



“The Niagara Catholic District School Board, through the charisms of faith, social justice, support and leadership, nurtures an enriching Catholic learning community for all to reach their full potential and become living witnesses of Christ.”

APPROVED MINUTES

St. Catharines Elementary and Secondary Family of Schools

Ad Hoc Attendance Area Review Committee Meeting

Michael J. Brennan Catholic, St. James Catholic, Assumption Catholic, St. Alfred Catholic, St. Ann Catholic, Canadian Martyrs Catholic and Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Elementary Schools

November 5, 2013

7:30 p.m.

SAINT FRANCIS CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL

Minutes of Ad Hoc Attendance Area Review Committee Meeting for the St. Catharines Elementary and Secondary Family of Schools of November 5, 2013 at 7:30 p.m. at Saint Francis Catholic Secondary School.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Superintendent Baldasaro

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Opening Prayer: Yolanda Baldasaro, Family of Schools Superintendent

The opening prayer was led by Yolanda Baldasaro, Family of Schools Superintendent

Committee Members		Present	Excused	Absent
Rhianon Burkholder	Trustee/Chair	✓		
Kathy Burtnik	Trustee	✓		
Maurice Charbonneau	Trustee		✓	

Resources to Committee		Present	Excused	Absent
John Crocco	Director of Education	✓		
Yolanda Baldasaro	Superintendent of Education/Secretary	✓		
Scott Whitwell	Controller of Facilities Services	✓		
Kathy Levinski	Manager of Facilities Services	✓		
Tina DiFrancesco	Recording Secretary	✓		

The following staff were in attendance:

Glenda Hillier, Principal, St. James Catholic; Carmela D’Andrea, Principal, Michael J. Brennan Catholic; Victoria Wegelin, Principal, St. Ann Catholic; Susan Tromanhauser, Principal, St. Alfred Catholic; Alan Creelman, Principal, Canadian Martyrs Catholic; Maria Solomon, Vice-

Principal, Canadian Martyrs Catholic; Ken Griepsma, Principal, Saint Francis Catholic Secondary; Kevin Timmins, Vice-Principal, Saint Francis Catholic Secondary; Tom Marshall, Vice-Principal, Saint Francis Catholic Secondary

Rob Berketo, Niagara Student Transportation Services (NSTS).

Members of the public registered their attendance via sign in sheet.

2. Welcome: Rhianon Burkholder, Trustee – Chair of St. Catharines Ad Hoc Attendance Area Review Committee

Trustee Burkholder thanked everyone for attending and introduced the Ad Hoc Attendance Area Review Committee which is made up of two area trustees for St. Catharines, Kathy Burtnik and Maurice Charbonneau and Rhianon Burkholder, who is the Chair of the Ad Hoc Attendance Area Review Committee and Trustee for Thorold. Trustee Charbonneau sent his regrets for this evening. Information and options come from staff who acts as resource to the Committee: Superintendent Baldasaro, Scott Whitwell, Controller of Facilities Services, Kathy Levinski, Manager of Facilities Services, Rob Berketo of Niagara Student Transportation Services (NSTS), Tina DiFrancesco, Administrative Assistant to Superintendent Baldasaro and John Crocco, Director of Education.

Trustee Burkholder announced that this is the third Ad Hoc Attendance Area Review Public Consultation meeting. The next Committee Meeting will be held on November 12th at the Catholic Education Centre and the final recommendation will be determined by the Ad Hoc Attendance Area Review Committee at the November 18th Committee Meeting at Saint Francis Catholic Secondary School. Trustee Burkholder stated that all meetings are public and encouraged everyone to attend.

Trustee Burkholder described the process whereby the Ad Hoc Attendance Area Review Committee will bring forth recommendations to the Committee of the Whole on December 3rd. The Committee of the Whole will bring the recommendation to the December 17th Board meeting.

3. Terms of Reference: Rhianon Burkholder

Trustee Burkholder presented the Terms of Reference for information.

4. Meeting Schedule: Rhianon Burkholder

Trustee Burkholder presented the Meeting Schedule for information.

