



**Accommodation Review Committee
Public Meeting No. 2 - What is ... What could be
Warren Central Public School
Wednesday, June 13, 2007
6:00 pm to 7:00 pm**

MINUTES

Present:

Norm Blaseg, Superintendent, Rainbow District School Board; **Kathy Wachnuk**, Principal, Warren Central Public School; **Maureen Andersen**, Teacher, Warren Central Public School; **Pamela Munro**, Chair, School Council, Warren Central Public School; **Janet Johnson**, School Council, Warren Central Public School; **Jocelyn Guenette**, business representative, Caisse Populaire de Verner-Warren; **Heather Thirkill**, Recording Secretary, Rainbow District School Board; **Jean Hanson**, Director of Education; **Diane Cayen-Arnold**, Superintendent of Business; **Fred Law**, Superintendent; **Nicole Charette**, Corporate Communications; **Dena Morrison**, Chair; **Judy Hunda**, Vice-Chair; **Doreen Dewar**, Trustee; **Larry Killens**, Trustee; **Grace Fox**, Trustee; **Ruth Ward**, Trustee; **Gord Santala**, Trustee; and **Jeanna Miller**, Trustee.

1. Welcome

Superintendent Norm Blaseg welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Administrative Council, Trustees and members of the Accommodation Review Committee were introduced.

Presenters were asked to come forward to deliver their remarks. Those in attendance were reminded that the minutes of the meeting will be posted on the Board's website (rainbowschools.ca).

2. Response to questions from Public Meeting No. 1

Questions raised at the first public meeting were reviewed.

In March 2005, a motion was put forward to change the boundaries for Warren Central Public School. Grade 4, 5 and 6 students were moved from Warren Central Public School to Markstay Public School starting September 2005.

A question was raised at the May 29th meeting about the number of students living in the Warren area that are currently attending Markstay Public School. There are a total of 20 students. The consortium provided the following breakdown:

Grade 4	2 students
Grade 5	3 students
Grade 6	2 students
Grade 7	6 students
Grade 8	5 students

As well as 2 special education students

3. Presentations

Superintendent Blaseg reminded everyone about the 10-minute time limit. There will be an opportunity to ask two or three questions at the end of each presentation. There were four presenters: Lynn Post, Donna Smith, Janet Johnson and Pam Munro.

Superintendent Blaseg indicated that there were “Request for Public Input” sheets available at the door for anyone who would like to write down their recommendation(s). These can be submitted at the end of the meeting or any time before the third Public Meeting, which is scheduled for Tuesday, September 18, 2007.

Superintendent Blaseg reminded the audience of the two guiding principles – *to ensure that all students continue to have access to the best programming possible in quality school facilities and to reduce surplus space.*

First Presenter – Lynn Post,

parent of two children attending Warren Central Public School

My first recommendation is to leave well enough alone. I want to use the old saying “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”. I don’t believe that all of the 1.4 million dollar repair work is necessary and urgent. Why would you have to repair absolutely everything on your list? I don’t agree with being in the preventative mode of repairs instead of reactive mode as was discussed at the last meeting. Some of these 1.4 million dollar repairs may never need to be fixed if left alone. If the board is truly concerned with the condition of the school, why are they recommending that our students be sent to a school that is in no better shape, perhaps worse?

We don’t want a Beverly Hills School. We want a good school close to home. We don’t want our young children to have extremely long bus rides on a

dangerous highway. I travel to Sudbury every day on Hwy 17 and see many fatal accidents. I don't want my children exposed to unnecessary danger traveling a long way on that highway. Does the board want that on their conscience? This is the only English school in the Warren area. This is a bilingual country isn't it? Why would you take this away from us? Would this happen if this was a French school? I don't think so.

My second recommendation is to bring back the 4, 5, 6 grades. You are complaining of the school having a low occupancy so fill it up with more grades. Why were they removed in the first place? Why don't we change the boundaries to increase the catchment area for the Warren School?

