



“The Niagara Catholic District School Board, through the charisms of faith, social justice, support and leadership, nurtures and enriching Catholic learning community for all to reach their full potential and become living witness of Christ.”

MINUTES
Monsignor Clancy and St. Charles Catholic Elementary Schools
Modified Pupil Accommodation Review
Combined Catholic School Council Meeting

March 28, 2017
6:00 p.m.

MONSIGNOR CLANCY CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL THEATRE

Minutes of the Monsignor Clancy and St. Charles Catholic Elementary Schools Modified Pupil Accommodation Review of March 28, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at Monsignor Clancy Catholic Elementary School.

St. Charles Catholic *Elementary* School Principal Walsh opened with a prayer.

Monsignor Clancy Catholic Elementary School Principal Trainor welcomed everyone and introduced Board staff present.

Presentation:

Superintendent Farrell welcomed and thanked everyone for attending and outlined the upcoming presentation which would cover the modified pupil accommodation review process and the opportunities for parents to be involved. He advised that the slide deck will be posted to the Board website and that the upcoming Public Meeting on April 20th, at Monsignor Clancy, will be more detailed.

Superintendent Farrell indicated that Niagara Catholic, like all school boards in the province, are dealing with declining enrolment. In Niagara Catholic, 94% of our vacant space is at the elementary level and approximately 30% of that vacant space is here in Thorold.

The Niagara Catholic Long Term Accommodation Plan is available on the Board website which outlines potential accommodation strategies for the next five years. This Pupil Accommodation Review was identified to be addressed and recommended for the first year. Potential community partnerships were investigated, through a public meeting, and the local municipality was consulted in early January.

Each of the slides was reviewed and guests were provided the opportunity to ask questions.

The Initial Staff Report, prepared by Board staff is available in its entirety on the Board website for review and provides an open and transparent view into the rationale for selecting the recommended option. Superintendent Farrell outlined how the current accommodation review process was different than conducted in earlier years. The purpose of the modified accommodation review process is to seek input on the recommended option.

The four accommodation options considered were listed. The recommended option, to consolidate the schools at a renovated Monsignor Clancy, was reviewed and the double-gym, theatre, cafeteria and Chapel were highlighted as important considerations.

There will be a Public Meeting at Monsignor Clancy on April 20th, 2017 for the community to provide input on the recommended option.

Kathy Levinski, Administrator of Facilities Services, outlined the open and transparent process and showed where all information, including the Board Policy, Initial Staff Report and meeting dates, can be found on niagaracatholic.ca, the Board website. Parents will also receive information through the SchoolConnects system, through phone and email.

The feedback page for comments and questions, from the website, was shown. All inquiries will receive a response. All feedback is provided to the Board of Trustees.

Superintendent Farrell reviewed the timelines, in compliance with Board Policy, for the Modified Pupil Accommodation Review, including the April 20th, 2017 Public Meeting and a dedicated Board Meeting at Monsignor Clancy Catholic Elementary School to receive public delegations on May 29th, 2017. Minutes from the meetings will be presented to the Trustees and posted on the Board website. Feedback and correspondence will also be provided to the Trustees and incorporated in subsequent reports prepared by Board staff for Trustee consideration at the Committee of the Whole. If approved, Board staff will make a final recommendation to the Board of Trustees to be voted on at a formal Board Meeting, June 20th, 2017.

The final decision rests with the Trustees. The community would be advised of the decision by June 27th, 2017.

Scott Whitwell, Controller of Facilities Services, advised that a capital application would be submitted to the Ministry of Education at the earliest opportunity, if the approved recommendation involved renovation or construction.

Upon Ministry approval, pre-construction would take approximately 12 months which includes the selection of an architect, facility design, tendering and co-ordinating with the municipality for approval of site plan and obtaining building permits. Sources of funding were reviewed. If the recommendation is approved by the Board, it is contingent on a successful business case approved by the Ministry. Renovations could take up to 16 months. A combined school could open September 2020 or earlier.

Questions/Comments from Attendees:

What renovations would you need to do given, the school is already here and you have the surplus rooms? We need ELKP and Grade 1 classrooms here, what are you going to do - put up portables or are you going to build?

