

**South Shore Regional School Board  
School Review 2015-2016  
School Options Committee Meeting (BTES)  
Saturday, February 20, 2016  
10:00 a.m.**

**MINUTES**

**1. Record of Attendance**

Hillary Dionne, Scott Webber, Sarah Swinamer, Sue LeBlanc, Donna Larder, Gary Walker, and Cheryl Veinotte were in attendance.

Regrets were received from Shelly Adams.

**2. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings**

*MOTION* by Sue LeBlanc, seconded by Sarah Swinamer, to approve the Minutes of the Meetings held on January 8 and January 23, 2016.

*Motion Carried*

**3. Recommendation to the Board**

The Recommendation to the Board is a report that will include the following information:

- Introduction
- List of Schools Involved
- School Options Committee Membership
- Summary of Rationale to Review
- Mandate
- Review Objectives
- Meetings
- Variances from Provincial Policy
- Scenarios
- Recommendation(s)
- Closing Statement

The Board will assess the information in the SOC's Recommendation before making the final decision of this review. The SOC will request that the Superintendent write a Technical Report immediately, so as to give families plenty of time to plan for their children's next school year.

**4. Update from February 17 Public Meeting**

There are two items to discuss as a result of the Public Meeting:

- i. The Board Meeting that is scheduled for Wednesday, February 24, 3:00 p.m. at Chester District School is a special meeting for this Committee to present its Recommendation to the Board. This meeting will be open to the public. If Islanders

come to the meeting and need transportation to the school and back from the ferry, the Board will provide transportation.

- ii. Definition of School of Necessity – Ms. Dionne found information on the Board’s website and learned that New Ross Consolidated School is considered a School By Necessity and Big Tancook Elementary School is considered a Remote School By Necessity. This information is in the Board’s Long Range Outlook, which was last revised in June 2015.

Geoff Cainen, Superintendent, contacted Ms. Dionne and told her that it was a mistake and it never should have been typed for Big Tancook, that it was only for New Ross and that Big Tancook should have been listed as a Remote School. Mr. Cainen reminded Ms. Dionne about a meeting that took place at Forest Heights in June where it was noted that there were mistakes in the Long Range Outlook and the whole document needed to be reviewed again. He told her it was decided that the Board would wait until after the two reviews were complete before revising it.

In reference to New Ross, it is called a School By Necessity because if it closed, there would be students on a bus for 90 minutes each way to and from school.

Discussion took place regarding the term School By Necessity and the Committee feels that the length of time it takes students to get to and from school, as well as the length of time they are away from home for the day, should also be considered. By the time students leave their homes, walk to the wharf to take the ferry, and catch the bus from the ferry to get to the school, they can be in transit for 65-75 minutes. Also, their school-day is long, considering they would typically leave home by 7:45 a.m. and not return until approximately 4:45, making it a day of almost nine hours, which is significant, especially keeping in mind that they could be as young as four years old.

## **5. Scenarios for Big Tancook Elementary School**

Scenario 1 – Big Tancook Elementary School remains open.

- Pros
  - Island students can easily and safely get to school
  - School day is not compromised by any travel/travel time
  - Students’ education is not being hampered by being where they are
  - Public School Program is being delivered in an efficient manner to Island students
  - Students are not lacking in any programming needs
    - Staff at CAMS have repeatedly indicated that the Island students come well-equipped and fully prepared for middle school
  - Maintains a regular school day of 300 minutes per day
  - Young students (grades primary to 5) will have a reasonable number of hours in their school day (six, rather than 8-9)
  - Absenteeism is minimized with the continuation of an Island school

- The whole island is the classroom
  - No increase in costs for continuing to run the school
  - Student safety has never been an issue (i.e., no drugs or alcohol, no worry of strangers being in the area)
  - In the result of injury or illness, students can easily and quickly get to the comfort of their own home and family
  - Community inclusion; students stay in their own community
  - Potential to allow growth on the island and gives families with young children peace of mind knowing where their child's education will occur
- Cons
    - None
  - Request
    - Livestream CDS presentations, special guests, etc. to Island students; could be considered part of transition to link them with their upcoming peers
    - Declare school as Remote School by Necessity

Note: The province is staffing schools based on utilization and the number of students; they only used to use the number of students; 75% is the optimal utilization for school in Nova Scotia; anything less will hurt the Board in terms of staffing; anything greater, the Board incurs more costs.

