

**South Shore Regional School Board  
School Review 2015-2016  
School Options Committee Meeting at Big Tancook Recreation Centre  
Big Tancook Elementary School  
Tuesday, February 17, 2016, 12:00 p.m.**

**PUBLIC MEETING NOTES**

Gary Walker introduced himself and explained that he was hired by the South Shore Regional School Board to facilitate the review of Big Tancook Elementary School. He explained that the review is happening at the request of School Board staff and the elected Board.

Mr. Walker reviewed the attached presentation (Appendix A) explaining the school review process and directives, as well as the mandate and objectives of the School Options Committee (SOC). He noted that this is a process that has been put into place by the province to allow the larger community to get involved, have a say, and give the public an opportunity to influence the Board's decision.

The SOC members were selected and at their first meeting, Hillary Dionne was selected as the Committee Chair. On behalf of the SOC, and with Mr. Walker's support, Ms. Dionne will present a recommendation to the Board of what the SOC thinks is in the best interests of the students.

If the SOC opts to recommend that the school remains open (Scenario 1), the presentation will have to include valid reasons as to why.

Scenario 2, which is to close school, will have to detail specific requirements and requests to the Board in order to meet the educational, as well as other, needs of the students, due to their unique situation involving ferry services. One example of student needs, other than the required 300 minutes of instructional time per day, would be a sick room, equipped with a bed and human support in times of injury or illness of a student.

The following information is a detail of the Question and Answer period for the public.

- What are the steps of the process?
  - Had a few meetings so far to come up with the details of what the SOC wants for the students of the island; the School Board will receive the SOC's Recommendation during a special Board Meeting on Wednesday, February 24, 3:00 p.m. at Chester District School; the eight-member Board will make a final decision at a later date; hope is that they will take our recommendation into consideration, fear is that they'll not; they have the right to take pieces of our recommendation; they can choose to agree with it, disagree with it, or change it.
- Is there a deadline?
  - Part of our recommendation will be to not have the decision extended to June 30 – we want to know as soon as possible, to be fair to Islanders; after the SOC submits their

recommendation, School Board staff will prepare a technical report indicating if they can do the things requested; then the Board will make a decision.

- On the assumption that the school closes and ten kids come to island, would they reopen the school?
  - It's never happened before, so they don't really know, but it will be included in the recommendation.
- What is the current cost of running the school?
  - \$14,699 for utilities and maintenance plus the teacher's wages.
- Result of last review?
  - School will run until 2020 or until there are less than three students, whichever came first.
- Cost of having a TA with the student?
  - \$24,000-ish.
  - Would have to have accommodation for TA in case the ferry isn't able to get back to the Island.
- Would the TA live in Chester?
  - Would like to have an Islander do this, because it would be more convenient for travel purposes.
- If child has to stay in Chester, what would the plan be?
  - Need special arrangements to stay with TA.
- What is the cost of a tutor?
  - This would not be applicable because the Education Act requires 300 minutes of instruction per day.
- Most rural communities are seeing a decline in population; the opposite is happening here. Over the past several years, there has been an increase of about 15%, as well as five or six new businesses. There is no reason to believe this trend won't continue. It makes sense to keep the school open, rather than closing it, only to have to re-open in a few years. It seems like it would cost more to hire a TA, have them travel with the students, and add the cost of recovering the lost instructional time.
  - The SOC talked about schools of necessity – what constitutes that? Maybe BTES should be one? If not, why? New Ross and Aspotogan are.
- Need to examine the possibility of school of necessity; School Board should be asked to make why it isn't one?
  - Need to link it to Scenario 1 as the Status Quo.
  - Want as much feedback as possible to sway the decision one way or the other; are we missing info for either scenario
- Seems like it would be cheaper to keep the school open, rather than put all of these extra supports in place to close the school.
  - Hiring a TA and the extra supports would not cost as much as the teacher working with 25 or so students, rather than one or two students.
- 7:30-4:00 is a long day for a young child; would be irritable and over-tired by the time they got home
- In emergency situations or during illness, children want their mom.
- Any input from Little Tancook?
  - Hillary spoke with the family who have a son starting in grade 2 in September; they used Big Tancook residents as emergency contacts; another family starting primary in 2017; and at least two new families coming as well.

- Enrolment will increase over the next few years.
  - Have to go by current student numbers registered.
  - Don't want a school to open and close from year to year.
- Why is it not appropriate to ask for a re-opening criteria, if they close the school?
  - We can ask for it in the recommendation.
- What about early dismissal days?
  - The TA would be responsible for the student(s).
- Will the Board Members have had the experience to spend a day on the Island?
  - Don't know. That would be up to them.
  - The elected governing Board makes the decision.
- Is there room for appendices?
  - Not sure, but will find out tonight.
  - It's the SOC's recommendation, so they should be able to add what they want.
- A useful appendix would be a statement from the ferry services about the rules around children being on the ferry and about operational concerns of the ferry.
- There is not much in place for unexpected early dismissals for the students that don't have anywhere to go.
  - This would have to be addressed by the Board.

Mr. Walker thanked everyone for coming. He requested that folks touch base with Hillary, before the next SOC meeting on Saturday morning, if they think of anything that might be helpful.

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 p.m.