Scott Whitwell: With additions, portables are not usually added for construction. St. Charles goes from Kindergarten to Grade 3 and will require purpose built classrooms, which tend to be bigger than regular classrooms. The parking lot may need to be modified with the additional staff. The tennis courts will be addressed through the process.

Because the JK's are younger, how are you going to separate them on the playground to keep them away from the older grades? My son got bullied by a Grade 3. Keep in mind this was a high school, during the construction time frame. Where are kids going to go to school while renovations are going on?

Superintendent Farrell: The Facilities Services Department, has successfully orchestrated a number of renovations and new construction projects. Student safety is paramount throughout the entire process. It is premature to address how students will be affected by construction as the accommodation solution needs to be resolved first.

These are questions parents are wondering right now. How are our kids going to be safe? Are we going to lose Ms. Wash our wonderful Principal, or are we getting two Principals? What about the teachers at St. Charles, are you going to move them somewhere else or are you going to bring everyone from over there here too? How does that work? Who are the partners? Who are the architects?

Superintendent Farrell: We will be able to answer those questions if it is decided that the schools are to be combined and we receive funding. The selection of an architect is done at the conclusion of this process. What I can assure you is that we want the best quality education for every child.

Well, I just want this on record, the best quality education right now is at St. Charles because of Mrs. Walsh - she knows every student coming into that building. She stands there every morning, knows every parent and I would like for her to be principal of Monsignor Clancy.

Superintendent Farrell: We have 49 elementary schools and parent and student affection for their school and Principal is natural. We believe that all of the communities should feel the same way about their school.

I read that there are other schools underperforming as well, so it's not just St. Charles and Monsignor. What about opening up boundaries? A lot of moms I've talked to, we can't afford Thorold anymore. Look at the demographics. The majority of the people that live here are elderly or Brock students so you are going to lose children coming to school anyways.

Superintendent Farrell: Declining enrolment is an issue throughout the province. In our Long Term Accommodation Plan we provide strategies to address this locally. Earlier this year, we adjusted the boundaries for Loretto Catholic in Niagara Falls and this area was also identified as a priority to address.

As a child who went through construction and lost my high school, I was here, I went through all that construction; the tar smell, headaches, sick days. I have two girls, one in each school, and I worry about their safety. I know you try; but I've been through it and it's hard. The children are still little, but they will be affected here. They are losing their identity. How are the St. Charles kids going to keep their identity? They are Penguins. How is it that those St. Charles kids are going to have their identity kept? Mr. Trainor and Mrs. Walsh have done a phenomenal job joining these two schools as one unit; in the community they are seen as one unit. I know this man (Mr. Trainor). I know what this man does to keep the bullying to a minimum. When you have little kids here and there is a Grade 8 with a Grade 4, what are they going to do to the little ones? That is something concerning as well as making sure the kids are safer during construction. You're going 16 months. That's over one full school year of construction they have to suffer through. Things like their playground, is it going to be brought over because we lost the one that we built? St. Charles had one for the little JK and SK's and it's gone. As parents, we spent money for it. Those are my main concerns to be addressed. Their identity, their safety, full and complete safety. You can't stop paint smell, you can't stop tar smell, you can't stop re-routing. The months of construction, for Mr. Rapattoni, I can't even use the word. Those are the things that are my concerns.

Superintendent Farrell: We appreciate your concerns and understand the amount of work on that will be required by both Principals to bring both school communities together. A transition plan will be developed if the decision is made to combine the schools. The intent is not to erase the history of either school. The intent is to honour that history, but, move forward.

But there is a dilemma right there. As a Monsignor Clancy High School student, where is my identity? Mr. Trainor knows. We just did our reunion and one of the things we don't have is a wall, our Grad pictures put back up. We don't have a home. Our home was taken from us as a high school because it

was changed back to elementary. Mr. Trainor has been working to get our home put back into Clancy. We want a name, we want a place, we want to tell our kids we went here. You walk into DM and you go back generations. We don't even have a home so as you say the Penguins are gonna keep their face, I don't believe that. As a Crusader, I went here from Grade 6 to OAC, I don't have an identity. And that was partially the Board and partially the Church that took it away.

