: What is the FCI index for Eaket? Do they have asbestos?

Response: The current Facility Condition Index for WC Eaket is 50%. Buildings are considered Prohibitive to Repair at 65% or higher. Eaket's current utilization factor is at 18.5%. Most buildings in the board do have asbestos as this was a common building material during the era in which many of our buildings were constructed.

Comment: The floor tiles are made with asbestos, it's pretty common.

Question: Does the FCI take into account some of the work done at Eaket last summer?

Response: The FCI is the most recent one that has been developed so it should recognize work completed.

Question: If money was spent to retro-fit Eaket, would this bring the FCI down?

Response: Yes, a retro-fit would address some areas of need, which would bring down the FCI.

Question: Looking at the cost of a new school, are there any other new builds in our system that are comparable to the population of students here? What would the cost of a new building be?

Comment: Perhaps it would be comparable to the school in Hornepayne.

Response: Don't have information on the specific cost of a new build for the approximate number of students at BRPS and WCE, this is a question that would need to be determined by our business staff.

Question: Why are there new schools in the Sault? Why not here?

Response: There are schools that have been closed or consolidated in the Sault based on underutilization and the FCI of the buildings. Some have been repurposed. For ADSB, both new building and retro-fitting has taken place in both Sault Ste. Marie and in the district (e.g. Hornepayne, Central Algoma).

Comment: The curriculum is more play based. Unless we can buy the soccer field, Eaket wouldn't be a good site for elementary students.

Comment: Concerned regarding having my children move to another school where they have to establish relationships with new staff members.

Comment: Concerned that in regard to Library space/Computer labs, the younger kids will get the "short end of the stick".

Response: Board has learned that as part of the transition process, consultation with staff, parents, and students needs to take place so that all of these areas can be discussed and plans can be made.

Question: If it is a retro-fit, would plans be shown to parents?

Response: Yes. We also have some photos and pictures of retro-fitting that has happened in other schools. These will be made available on school website.

#### **4) ARC Timelines/Next Steps:**

An Initial draft report will likely go to the trustees for an update on Tuesday night **(May 9<sup>th</sup>)**.

The Final Staff Report would be posted on the board website on **May 18<sup>th</sup>**.

As part of the ARC process, public delegations are also allowed to address the board. This is scheduled to take place on **June 5**.

A final vote would take place at the meeting of the Board of Trustees on **June 20<sup>th</sup>**.

#### **5) Questions**

Question: How can you say that consultation has happened when not many people have shown up to the meetings? Would there be a possibility that this process could be extended due to the lack of attendance at the meeting?

Response: There have been two public meetings and the numbers at both meetings have been similar. The opportunity to attend was open to anyone who wished to do so. For this meeting, the school held its Showcase event beforehand in the hopes that having more people in the building would increase the turnout, however, this didn't seem to have any impact.

Comment: The flyer wasn't posted on the ADSB website under the Accommodation heading. A SynerVoice message was not sent out to parents.

Response: That was an oversight; however the meeting was advertised in the local media, on signage and in the school newsletters.

Question: Can people show up to the Board Meeting?

Response: As part of the ARC process, there is an opportunity for Public Delegations to make a presentation to the Board on June 5<sup>th</sup>. The process to apply to make a presentation will be available on the website. Regular Board meetings are open to the public, but follow specific rules – for example, it is not an open forum for people to show up to address the board, they must be on the agenda. Rules of order are similar to what you would see in a town council meeting.

Question: Would the transition date still be September 2018?

Response: As discussed at the first meeting, this is an aggressive timeline established to move the process forward. Usually, the process takes a year or two.

Comment: Concerned over the aggressive timeline in regards to ensuring everything is in place for elementary students.

Response: There has been a general sense in the room at both meetings that the community wants everything done before anybody moves.

Question: Plan B is not a viable option if the town does not provide land. Are the timelines firm and hard for this process? Could this be discussed beforehand to determine if Plan B is viable? Also, is there land available for Option A – discussion would need to occur to determine land availability.

Question: Would it not be worthwhile to approach the town first to determine if there is space available for Plan A or to determine if Plan B is viable?

Comment: The biggest contingency is whether or not there can be land given to the ADSB by the Town of Blind River.

Comment: Fortunate that we have a scenario where we are still discussing having our students attend school in the local community. There are lots of places where schools are closing and students are being bused for an hour to attend schools.

Response: Once a recommendation has been approved, the next date for Capital projects to be forwarded to the Ministry is the end of the summer. A decision by the Ministry would likely come in the fall although this is not a concrete timeline. The Ministry may say that they are not willing to fund a new build, but will consider plans for a retro-fit. After a recommendation

has been approved by the Trustees, this would allow board staff to move forward with pursuing the recommendation.

Both recommendations rely on attaining capital funding. Once a final determination is made in regard to Ministry funding, transition planning would need to take place. This would involve board staff, staff from both schools, parents, and students.

**Adjournment: 8:35**