My third recommendation is to challenge the members of the board to spend a day in this school. You would see why this school is so special and important to the community. My children love school because of the environment here and the education they get. They get so much one on one attention you would never get at a bigger school. The students here have unique opportunities not found at a bigger urban school. They have terrific school trips and activities right here. You would have been amazed at the Pioneer Week they put on for the students last week. What other primary school do you know that learns cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and skating for gym class? It is a safe, friendly and nurturing environment for our children. I pay the same taxes here as some of my friends do in New Sudbury. Part of my taxes pay for this school. I want my tax dollars to stay in Warren. I want this school to stay open close to my home. I don't care how much it costs.

I work in the health care field and I see how reducing budgets and cutting costs affect staffing and patient care. It is depressing to see in a country like Canada. It is even more depressing to know that this is also happening in our education system where only dollars and the bottom line count. What about quality?

Does our voice really count? Are you really going to listen to us? Or are you just making us go through the motions because you have to? You have discouraged us and probably turned a lot of people off of trying to support us because they think it is a lost cause. Show us that this process you are putting us through really works by listening to us and agreeing with us.

I am not from Warren originally. We moved to Sudbury for jobs and later moved to Warren to live in the country. When I had my children and they became school age I visited this school to enroll them. I had some concerns but when I walked in here any worry I had was gone and I immediately loved the school. I was happy that my children would attend here. It is like a family here. A better school you could not ask for and a better community you could not ask for. How can you say to us that this school is not worth staying open? How can you say that this community and people are not worth it? We are worth it and this school is worth keeping open.

Superintendent Blaseg asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Second Presenter – Donna Smith

Good evening – my name is Donna Smith – my connections to this school are that my grandchildren attended this school, I was a lunch and playground supervisor for two years, I am the Municipal Librarian and the Library is located in the school and I am a member of the Warren Historical Society – dedicated to preserving the history of Warren and community. Some members of this community remember when this school was built for the English taxpayers and the growing English presence in town. Its cultural heritage is important and the decision to save it or not should be as important. In the beginning of this process it was discovered that this school IS important to the students and the community. The Board sees it in dollars and cents.

When the Ministry executives presented their data, it looks like a stacked deck. They have all the fancy graphs, interpretations of the data and the attitudes of we are just being silly if we can't see the justifications for closing the school. We are fighting back with heartfelt appeals and little or no hard data.

But we do know that this community is growing, and that the real estate market is in our favour. And we do know that the people moving into this community are English speaking and having an English school is a factor in their decision to settle here. I don't have any graphs or surveys to prove that, I just talked to the local real estate agent and he confirmed my assumption.

The Ministry and Board executives actually don't understand why anyone would want to live here!

We do know there are 23 children coming to school here, about 10 more than started in September. 23 sets of parents expect them to receive a good education, and pay taxes, along with many others, to make sure that happens.

When applied to rural, northern schools the funding formula is unfair. The fact they use the enrolment as of October 31st instead of using actual enrolment at the time of the review, is unfair. I don't care if that's the way it is, that rule needs to be revisited.

The fact is the community like many other northern communities is growing by leaps and bounds and it is happening right now. The Trustees, Ministry and Board personnel don't value or understand this. The influx of people is being felt in many sectors. New residents are starting businesses, buying houses, buying supplies – the effects are being felt at the Municipal offices, the libraries, the corner stores, and the schools.

We wouldn't be having this review if the boundaries reflected distance from the school and the three grades hadn't been moved. This move seems suspicious now that this school is undergoing a review. Maybe it started then and we just didn't recognize the plan.

Markstay Public School does not have space. Since renovating the school to incorporate a day care, there is less room. The Principal is constantly complaining that there is absolutely no room, so much so that garbage bins have to be placed in the Library because there is no where else to put them. Classes are full – sometimes 30 children.

The boundary needs to put Hagar on the other side. Hagar is closer to Warren than Markstay. There are other children who live closer to Warren yet are bussed to Markstay.