5. Background: Kathy Burtnik, Trustee – Chair of the Niagara Catholic District School Board

Realities

- *St. James Catholic Elementary School*
- *Early Learning Kindergarten Program*
- *French Immersion*
- *Grandfathering*

- *Attendance Area Policy 301.3*
- *Committee Considerations*

Trustee Burtnik informed the audience that the Board had to make the difficult decision to close Michael J. Brennan School and are looking to this Committee to try and establish boundaries that can best maximize facility use of our identified school sites. As well, the Board is not to be looking at secondary schools, that there should be no impact on Secondary enrollment.

Trustee Burtnik stated that the primary goal is to ensure that wherever children are attending school they are receiving the absolute best in Catholic Education and that every school that we have is serving our students to the best of their ability.

Trustee Burtnik stated that the French Immersion Program is high priority and is currently located at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic in St. Catharines, as well as other schools within the Board. By next year every school in Niagara Catholic will have the Early Learning Kindergarten Program (ELKP).

Trustee Burtnik stated that as a Committee many options have been reviewed and considered. Initially there were fifteen options. The Committee is far from a final recommendation and is open to hearing all questions and concerns. Every comment and letter that comes to the Committee will be discussed in order to make a more informed decision.

Trustee Burtnik introduced Yolanda Baldasaro to present the options for consideration.

- 6. Option 11:** **Yolanda Baldasaro**
Scott Whitwell – Controller of Facilities Services
Kathy Levinski – Manager of Facilities Services

Option 4: Current Boundaries

Option 8B: Revised boundaries between St. James, St. Ann, Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Elementary Schools plus revised boundaries with Our Lady of Fatima and Assumption Catholic Elementary School plus revised boundaries with St. Alfred and Canadian Martyrs Catholic Elementary Schools

Option 10: Revised boundaries between St. James, St. Ann and Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Elementary Schools plus revised boundaries with Our Lady of Fatima and Assumption Catholic Elementary Schools

Option 11: Revised boundaries between St. James, St. Ann, Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Elementary Schools plus revised boundaries with Our Lady of Fatima and Assumption Catholic Elementary Schools

Superintendent Baldasaro and Kathy Levinski presented the preceding attendance area options for consideration: Option 4, Option 8B and Option 10. Data included the current and revised boundaries, building utilization information and school areas of change for the St. Catharines Attendance Area Review identified schools. All information is posted on the Board website.

Superintendent Baldasaro stated that at the last meeting the committee looked at the three options and thereafter described the development of Option 11. Information regarding this new option was provided regarding current and revised boundaries, building utilization information, school areas of change and boundary descriptions for the St. Catharines Attendance Area Review identified schools.

7. **Comments/Input/Feedback**

Trustee Burkholder encouraged members of the audience to offer ideas and suggestions for feedback and stated that no decision has been made at this point.

Danuela Freel:

Regardless which boundary we go with, I want to ask regarding the bussing, if we are saving money on the closing of Michael J. Brennan, why is it such an issue to not have bussing for the grandfathered children?

Kathy Burtnik:

Through the process, when the school was announced for closure there was a guarantee of attendance; a grandfathered statement was made for students enrolled at Michael J. Brennan as of February 1st, 2012 where students were guaranteed the right of attendance at St. James School; and at the same time we were asked, don't move us into portables. The decision was made and it's a motion of the Board, that those students that are currently enrolled in Michael J. Brennan and their siblings would have the right of attendance into St. James. The mandate has been and is that we have a current transportation policy clearly stating that no transportation to any out of boundary schools will be provided by the Board. The Board cannot contravene its own policies unless there is a specific recommendation to do so, but to do so means that portables will be a reality at St. James School until grandfathering subsides. Nowhere has the Board made these decisions because of cost saving measures. The Board's mandate is to balance enrollment across all of our schools so that every student in every school will have the same excellent educational opportunities no matter what school they attend. It's not about money, it's about balance and it's about opportunities for children in all of our schools, fairness.

Danuela Freel:

I don't remember the portables being an issue at all. It is really important for the community to stick together, with the bussing it will force the community to not be together anymore.

Kathy Burtnik:

It will ultimately force the community to make the best decision that you need to make for your children.

Sue Abernethy:

Thank you for all the time spent on this; is there going to be no portables at St. James? Because if portables are an issue, if we're all considered out of bounds, I would expect portables.