Scenario 2 – Big Tancook Elementary School closes.

- Pros
  - There are no benefits to students by closing the school.
- Cons
  - Wharves are not safe places for young children. Wharves are provincial loading zones for fuel, supplies, general cargo, lumber, and many hazardous materials. Garbage trucks, oil trucks, septic waste trucks, heavy machinery, cement trucks, fishing equipment, etc. are daily sights. Students would be going through this loading zone at the two busiest times of the day get on and off the ferry; meaning they would be going through four times.
  - In the event of an interruption in ferry services, for whatever reason, students are stranded in Chester and cannot get home. It is not the same as a bus breaking down.
  - In the event of an unexpected, or even during a planned, early school closure, Island students are stranded in Chester and cannot get home until the next ferry run, which could be almost 2.5 hours or almost 5.5 hours
  - Students in grades 6-12 currently have an emergency plan in place. It is not reasonable to have that same plan in place, nor is likely to be age-appropriate, for students in grades primary to 5

- The learning time is not comparable – studies have proven that early morning is better for younger students than mid-late afternoon, and these students would lose over an hour of that valuable time, first thing in the morning, compared to making up that hour at the end of the school day.
- Students will have increased absences due to interruptions of ferry services
- Ferry is an emergency escape vehicle for the Islands and cannot always guarantee transportation of students
- The ferry day would be 8.25 hours (leaves at 8:00 and returns at 4:15), but the students’ day is even longer – time to get to ferry from home, then from the ferry to the bus, and on to school (nine hours, from 7:30-4:30)
- Not only students of Big Tancook, also students at Little Tancook; they get on ferry at 7:45 and get back at 4:45 (including prep time, it would be a 9.5 hour day); easier for them to go to school on Big Tancook rather than Chester
  - See ferry schedule below
- Ferry crew has a “Right to Refuse Passage” to children under the age of 12 who are not accompanied by a responsible adult
- Young families may move, which will have a negative impact on the economy of the island, as well as potential up-and-comers

<b>Day</b>	<b>Departs Tancook</b>	<b>Departs Chester</b>
Monday to Friday	6:00 am	7:00 am
	8:00 am	10:20 am
	1:30 pm	3:40 pm
	4:30 pm	5:30 pm
Friday Evening	6:30 pm	8:30 pm
	9:30 pm	11:00 pm
Saturday	9:00 am	1:00 pm
	6:00 pm	7:00 pm
Sunday & Holidays	9:00 am	10:00 am
	5:00 pm	6:00 pm

- Alternatives to Education on the Island
  - Need to provide students with technology to assist them in the delivery of the PSP when student is unable to get to school due to an interruption in ferry services
- Demands and requests, in the event of school closure, to accommodate the needs of the children
  - Need 100% Teacher Assistant (TA) for transportation of the students from the ferry to the bus and return
  - Recommend to the Superintendent the creation of a training opportunity to take place on the Island, for island residents, who are eligible and interested

to participate in substitute TA work, to ensure the availability of that position, in times when the permanent TA is unable to work

- All students are to travel at the same time to and from Chester
- Due to ferry schedule times, lost classroom instructional time will need to be recovered
- School-wide activities, such as the singing of the National Anthem and assemblies, must occur at times when all students have arrived at school
  - When students are unable to get to school due to an interruption in ferry services, there must be an opportunity for them to connect with their classroom via Skype, or some other format, to minimize missed learning time
- Must have a suitable “sick room” at CDS to ensure student comfort in times of illness, when they may have to wait for hours to get home on the ferry; must have supervision during such times.
- Direct the Superintendent to report back to the SOC when the Board has investigated all options and come to a decision

Notes:

- The Board may ask questions upon completion of the presentation of the SOC’s Recommendation.
- The SOC would like to request the Board do something as a “thank you” to Jason Keddy, the ferry’s Captain, and the crew (total of nine employees) for allowing the SOC to use the ferry as its venue for meeting.

**6. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.