The decision to move grades 4, 5 and 6 seemed to be a knee jerk reaction to a unique situation (only one student in grade 4) and a teacher who was unable to deal with three grades in one room. I happened to be the lunchroom supervisor when those grades were here. The reasoning there was flawed and did not take into account that this unique situation would be short lived but would have long lasting effects on the future of Warren Central Public School.

The large amount estimated to be the cost of bringing the school up to Ministry standards. I believe the amount is grossly inflated and if there were no review this work wouldn't be done. Warren Central Public School has been neglected for a long time. Taxpayers' dollars have been paying for what? For example, there is no playground equipment and the paved part of the playground is so uneven and broken up it's a credit to the playground supervisors that children are not injured. Why was the school left to deteriorate? What have taxpayers been paying for? Part of their tax dollar is expected to be spent on keeping the school at a certain state of repair – where DID those dollars get spent if it wasn't on the school building?

My final point is that planning meetings for 5 or 6 pm in this community is equivalent to sabotaging the process. Most parents work in Sudbury, North Bay or Sturgeon Falls. If they can't leave work until 4:30 or 5:00 pm it is next to impossible to get home to Warren by 5 or 6 pm and come out to a meeting. They have had a long day, the children are hungry, and a meeting is not at the top of their evening plans. Also, Wednesdays are Bingo night in this community. Not important? In this community it is and consideration needs to be given to that fact. Also, Council meetings are held on Wednesday evenings – that interferes with one of your member's obligations. Ignoring the request to move the meetings to a later time and a different night is self-serving.

Please join me in asking the Rainbow District School Board to prepare the following recommendations for presentation to the Board's Administrative Council:

RECOMMEND THAT Warren Central Public School's boundaries be adjusted to include the community of Hagar AND THAT the other boundaries be expanded.

RECOMMEND THAT grades 4, 5 and 6 students that reside within the new boundaries be reintroduced to Warren Central Public School.

RECOMMEND THAT the funding formula as it applies to northern rural schools is reconsidered.

RECOMMEND THAT a French Immersion program be introduced to Warren Central Public School curriculum.

RECOMMEND THAT the Public Meeting time and day be adjusted to not start earlier than 7:00 pm and not on Wednesdays.

Superintendent Blaseg asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Third Presenter – Janet Johnson

Hello, my name is Janet Johnson. I am a former student of Warren Central Public School as well as the parent of four children who will start their education career here at Warren Central Public School. I am an active member of our parent council as well as a member of the Accommodation Review Committee. Although I would prefer our school to continue status quo, from our previous meetings we have been made aware of the financial challenges to bring our school up to standards and enrolment issues.

Perhaps as a community and School Board, we could look at the excess space available as a growth opportunity instead of a negative. I have thought of a few options.

If we as a community were to request a change of programming to add French, we may be able to have more of the available children in our community attend our school.

Or perhaps we could offer adult education classes here. For example, conversational French, high school equivalency, literacy classes for mature students, computer classes, human interest classes (tole painting or ceramics). Government requires us to have a license for just about everything. Perhaps this space could become available for things like a boating course, firearms safety course and driver's education course.

Although the price tag for repairs to our school at 1.4 million sounds a little high, we could lease the extra room for revenue. At the previous meeting we were told the cost of repairs included labour. Could skilled volunteers donate time for grounds and work the equipment to achieve the same results with a much smaller budget?

I had the joy this past Fair weekend to see what volunteers can accomplish – perhaps if we work together as a community we can ensure the youngest of our area can stay here to receive excellent education in a small town, unintimidating environment without a trip on the trans-Canada highway every day.

Superintendent Blaseg asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Fourth Presenter – Pam Munro

Good evening to everyone here. I thank you very much for your support.

My name is Pamela Munro. My son Jared, who is in grade 1, attends Warren Central Public School and I am a member of the Accommodation Review Committee. I am very proud to have graduated grade 8 from Warren Central Public School in 1986.

Those were the better days when children from this area could attend school in the community from kindergarten to grade 8. Then, along came my sisters who also attended Warren Central Public School but unfortunately were only able to go to grade 6. Now, less than 2 years ago, the school only goes to grade 3.

