

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING OF THE  
SUNSHINE COAST BOARD OF EDUCATION (SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 46)  
Held on Tuesday, February 16, 2010 at 7:00 P.M.  
At Chatelech Secondary School, Sechelt, B.C.**

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**PRESENT: TRUSTEES:** S. White, Chair; D. Mewhort, Vice-Chair (by phone); F. Heppell;  
L. Fielding; G. Russell; J. Scott; K. Sinnott

**STAFF:** D. Palmer, Superintendent of Schools  
T. Hierck, Assistant Superintendent  
D. Ready, Secretary-Treasurer  
C. McPhedran, Confidential Secretary

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**#73** Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chair White welcomed the audience. He began the meeting by explaining the purpose of the second and third reading of the bylaws. He went on to explain that there has been more information gathered about the budget and our schools in meetings with the principals and this information will help the trustees in their debate. Superintendent Palmer was asked to give an update.

Superintendent Palmer reported that schools of less than 100 students are not cost-effective with the present structure of one principal, one facility, one budget, one secretary, teachers and students. She explained that the district would be moving to a model of family groupings resulting in three separate clusters (Pender Harbour, Sechelt and Gibsons areas). Within the clusters, the principals will decide how to structure the schools based on enrolment and class size. Superintendent Palmer went on to explain the necessity to annex smaller schools to larger schools, pooling budgets and by doing this provide a more equitable service to students.

Chair White thanked Superintendent Palmer for her report and invited questions from the audience.

**#74** New Business

1. MOTION: Heppell/ Russell

“To change the order of the agenda to discuss the reading of the bylaws as follows: First, Kinnikinnick Elementary School; Second, Sechelt Elementary School; Third, Davis Bay Elementary School.”

Carried

Trustee Fielding asked if “New Business” should be titled “School Closures?”

Chair White confirmed that technically it should read as “School Closures,” but pointed out the subheading referred to “School Closures.” He explained that if the second reading is passed then the meeting would continue to the third reading of the bylaws.

Secretary-Treasurer read Bylaw No. 2010-3 to close Kinnikinnick Elementary School in full.

2. MOTION: Sinnott/Scott

“That Bylaw No. 2010-3 to close Kinnikinnick Elementary School in Sechelt, commencing September 2010, be read for a second time.”

Trustee Sinnott opened the debate by referring to all three motions that were before the board. He gave the pros and cons for each school and offered ideas on how different options should be considered. Some suggestions were to leave the Sechelt Elementary facility open, moving the students temporarily to Kinnikinnick Elementary pending renovations and upgrades, possibly change the configuration of West Sechelt Elementary, annex Davis Bay Elementary to Kinnikinnick Elementary and possibly have Davis Bay grade six and seven students transfer to Kinnikinnick Elementary. Trustee Sinnott went on to say that these suggestions may not work, but are options worth considering. He finished by stating that he is not in support of any of the three motions. He does not see overwhelming evidence to support the closure of Davis Bay Elementary.

Chair White read the Provincial Government Ministerial Order for opening and closing schools, and went on to further explain the difference of a school closure versus temporarily closing a school to be reopened after repairs are done.

Trustee Scott commented on the process of closing schools, saying that he does not think that a solution of school closures is ideal or that enough options have been looked at. He stated that closing schools is the traditional way of dealing with the circumstances that the district is currently experiencing, but the situation does not need to end negatively. It is his hope that the necessary changes will be positive for everyone. He agreed that schools may need to operate differently but stated he does not agree with closing schools.

Trustee Fielding agreed with Trustees Sinnott and Scott that closing schools limit options. She spoke about the overcapacity in West Sechelt and Roberts Creek Elementary Schools and said that closing schools would limit how schools can be reconfigured in years to come. She referred to the declining enrolment at the secondary schools, suggesting that transferring the grade seven students to Chatelech Secondary would relieve some of the overcrowding issues expected for some elementary schools. Trustee Fielding stated that she wished that West Sechelt Elementary had been involved in the discussions from the start. She reported that Sechelt Elementary is on the capital list and if it is closed, the possibility of a Neighborhood of Learning in the heart of Sechelt is lost. She also said that there would be an issue of where the Sunshine Coast Alternative School would go.

The above motion to close Kinnikinnick Elementary School was:

Defeated unanimously

3. MOTION: Mewhort/Sinnott

“That Bylaw No. 2010-1 to close Sechelt Elementary School in Sechelt, commencing September 2010, be read for a second time.”

Trustee Mewhort stated that the population on the Sechelt Elementary site was too small and he believed students and staff should be amalgamated to the Kinnikinnick Elementary site. He clarified that he moved the motion for the sake of debate, believing that Sechelt Elementary should be merged with Kinnikinnick Elementary for repair purposes. He is in favour of having Davis Bay Elementary remain open; however, he went on to say that the population of grade six

and seven students is too small and would like to consider Davis Bay Elementary being a K-5 school and moving the grade six and seven students to a larger site. He is willing to defeat the closure bylaw with the understanding that the students will be amalgamated as improvements are made, keeping Sechelt Elementary on the province's seismic and capital list.

