

School Steering Team Minutes

Meeting #8

Halifax South Peninsula School

Date: August 28, 2017

Location: LeMarchant-St. Thomas School (Beaufort School site)

Attendees:

Name	Organization
Judy Obersi	LMST (SAC)
David Jakeman	LMST (SAC)
Stacey Hughes	Architecture 49
Peter Howitt	EECD
Darrell MacDonald	DTIR
Karyn Cooling	HRSB (School Administration)
Joanne Williams	HRSB (EXCEL)
Moira Cavanaugh	LMST (principal)
Cindy Littlefair	HRSB (elected Board member)
Earl McMullin	HRSB (Operation Services)
Marie Fagan	HRSB (Operation Services)
Dan Sheehan	HRSB (Operation Services)
Tim Schaus	Facilitator

Guest: Gary Burrill (MLA)

1. Darrell MacDonald from Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (DTIR) provided an overview of the Halifax South Peninsula School project and indicated why the project start has been delayed.

Delays occurred in the tendering/bid process due to the provincial election and appointing of a new cabinet. It has been questioned if the fact that the tender prices came in higher than expected was a factor in the delay. This is not the reason for the delay. Rather, the reason is that new information from the Halifax Regional School Board is projecting an increased enrolment of upwards of 90 more students for the new school and that has continued the delay. The project was designed for an enrolment of 414 students. A projected enrolment increase from 414 students to 504 would affect the number of classrooms needed, the size of other spaces in the school and possibly the footprint of the school. As well, other aspects that could be affected include parking, green space and traffic. All of these implications must be considered by those making decisions.

2. Questions and discussion around student enrolment and the project delay:

David Jakeman: Are the new projected enrolment numbers from Baragar?

Darrell MacDonald: For three years in a row the minister has mandated projected enrolment estimates for schools. The HRSB uses Baragar Systems for enrolment projections. It appears that the increase in the enrolment projections are due to new enrolments in the French Immersion program at LeMarchant St. Thomas and not out-of-area requests.

Cindy Littlefair: LeMarchant St. Thomas is the designated French immersion site for elementary students living in the LeMarchant St. Thomas, Inglis Street, Sir Charles Tupper and St. Mary's school boundaries.

Judy Obersi: Is there any consideration given for additional French Immersion sites to relieve the enrolment pressure on the new building? A conversation needs to be held around the French immersion program and boundaries.

Cindy Littlefair: Is there a possibility for an additional French Immersion site and stay the course and build with the smaller projected enrolment number of 414?

Karyn Cooling: Decision makers must consider the viability of a small French immersion program in another school. Space requirements and a critical mass of students are necessary for a program's sustainability. Nearby schools such as Inglis Street and Sir Charles Tupper may have an additional classroom or two but these two schools are not almost empty.

Cindy Littlefair: It has been stated that CSAP is looking for another school on peninsular Halifax. What effect would that have on the enrolment numbers of the new school for LeMarchant St. Thomas?

Darrell MacDonald: CSAP also draws students from English programs. What effect that would have on the LeMarchant St. Thomas enrolment is a big question.

David Jakeman: How would you find the answer to this questions – possibly conversation with HRSB and CSAP and using the Baragar projections?

Darrell MacDonald: Yes. We will work with the parties involved to determine next steps.

Cindy Littlefair: Timing is an issue for new building. The Halifax South Peninsula school project is in the pipeline. At this time, a Halifax CSAP school is not in the pipeline.

Darrell MacDonald: Any requests for new school major capital projects will need to be considered by Government in a holistic manner, taking into account all requests from around the province. It is yet to be determined what the results will be of any request by other boards.

Cindy Littlefair: The process of yearly generating enrolment projections for schools (Long Range Outlook) is relatively new. There is a need to automatically check the Long Range Outlook of enrolment from one year to the next – especially for new constructions. Recommendation will be made that the HRSB implement this going forward.

Peter Howitt: We went back to the HRSB to confirm the accuracy that their projected enrolment for the year 2022 increases from 414 students to 504. They confirmed that their projected enrolment is accurate according to Baragar Systems.

3. Questions and comments around the delay of the Halifax South Peninsula School project:

Darrell MacDonald: Targeting a September 2018 opening is now not possible. We don't know the new timeline. We are looking at options now. We want to spend the money on a proper facility.

Judy Obersi: With the delay, students will be in the Beaufort building longer. Is it available?

Earl MacMullin: The Halifax Regional School Board has control of this building and site and it is the board's to use as long it is needed by the HRSB.

Gary Burrill: Where does the process with the tender stand?

Darrell MacDonald: EECD and TIR are working collaboratively with all stakeholders involved to determine what the advice will be regarding next steps in ensuring we are constructing the right building for this community.

4. Questions and comments around the project moving forward past the delay:

Cindy Littlefair: What are the options?

Stacey Hughes: If 100 more students are projected, more classrooms would be required. Also other spaces in the school would be enlarged including mechanical. The gym would not need to be enlarged because it is already larger than what the provincial standard would provide. The design could be adjusted and fit to the site but it could have a ripple effect on the HRM field and the Beaufort site for parking.

Darrell MacDonald: The increase to 504 students would impact traffic, green space and parking. These implications must be considered by those making decisions.

David Jakeman: I don't want to see the school going out into the green space.

Stacey Hughes: Another floor could possibly be a problem with municipal setbacks. This would need to be investigated to determine if it is an issue. The simplest thing is to increase the length of the spine which would impact green space, either at the rear of the school or at the front.

David Jakeman: I'd like to see the school board put French Immersion at Inglis Street or Sir Charles Tupper and the design for the new LeMarchant St. Thomas stay as it is.

Judy Obersi: There is a sweet spot for size of a school. The community loses green space if LeMarchant St. Thomas gets larger. What if numbers go down in the next projection? I wouldn't want it to turn into a P-9 eventually.

David Jakeman: Could the fence be moved to give access for students to the second playground and the field?

Darrell MacDonald: I'll have a conversation with the project manager about opening up access to these two areas.

Gary Burrill: Why can't you give us a timeline for the project?

Darrell MacDonald: Until we know solutions we can't give timelines. We don't know the magnitude of the required design change, if any.

Cindy Littlefair: What are next steps?

Darrell MacDonald: DTIR will work with HRSB and EECD to resolve the enrolment issues.

Gary Burrill: Do you work with guidelines regarding when consultation must be redone? At what level of design change does public consultation continue?

Darrell MacDonald: There are no specific guidelines. If the design must change, we would do more again with the School Steering Team (SST) and the public. As we come up with viable options we would come back together. It would be a judgement call by the project team as to what consultation will be necessary and when.