

PUBLIC MEETING NO. 4: INFORMATION SESSION

MEETING SUMMARY: MAY 9, 2019

Project Overview

Throughout the 2018-19 school year, EIPS administration developed and implemented a public engagement strategy to seek feedback from the Andrew community about programming for senior high students living in the area. Consultations were conducted with students, families, staff, town and county officials, and community members. These efforts included three working-group meetings, a student forum and four public meetings. To complement the public meetings, the Division also conducted a survey and collected submitted feedback to gather even more input from the Andrew community about how best to provide equitable educational opportunities for senior high students.

At the April 18 Board meeting, the Board approved the motion to “to consider the closure of grades 10-12 at Andrew School, effective June 30, 2019.” What this means? The Board is considering making Andrew School a K-9 school that feeds into Lamont High and Vegreville Composite High for senior high programming.

Public Meeting Overview

According to the School Act, when a grade reconfiguration is considered and involves three or more grades, it is technically termed a school closure, even though the school is not being considered for closure. As such, EIPS has to follow guidelines outlined in the province’s School Act “Closure of Schools Regulation: Alberta Regulation 238/1997.” The guidelines ensure a fair and transparent process and that the decision made is in the best interest of both students and the Division.

Part of that process includes a public meeting to share information about the possible grade reconfiguration, which took place on May 9. The meeting was the fourth public meeting hosted by the Division. At the meeting, EIPS provided background information, reviewed the main themes that came out of the public consultations, explained next steps, listened to comments and answered questions posed by attendees. The meeting also included multiple topic-specific stations relating to the proposed grade reconfiguration. The stations allowed participants to rotate through the room, at their own pace, ask questions and share more feedback about what matters most to them.

In total, 53 people attended the public meeting, which included students, staff, families, town officials and community members. From the EIPS Board of Trustees and senior administration the following were in attendance:

- Trina Boymook, Board Chair
- Randy Footz, Trustee
- Skip Gordon, Trustee
- Colleen Holowaychuk, Trustee

- Annette Hubick, Trustee
- Jim Seutter, Trustee
- Harvey Stadnick, Trustee
- Mark Liguori, Superintendent
- Candace Cole, Secretary Treasurer
- Brent Billey, Associate Superintendent
- Sandra Stoddard, Associate Superintendent
- Dave Antymniuk, Division Principal

Mark Liguori welcomed everyone to the meeting, explained the reason for the review, discussed general themes from the public consultations and provided an overview of what the Board is considering. The following is a high-level summary of what was said and heard at the public meeting. The transcript from the audio-recorded public meeting is available at www.eips.ca.

Background Presented

The review was initiated because the Division had concerns about the equity of education for senior high school students living within the Andrew School attendance area. To explore those concerns, various public consultations were conducted with students, staff, local officials, families and community members, which confirmed the Division's initial suspicions. Despite the hard work of staff, students in senior high simply don't have the same standard of enhanced education available at other senior highs within the Division.

In general, there is a lack of access to peer-group classes, enhanced options and important school-community experiences—a sentiment felt at both the senior high level, and at the junior high level. Students also expressed concerns with bus ride times and families expressed concerns about an increased need for child care.

Based on the feedback collected, EIPS administration provided the Board with a recommendation to consider the closure of Grades 7 through 12 at Andrew School. At the April 18 Board meeting, trustees amended that recommendation and approved a motion “to consider closing grades 10 through 12 at Andrew School, effective June 30, 2019.” What this means? The Board is considering a grade reconfiguration for Andrew School, moving to a kindergarten to Grade 9 school. The Board will review all the information and feedback received before making a final decision, which is expected to take place at the board meeting on June 6, 2019. Whatever decision is made will be in the best interest of both students and the Division.

Comments and Questions

The major themes that came out of the fourth public meeting centred on community and quality of education available to senior high students. In terms of community, people were worried closing the senior high would hurt the town's long-term viability. There was also a general sense going forward, residents need to make an effort and start working together to support the school and

community—regardless of what decision is made by the Board. If the Board does decide to reconfigure the grades, attendees expressed a hope the community will grow so it can once again support a vibrant kindergarten to Grade 12 school community at Andrew School.

In terms of quality of education, many agreed the low student base attending senior high at Andrew School limits educational opportunities and experiences for students. They also generally agreed, senior high students would benefit by attending a school with more programs, options, students and extracurricular activities. That said, there were concerns about bus ride times, what that means for students long-term and how senior high students going to another school will impact child care needs for families.

Next Steps

Currently, the Board is reviewing all the information submitted, including reports, information and input received through the various public consultation sessions and survey. The Board will take into consideration all the information and feedback received before making a final decision, which will take place at the regular Board meeting on June 6, 2019.