Trustee Russell spoke next, saying he was confused with keeping Sechelt Elementary School open and that it was new information to him. He went on to question how capital funding would be obtained for a school that has been temporarily closed.

Secretary-Treasurer Ready referred to the School Closure Regulations and explained her interpretation of this regulation.

Trustee Russell asked for further explanation at which time Chair White asked Superintendent Palmer to explain further.

Superintendent Palmer reviewed the Ministry's definition of a school closure.

Trustee Russell asked what the combining of the schools would be called as it would no longer be a closure.

Chair White replied that this option would still be a germane topic of the agenda and that a alternative motion could be brought forward later.

The above motion to close Sechelt Elementary School was:

Defeated unanimously

#### 4. MOTION: Scott/Heppell

"That Bylaw No. 2010-2 to close Davis Bay Elementary School in Sechelt, commencing September 2010, be read for a second time."

Chair White asked for discussion.

Trustee Heppell read a prepared statement thanking all those who gave public submissions and wrote letters for the board's consideration. She also thanked senior management, principals, teachers and support staff who gave of their expertise in order for the board to base their decision on sound educational practice. She reported that this has not been an easy process. Trustee Heppell said that her decision was not based only because of lack of money, although it is clear that we are in tough economic times. She went on to say that senior management has been reviewing finances and looking at the big picture on how to provide the best educational outcome with the money that is available. She said that she feels advice was passed on to the board very clearly with no ambiguities and her decision is based on this. She favours the combining of the three schools to give the best opportunities educationally to all. At this point she asked Superintendent Palmer to give a brief descriptions of what Davis Bay Elementary would look like this coming fall if it were to remain open.

Superintendent Palmer referred to the numbers using the Baragar Demographics system. She reviewed the projected class sizes in detail and noted that if the grade six and seven classes were to move to Kinnikinnick Elementary, there would be three teachers at Davis Bay and likely the administrator would be teaching .6 of the time. Davis Bay Elementary would be annexed to Kinnikinnick Elementary and the budget would be run through Kinnikinnick Elementary.

Trustee Heppell thanked Superintendent Palmer and continued by suggesting that most parents would agree that this is not a picture of a school where their children would be experiencing the best educational experience. She asked the trustees to acknowledge the sound advice that was given by educators and to vote for the consolidation of the three schools at Kinnikinnick Elementary.

Trustee Scott replied that Davis Bay Elementary is a decent size school and was supposed to be a small neighborhood school. He considers it to be a viable school especially for primary students. He believes that the argument that students do better in larger schools is inconclusive. He spoke about the implementation of all-day kindergarten and the birthrate, which appears to be turning around. He said he understands that the higher grades may need more social opportunities and he would like to look at options for them, but for primary students he says Davis Bay Elementary is a great school.

Trustee Russell reported that he looked at this for a long time and tried to do a comparison if all three schools were to combine. He referred to Roberts Creek Elementary and what they can offer their students and continued by saying there are more options available when you have the numbers to offer teacher choice. He spoke about the unfair pressures on administrators who also have to teach. Trustee Russell referred to a two-tier education system. He stated his belief that the three schools should consolidate.

Trustee Mewhort replied that he has read hundreds of submissions and attended many consultation meetings. He says that schools are different and you can't compare them. Educationally, Davis Bay Elementary is fine and they are not behind. It is a small school and it functions well. He does see the grade six and seven classes as a problem. Twenty-one students is not sufficient a number to prepare them for high school. He argued against closure.

Trustee Fielding referred to Trustees Scott's comments about all day kindergarten and the need for more space. She referred to the December 2009 BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) Academy where she, along with other trustees, attended a workshop called "Ethical Decisions Making" based on right versus right decisions. Attendees learned that when you make choices, these should be made on values not policies. The Sunshine Coast values their neighborhood schools and for this reason, she believes that Davis Bay should remain open.

The above motion to close Davis Bay Elementary was:

In Favour - Trustees Heppell and Russell

Opposed - Trustees Fielding, Scott,  
Mewhort and Sinnott

Defeated

#75 Amalgamation of Schools

MOTION: Scott/Russell

“That effective for the 2010-2011 school year, the K-7 program and staff of Sechelt Elementary be amalgamated into Kinnikinnick Elementary, pending renovations, repairs and the pursuit of a Neighbourhood of Learning at the Sechelt Elementary site.”

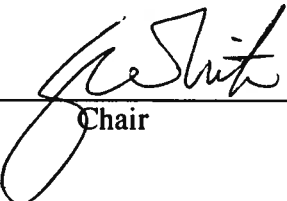
Chair White asked for discussion.

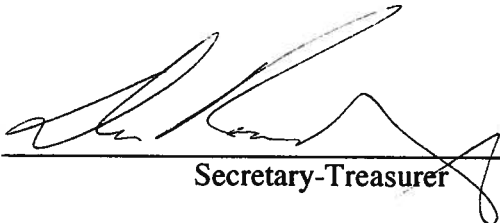
Carried unanimously

#76 Adjournment

MOTION: Mewhort/Russell

“There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

  
Chair

  
Secretary-Treasurer