We are here this evening to save what we have remaining and make recommendations.

The two guiding principles the Rainbow District School Board states they need to follow are:

- 1. to ensure all students continue to have access to the best programming possible in quality school facilities and secondly*
- 2. to reduce surplus space.*

Addressing the first, best programming in a quality school facility. My son began JK when he was 4 years old. He was frightened, nervous and unsure of what would happen to him in a new and unknown environment. Grateful as a parent to know the numbers were not overwhelming and the supervision would be available. Day by day he would hold staffs' hand and learn it would be all right. Even though he had been in daycare since a baby, it took a while for him to adjust and feel comfortable. Would he have had the attention, caring, patience and kindness at a school filled to capacity? I think not. That is how I measure

quality, instilling trust with compassion. Quality programming involves a full size gymnasium, computer labs, etc. I can argue very easily, when I graduated grade 8, there were six of us. Of the six, five of us went on to Northern Secondary high school. A school with high numbers and many extra-curricular activities available. We all were on the honour roll every year; all of us successful, competitive athletes throughout high school and 2 out of the five of us went on as athletes at the university level. Attending Warren Central Public School to grade 8 put us as all rounded top-achieving students. Socially, behaviourally and emotionally we received quality because the teacher had the time to dedicate it to us. I recall all my teachers at Warren Central Public School giving me one on one attention that I needed. I remember my public school teachers so clearly in comparison to secondary, college or university. This school prepared me to take on the world with confidence and enthusiasm.

The school board ultimately has to look at the bottom dollar. However, how far are they following that dollar? Is it not worth the money to raise students who will be successful and look at the long-term result?

The second principle is surplus space. After recently getting rid of the grade 4, 5 and 6 classes, we now have a classroom that will always be marked as 0 out of 23 bodies it is able to hold. Bring back the 4, 5 and 6's; extend the boundary level to include students who are closer to Warren than Markstay; offer French Immersion to a bilingual community. It is a fact that more people are moving to Warren and having an option where to send their child is essential. It increases the value to taxpayers and also houses the municipal library. In the Markstay/Warren community, the greatest numbers of taxpayers support English public at 1232. Should the school close, I would definitely have my taxes changed to support St. Thomas, our other local school. I have spoke to many who feel the same way.

The other issue is the big dollar – 1.4 million to “fix” the school. When we hear this number, we are “wowed” for shock value. First, figure out shat “needs” to be done, not what would be nice to do and then figure that out over a 5 to 10 year period. That cost is not so astounding. I would like to know why money has not gone into addressing the “need” to problems? I feel the money is well invested to maintain this school and the children who attend.

Then, lastly, if all of this fails, I can say many I have spoken with stated they will home school their children before they put them on the highway for what would be unnecessary danger and added length to a young child's day. I would like to know what the added transportation cost would be to send these children out of the community? We have our separate school and I would like the possibility investigated of having the two schools in one. Can that be a viable option if the board chooses to close this school? Our children are being raised here and should be able to attend school in their home community. As of now we have 21

students registered for September 2007 and this enrollment number will continue to grow. I encourage all of you to stand up and support our public school!

Superintendent Blaseg asked if there were any questions or comments.
There were none.

Superintendent Blaseg asked if there were any other presenters from the floor.
There were none.

Superintendent Blaseg mentioned that the next public meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 18, 2007 at 6:00 pm. The start time will be reviewed.

Next Steps

Public Meeting No. 3 is scheduled for Tuesday, September 18, 2007. This meeting will include presentations of the options developed by the committee. The public is also invited to come forward and present their recommendations at this time. "Request for Public Input" sheets are available at the door and can be completed at any time up to the September 18th meeting. Please call Superintendent Blaseg at 674-3171, ext. 7229 or Heather Thirkill at 674-3171, ext. 7216 to if you would like to make a presentation at the September meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm.

The next Public Meeting is scheduled for September 18, 2007 at 6:00 pm.