Another thing I want to point out is that you say that this could happen. If you know this is going to happen you should have everything prepared now. If you have a transition plan, where is it? Give it to us right now, because parents want to see it. You people have it in your mind that it is probably going to happen so. You guys are very political. If you want us to vote on it, we need information in our hands, not online - we want paper.

Superintendent Farrell: We can make the report available at the school or you are able to print it off. The transition plan is premature.

You should have a transition report now. If you think this is going to happen, you need to have your ducks in a row. You should have a transition plan for us now. Get that stuff to parents early so we are not sitting here wondering. Parents weren't heard when they turned this from a high school and made it back to elementary.

Superintendent Farrell: As far as what happens next, we have a Public Meeting here on April 20th. We will be presenting the options considered and the rationale for our recommended option. We will not be presenting a transition plan at that time. At this stage in the process, we need to hear from the community and what the concerns are. If the recommended option is ultimately approved there will continue to be time to communicate. We are not talking about beginning construction for September. These things take years.

You said 2020 is the date that the two schools will be amalgamated, that is three years away and construction will take 16 months.

Superintendent Farrell: One of the things we need to do, if this is approved by the Trustees, is to apply to the Ministry of Education for funding. If there is no funding then we go status quo.

There is an election next year, what happens if you go through all this and don't get funding?

Scott Whitwell: We would prepare a business case. Each Board can submit up to 8 business cases to the Ministry of Education. There are boards that put in a business case and get turned down the first time. That doesn't prevent them from applying again.

But wouldn't that put construction back due to the election.

Scott Whitwell: I believe that once the Ministry of Education gives the funding it generally stays in place. That has been the history.

So this whole recommendation is based on getting funding from the Ministry?

Yes, we require funding. If we don't get it we will need to consider next steps. We have looked at our empty spaces and it may not seem like it would have a large impact on the board, but, resources allocated to empty spaces mean less resources for all students in the Board. It doesn't just affect one or two schools. It means less resources for your children.

Look at Thorold South, all that land just went up for construction.

Superintendent Farrell: We will get into that more on the April 20 meeting. Tonight, we wanted to let you know how you can be involved and where you can find information. Our website has all of the information. You leave a question or comment using the site. You can use regular mail if you are not comfortable with electronic or you can call Kathy Levinski. Everything gets documented and is provided to the Trustees. We can't be more open with our rationale or what we are thinking than we are in our Initial Staff Report.

Comment: I think it worth noting as well that we are the only schools that are separated by Primary and Junior/Intermediate. We are the last remaining to be K-8 and the benefits to having the K-8 are important.

Comment: I think what this lady over here was saying about the safety of our students is probably the most important thing. I remember when my son was in Grade 1 at St. Charles and the ELKP was being constructed. Part of his Grade 1 year was spent in the gym. So things like that might happen again here. I just want to make sure that the students are still having their best year even though all of these other things are going on around them.

Superintendent Farrell: We recognize and appreciate your concern for your children. They are our children as well. We also have future children coming and we want to plan for them. We have a long term vision for Catholic education in Thorold. If the recommended option is approved, communication will continue. You will be part of the conversation. Safety of the students is paramount.

Comment: As a parent of two kids, one in each school, I think it will be wonderful to have both in one. I have two different bus schedules, two calendars, they will never be in school together. My little one is so excited when her sister is at the school helping. I think it will be great to have one school.

Comment: I understand safety will be an issue. We are not separating the Grades 4 to 8 anymore because of the guidance of the principal here. I remember the fear I had sending my son from St. Charles to Monsignor Clancy. I heard all kinds of bad stuff but once he got here he was fine. It is a wonderful school. You have your first born who has never seen how older kids act, now you have older kids that need to keep themselves in check for the younger kids. They learn from each other. It think it's a great opportunity to put them together to get a well rounded education. I believe you will do the best to keep our kids safe. It may be bumpy, but, I know Mr. Trainor and only had brief moments with Mrs. Walsh and I know they will be out there working with the parents.

Superintendent Farrell: Thank you to the Catholic School Councils for hosting us and for the questions and feedback. All are invited to the April 20th, 2017 Public Meeting.