



Tri-County Regional School Board
Nova Scotia, Canada

Students First

**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
MINUTES
March 5, 2007**

**APPROVED
March 20, 2007**

Present:

Board Members

Faye Haley, Chair	Alvin Comeau
Ron Hines, Vice-Chair	Anne Moses
Robie Atkinson	Winnie Surette
Joan Brewer	Donna Tidd
Alvin Comeau	

Regrets

Janice Francis
Nick Pippy

Absent

Alden Fells

Staff

Phil Landry, Superintendent of Schools
Bill Curry, Director of Programs & Student Services
Joe Hazelton, Communications Officer
Tanya Forrest, Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Secretary

A special meeting of the Tri-County Regional School Board was held on Tuesday, March 5, 2007.

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Haley called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

RECORD OF ATTENDANCE

Attendance was taken noting that eight Board Members were present which constituted a quorum.

REPORT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Superintendent Landry provided a report to the Board in regards to grandfathering. He noted that senior staff met with Coordinators and Consultants of the Board as a group and with the principals as another group.

The consensus of both staff and principals was that Grandfathering should **not be allowed**, and that existing Board Policy 703.4 *Student Transfers* – “that students will attend schools that service the area in which they live unless student transfers are permitted in accordance with established procedures” – was very clear and specifically allows for transfers for solid educational reasons, and Board staff in particular felt there was no reason to alter this Policy. This Policy is also seen as a very commendable and straight forward rationale by both groups, one that is fair and equitable to everyone.

REPORT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT ...continued

A lengthy discussion ensued pertaining to grandfathering and Board Members felt that it was not a matter of whether grandfather should be allowed, but how it should be done. Board Members stated that they want students treated fairly in all three Counties.

Board Member Moses asked what is meant by limited Grandfathering. Superintendent Landry stated that limited Grandfathering means grandfathering those already in the school system, not the siblings coming in.

Board Member Moses stated that she believes that grandfathering is doing what the Board agreed to do, which is putting students first.

Board Member Comeau advised that he is in favour of grandfathering because up to now there have been no boundaries in the Clare area. He further stated that after all these years, Clare students finally went to their appropriate school, are comfortable there, and if we change it again, it would cause another problem in the Clare area.

Board Member Surette stated that she feels grandfathering should be for students who will have to change schools because the Board changed the boundaries and that consideration should be given for students in their last years of high school because of programming etc. for graduation.

Board Member Brewer stated that she feels a blanket grandfathering clause disregards all the work of the Boundary Committee. She stated that to grandfather students at Meadowfields School would be irresponsible due to the high number of students per class and if the Board wants to do what is best for our students, we should look at the overcrowding in some classes. She further stated that Grandfathering will cause more parents to drive their children to school which means more traffic flow at the drop off site which can be dangerous for the students. She stated that most children adapt well to change and often play with children from other schools.

Board Member Hines distributed a report outlining his thoughts pertaining to grandfathering. He stated that it seems difficult because of the complications which various forms of grandfathering students and/or families will cause but believes the Board is capable of handling the issue while accommodating our students to the extent that their educational future is not jeopardized.

Board Chair Haley gave some options the Board could consider, as follows:

- Status quo, with only Clare students grandfathered until 2010.
- Grandfathering everyone in the system until 2010.
- Grandfathering everyone in the system for one or two years instead of three, with all new students going to the school in their catchment area.
- Grandfather only students presently in the system, not siblings.
- Grandfather only those students entering their final year in their current school.

Bill Curry asked that if the Board discovered that a student was in the wrong school, but yet passed a grandfathering clause, would that allow them to stay at that school? Board Member Hines advised that grandfathering would not be for students attending the wrong school, but only for those students affected by the Boundary Report.

REPORT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT ...continued

The Board suggested that staff consult and come up with a plan of how grandfathering can be done.

SPEC01-07 **MOVED** by Board Member Hines, seconded by Board Member Tidd, that staff consult and come up with a plan to put into effect a grandfathering clause for students presently in schools who are affected by Boundary changes that will take effect in September 2007.

MOTION CARRIED

INQUIRIES AND COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

As noted above.

INQUIRIES AND RESPONSES FROM THE PUBLIC

Roxanne Heroux asked: "What is a justifiable transfer?"

Superintendent Landry advised that he consults with both principals and looks at various issues such as medical, testing, family situations, class size, etc. when considering a transfer request. As per the transfer policy, if the transfer is denied, parents have the option of appealing.

Rachelle Loppie asked: "Why can't the kids that are in the school system now keep going until they are all out?"

Board Chair Haley stated that at some point, there has to be a cut off date. She noted, however, that if the Board already set the deadline at 2010 for one area, we could look at extending it in another area.

Tracey Watkins made the following comment: "I feel that grandfathering should be allowed for the children who are currently attending their proper school. I have a child with Down's Syndrome who will be entering grade 6 in September 2007 and a son who will be entering grade 5 in September 2007. I bought land and built a new home just one year ago and when I bought the land I made sure it was within the Meadowfields school boundary. I think that changing schools for my 2 children at this stage is unfair to them. Had I known this boundary change would be implemented, I would have bought land elsewhere. I feel my children have had enough changes and that is why I made sure our move would not affect their schooling. This matter needs to be settled ASAP."

Sonya Breton asked: "Are we to assume that if the board makes a motion not to grandfather the students who are currently attending their proper schools that all the other students who are attending schools not in their proper district be leaving as well, how will this be enforced because so far it seems to not be working?"

Superintendent Landry advised that the Board tried enforcing the present boundaries last year but there is always someone who falls through the cracks. He noted that some were caught last year and had to return to their neighborhood school but some are hard to catch because they falsify their address.

INQUIRIES AND RESPONSES FROM THE PUBLIC ...continued

Tina Comeau asked: “You say the kids were caught, sent to their proper school, but they can still apply for a transfer?”

Superintendent Landry advised that parents can apply for a student transfer.

Faren Surette made the following comments: “Mrs. Brewer’s remarks are incorrect in as much as she believes that children from other schools play with each other. They do not. My son has been to six birthday parties in the last month, all from his class. He has been to zero from other schools. Mrs. Brewer would have a different feeling if this affects her child by making her change schools. She has decided to bring up a number of ridiculous concerns such as traffic and environmental issues. If she indeed had the best interests of the children in mind, she would allow grandfathering for our children who are now happy with their school. If she feels class sizes are too large at Meadowfields, she could request a transfer under board policy 703.4 so that her daughter could be in a smaller class. My son is already crying because he does not want to change schools and it is only March; imagine what his attitude will be in August. Let’s put the children first instead of our egos.”

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Tanya Forrest
Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Secretary

N. Faye Haley
Chair of the Board

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