

St. Matthew's Elementary

School Council Meeting Jan. 10, 2011

Minutes

In attendance: Dean, Paula, Bev, Brian, Kyran, Steve, Sean, Glenn, Angela, Claudette, Sharon

Absent: Jason

Meeting began at 5:33 pm

1. **Welcome** –Dean called the meeting to order and welcomed the council. Dean moved that the minutes be adopted as read, seconded by Angela with all in agreement.
2. **Spring Fair** – The date for the Spring Fair has been set for May 14th. This date is later than normal due to the Quebec exchange trip and the late Easter vacation. The first committee meeting will take place on Thursday, Jan. 27th at 7 pm. Council members were asked to consider where money raised would be directed. This will be discussed at the next staff meeting and the decided at the next council meeting. It was suggested that we have a pancake breakfast this year as opposed to a morning coffee. We will investigate the possibility of CONA cooking students taking responsibility for the food preparation. It was thought that the breakfast idea would have more of a family focus.
3. **School Board Proposal** – Kyran circulated the two letters sent home to parents since our meeting with Ford Rice and senior district staff on Dec. 6. The first letter informed parents of the proposal and invited written submissions to the council by Dec. 20. Kyran also provided a copy of an email he sent to District Office on Dec. 20 summarizing the issues brought forward by parents. The letter from Ford Rice to parents addressed many of the parent concerns forwarded in emails to the school council. There were seven issues identified:
 - a. **Missed opportunity to socialize and be mentored by older students** – Council discussed this issue and pointed out that our French Immersion students will have a greater opportunity to socialize when both the Cowan Heights stream and St. Matthew's combine at Beaconsfield in Grade 8. This would not happen if the current feeding system continued where our students would go through alone at Beaconsfield. It was also pointed out that our students will have the same district privilege of being able to leave school premises during the lunchtime. It was felt that students could have significant leadership roles within

the school, particularly given our March Leadership project in connection with Free the Children.

- b. **Sports and Other Extra Curricular Activities** – Concern was expressed by some parents that our students would not have the opportunity to play on a junior high team. Council felt that a greater percentage of our students would have the opportunity to play given that our school would have a competitive team comprised of only our students.
- c. **Overcrowding and disruption of instructional time at Beaconsfield during renovations** – It was felt that this was a concern outside our control but that the District was notified of this concern.
- d. **Long term possibility of “modular” classrooms becoming permanent** – Some Council members have seen the current “modular” classrooms and reported that they appear to be very good learning environments. Mr. Rice explained during the Dec. 6 meeting that they will be temporary until Government approves the money for the extension.
- e. **Homeroom versus floating to classroom** – Some parents were concerned that students would remain in homerooms as in elementary school and not have the opportunity to move about to change classes. This will be determined when staffing is completed and decisions about subject teaching are finalized.
- f. **Lack of qualified French Immersion Teachers/and subject specific teachers.** - Council were quite firm that the District must ensure that the Grade 7 program be staffed with qualified teachers and well resourced.
- g. **Concern about whether the program at St Matthew’s be the same as Beaconsfield.** – This concern was addressed by Mr. Rice in his letter to parents. Due to the fact that Beaconsfield offers music and tech ed in Grade 7, we are able to accommodate those programs. In Science, there are eight core labs of which four can take place at the school but arrangements would have to be made to conduct four off site.

In this discussion, the greatest concerns of our School Council were the need for qualified teachers and sufficient, timely resources to deliver the Grade 7 program at St. Matthew’s. It was felt that if the proposal went ahead with success next year, the school council would consider supporting this as a permanent move. The District and school would have to evaluate the decision from a district, school, curriculum and parent and student perspectives.

After much discussion Dean motioned that the School Council support the proposal to retain our Grade 6 students for Grade 7 on the condition that qualified teachers be hired and sufficient, timely resources provided. All members supported this motion.

The School Council is also open to the possibility of exploring this as a permanent move if an evaluation process deems the decision successful.

Dean will present on behalf of the School Council at the Consultation Session to be held at Hazelwood Elementary on Wed., Jan. 12. at 6:30 pm. He will circulate his draft presentation tomorrow for feedback.

4. **Swimming/Skating** – Brian brought up the need to reconsider school swimming/skating. Kyran informed the council that the district has limited the amount of time that can be spent not on task. The non-instructional time to participate in skating and swimming programs (transportation, changing, etc.) is longer than the instructional time. It was discussed that this is part of physical education and even a life skill to swim so we will investigate ways to participate in these kind of activities even once per term. This item will be discussed in more detail at our next meeting.

5. **Next Meeting** – Feb. 1 at 5:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned: 6:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted: Sharon Vivian