Kathy Burtnik:

The current reality: One of our options was to do nothing; option 4. All charts are on the website for your consideration. Looking at St. James in option 4 in the next school year, 2014/2015 there would be 80 more students than spaces, even with the addition that's coming.

Sue Abernethy:

We knew that when the consolidation was decided. We knew we were going to be overcapacity at St. James. We received money for kindergarten based on that and you're saying that we still don't enough room for all those kids.

Kathy Burtnik:

The broader reality is when you look to the east and west of our schools. In the east we see Assumption at 63% and we see St. Ann's. It is our job to manage as best we can. Our responsibility is to balance across the whole northern corridor of our boundaries. We have empty spaces in our neighboring schools. The Ministry would not allow for funding, they look at our whole picture and if we can't show efficient use of our spaces we don't get funding for new capital projects.

Sue Abernethy:

The closure of Michael J. Brennan allowed you to obtain that funding.

Kathy Burtnik:

The closure of Michael J. Brennan allowed us to not have triple grades at Michael J. Brennan. That was a very real reality.

Sue Abernethy:

Let's look at where the population is 89%, portables yes or no?

Kathy Burtnik:

When it's at 89%; Likely not. No.

Sue Abernethy:

Will there be portables next year at St. James? If all those kids are bussed to St. Ann's.

Kathy Burtnik:

If all those kids who are grandfathered choose to go to St. James there will be portables.

Sue Abernethy:

If they choose to go to St. Ann's, will there still be portables?

Kathy Burtnik:

Likely not. It depends on what grades they are in. It depends on how the structure is and how it plays out. Each school is very different.

Superintendent Baldasaro:

There may be families that move in to the area that will go to St. James. So those fluctuations in terms of attendance can happen. There are many families that are choosing French Immersion. As French Immersion is rolling out in our system, people are talking; we are hoping that rollout will continue in years to come.

Sue Abernethy:

The whole projection thing is a whole different issue for me; that's 13 years away. Everyone that is in this room will not have a child attending school in the next 13 years. I understand you have to have some forethought, but trying to fix what's going to be good for 13 years is not good for the people in this room today. Originally, when the whole process started the Board said it was going to be a seamless transition, when they decided on the consolidation between Michael J. Brennan and St. James. We wanted to stay together. Looking at the projected boundaries, I understand that you have to look east and west. I am within boundaries. I am talking for the families I am representing as CSC Co-chair. They are looking east and west and they are looking straight ahead at 690 Lake Street; a school that goes to grade 7 and 8. The ones that you are asking to bus are walkers. Which way do you think they'd choose if they have to take a bus? Right now they are walking to Michael J. Brennan.

Kathy Burtnik:

Why wouldn't they walk to St. James?

Sue Abernethy:

Because they don't even have to cross Lake Street.

Candy Carnovale:

I live across from the school. If this takes place, my kids will have to take a bus and start a whole new community. The girls are little and they are not going to walk to St. James. As a child I was in Catholic Education. My husband went to public and Catholic and does not see the difference. I know the difference. I am very divided and I'm frustrated. I hope you take in account how it's affecting our community.

Kathy Burtnik:

This is the single most difficult decision that any volunteer elected official can make is the closing of a school. Following that is the ripple effect, the domino doesn't stop. No matter what we do somebody is going to be affected. Our original idea was to look at the St. James community and move half to Assumption; Move most of Michael J. Brennan to St. James, and the remaining streets to St. Ann. That would keep most of the Michael J. Brennan students happy. The fact is we cannot maintain the population at St. James with both communities without adjusting boundaries. Parents have tough decisions to make. Moving to a public school is your choice. We pray that we mean something more to you and that is not an option. You are willing to make a complete culture shift. God bless you in your decision making. We have to balance our entire population in all of our

schools. Transportation I recognize is an issue. It was not mandated at the point of closure that transportation would be grandfathered; right of attendance is absolutely there for you should you choose. The transportation policy is in place. When you say that you are speaking on behalf of other people, please encourage them to contact us directly. I have responded to the letter. We are far from making a final decision. Please have them contact us directly.

Sue Abernethy:

We are defeated. We have had enough. Why wasn't transportation addressed at the grandfathering? An exception was made for the community. I don't know why transportation cannot be made an exception again. Was this your intention from the beginning? You knew all of us wouldn't fit in that building. Was this the plan from the beginning?

Kathy Burtnik:

No. This was not the plan at the beginning. Out of the closure, it was made very clear in all of our public meetings that an attendance area review must be done in order to facilitate the closure of Michael J. Brennan.

Sue Abernethy:

And our community accepted that?

Kathy Burtnik:

Yes

Sue Abernethy:

None of us knew that we would not be bussed. I believe it was discussed that we would all fit. It is very disheartening when we put trust in you and you close the school and then you change the principal. Dan Trainor was a big part of our community as well. There is too much change going on. Dan Trainor was always working with Carm. He was a second principal to us. There is no consistency, no familiarity. When this is going on it breeds mistrust. People moved in to the area to walk to 690 Lake Street. When you present something, we accept it and we are fooled again. It was assumed by everyone when we were grandfathered in they would be bussed. We were astonished at the September 10th meeting, that bussing would not be provided. Parents are washing their hands of this. You are really going to change things. If they aren't going to go to St. James why aren't they going to go to Pinegrove? The children at Michael J. Brennan are Christians. I cannot say that all the parents are Catholic. It's a decision that is being made in homes already. You need to know this. I appreciate the time but this is where we are at too. People have shutdown.

Kathy Burtnik:

When you are engaged with these parents, please reassure them that they need to speak to us please. This is the whole purpose; open, transparency, communication. Give us your thoughts and feedback so we can respond appropriately. I trust that you are speaking on behalf of many. Their voice needs to be heard individually. Can I introduce the current Principal of St. James, Glenda Hillier. She is absolutely as miraculous as Dan. Principal of St. Ann, Victoria Wegelin, Principal of Michael J. Brennan, Carm D'Andrea, Alan Creelman, Principal of Canadian Martyrs, Maria Solomon, Vice-

Principal of Canadian Martyrs, Sue Tromanhauser, Principal of St. Alfred. These people commit their lives to making your children's Catholic Education a marvelous experience, just as Dan has done in the community that he is in.

Sue Abernethy:

I don't dispute that these people are wonderful. I am sure that they are very good at their jobs. How do you tell your children that this is your stepfather and now you're bringing in another stepfather? You haven't made a relationship with somebody regardless of the role that they're playing in your children's life. Carm D'Andrea has had a huge impact on our children. What I am looking for is a formal recommendation, how to get my kids bussed to St. James, out of bounds? How do I get that lady over there to be the principal at St. James? How do I get that to happen?

Kathy Burtnik:

The Director, John Crocco is the sole person who makes responsible decisions for who is placed in a school as the leader of that school. He has not failed yet and I don't suspect he will. You should love your principal and classroom teachers. Absolutely. You should be open to knowing that those same people by different names exist in every one of our Catholic schools. That I am asking you to trust me on. The transportation issue will be discussed at the next committee meeting.

Sue Abernethy:

It's really hard to trust.

Danuella Freel:

In any of these options, is it that any of the children that are currently at St. James would have to move to Assumption in any of the options? If that is the case, those children going to Assumption would not be going to Saint Francis with their friends; they would have to go to Holy Cross.

Kathy Burtnik:

That is exactly why we stopped that option entirely. We would have to adjust our Secondary population and that was not our mandate. That option is not an option.

Trustee Burtnik stated that the maps are here for viewing and all information is posted on the Board website. The Committee will give serious consideration to the transportation issue.

8. Future Action

Trustee Burtnik stated that any comments or questions can be sent to Tina DiFrancesco at the address posted on the Board website or can be e-mailed directly to Kathy Burtnik or Rhianon Burkholder.

The next public Committee Meeting to be held on November 12th, 2013 at 5:00p.m. in the Father Kenneth Burns csc Boardroom at the Catholic Education Centre.

The meeting ended with a closing prayer.

9. Adjournment

Moved by Trustee Burtnik

THAT the Ad Hoc Attendance Area Review Committee Meeting for the St. Catharines Elementary and Secondary Family of Schools of November 5th, 2013 be adjourned.

CARRIED

This meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.