

MINUTES
DON BOSCO
PUPIL ACCOMMODATION REVIEW
October 25, 2016 7 p.m.

The panel comprised of:

Adrian Della Mora, Superintendent of Education, Area 1 – Chair of the Meeting

Trustee Joe Martino

Rory McGuckin, Associate Director of Education

John Yan Senior Coordinator Communications

Mario Silva, Comptroller Planning and Development

Jessica Peake, Senior Manager Planning and Development

Laraine D'Souza, Recording Secretary

Also present were principals of Michael Power/St. Joseph, Joseph Brisbois

Archbishop Romero, Nancy Mancini and Frank deFina, Vice Principal Msgr. Percy Johnson

Michael Rossetti, Principal Don Bosco.

Meeting started with a prayer and then the superintendent thanked everyone who attended and also the staff and students who came to the meeting.

Comptroller Planning and Development mentioned trustees make the decision to undertake an accommodation review and then the report is shared with the public there should be one minimum meeting subsequently, feedback is taken into consideration.

The report is presented to the Board and then later on the public delegations are heard by Trustees. The final recommendation is voted by the Trustees.

Rory McGuckin, the Associate Deputy Director thanked everyone and recognized number of staff and he said 18 years ago he was once principal of Don Bosco and said the Board was committed to continue the academic program for Grade 12 students. Hours have been spent proposing to meet requirements and provide programming and to see the students' needs are met. Classes and courses have been put together to see the students graduate. As the Board begins to refocus on student needs it wants to assure that Grade 11 students will be relocated to various high schools in order to best serve their academic needs.

The Board has offered Grade 11 students an opportunity to be transferred in Semester 2 by keeping in mind the proximity of their residence to neighboring Catholic high schools. Courses presently offered can be taken into consideration as well. To accommodate, they will accept and transfer to one of the neighboring schools. The courses will be set prior to Christmas. He assured that students will be set up for success. He understands the emotional decisions and the time that parents and students have to undergo to make the transition. Every effort is made to keep the schools close to the residence of the student.

The neighboring schools are Archbishop Romero, Chaminade, Michael Power/St. Joseph, Father Henry Carr, Monsignor Percy Johnson and St. Basil the Great.

Adrian Della Mora, Superintendent of Education Area 1 then spoke about the compassion and sensitivity that has been considered with a heightened sensitivity to the needs of the students. He also said the Board is willing to hear the concerns and input from parents, students and staff.

The meeting was then open for questions from the audience that included staff, students, teachers and parents.

1. What were the red dots on the current map that was on power point?

Those were residences of the current grade 11 students relative to other TCDSB schools. It was stated that if a student was closer to Michael Power/St. Joseph and if the student did not wish to go to that school, then another school within proximity would be considered.

2. Another question related to how would they deal with the students on the 2nd floor with special needs?

It was stated that those programs are covered centrally and those students will be relocated to other schools.

3. Are students guaranteed admission closer to their residence?

It was stated that space has to be considered and some level of choice would be used re 2nd or 3rd choice, and they would be honored to make the request.

4. A staff member asked if uniforms will be provided to the students that make the transition?

It was stated that the Board will support this need during transition.

5. Would sports be considered? Don Bosco has always taken part in sports?

It was stated that every effort would be made to accommodate the Don Bosco students to schools that will have sports program. Former Don Bosco students who already transferred have been accommodated at their new schools.

6. Another question was if Grade 12 will graduate, and Grade 11 will be out what is the plan in September?

It was stated that there will be no Grades 11 and 12s but ongoing consultations would take place regarding the school.

7. Would the Board look into keeping a Catholic School?

It was stated that while the Board would very much be interested in maintaining a Catholic high school presence at another site in Central Etobicoke it will need to continue its planning in this regard as a next phase in this process

8. Another question, what happens to the building?

It was stated by Trustee Martino that politically he will be making every effort to get a new location for the school and continue dialogue with the Ministry and TCDSB in exploring all options. The comptroller of planning and development also said they were considering program opportunities and collaboration with the city and we are long way to making a final recommendation.

9. Another question was about feedback?

It was stated by Communications that it is important for the Board to get feedback and that all stakeholders can continue to provide feedback via a link on the Don Bosco website.

10. Another comment was that feedback was given, and worked out options and why is the Board coming back to us again?

It was stated that programs have been considered. The real challenge relates to the reality that students were not applying to Don Bosco in Grade 9. Ideas were there but community input was important. It was said that the school should be kept close to this original location.

11. Another question was why is it economical for Grade 11 students to go to other schools?

It was stated that the staff recommendation for current grade 11s was driven by educational best interest not mere economical considerations.

12. Were any reviews taken into consideration like Boundary reviews?

It was stated that Admission, Policy and Boundary reviews have always been considered.

13. Does the Catholic School Board not know what is happening?

Southern Etobicoke is a unique scenario, there are variables of which we have no control over. It was also stated that despite strategic CSAC discussions, and school presentations showcasing innovative programs students did not enroll. There were challenges to deal with parent perceptions, dwindling low enrolments in Grade 9 and other factors made it complicated.

14. Another question was will Don Bosco be closed for sure? Is it part of a process?

It was stated that Grade 12s will continue and they will be graduating. Grade 11s cannot be accommodated. In 2017-2018 there will be no students.

15. A repeated question was asked about uniforms? Is it a guarantee?

It was stated that a contingency plan with other schools would be considered and that uniform costs would be absorbed or mitigated by the new school.

16. Another question was Grade 11 transferring may not have programs there?

We are trying to make the best out of a difficult situation. All program requests will be considered.

17. Will the Building be empty or will a new school be built?

It was stated that nothing has been decided and there would be a process before that could happen.

18. Another question was what if subjects are offered and students don't like it?

It was stated that students would be guided by the Guidance Counsellors and every effort will be exercised to make sure the needs of the students are met. The important factor is to allow current grade 11 students to participate in the subject selection process in their new school in February 2017.

19. How will students be tracked in their progress?

Student success strategies will be identified and students will be closely monitored with the help of Guidance Counsellors and Student Success teachers.

20. Is there a program in place to see how the transition students are doing ?

It was stated that every year students transfer and the Guidance Counsellors should be and will be notified of the transition. There are 3 principals at this meeting and for sure they will take the feedback to the staff of the various schools.

21. A question was raised as to what percentage of enrolment is needed to close the school?

It was stated that from 2009 the school experienced a declining enrolment. Students were leaving the school and with very low grade 9 numbers, the situation mandated this process.

22. Would teachers be accommodated during the transition period and would they get jobs?

It was stated that teachers will be accommodated during the transition period as they are covered by a Collective Agreement which has to be honored.

23. Would the school need a principal and will the school be here?

It was stated that all provisions would be made for the staff.

24. Was the catchment area changed for Don Bosco in the year 2000?

It was stated that the catchment area is the same.

25. Another question can a community center be considered?

It was stated that it will be considered.

26. Another question was if the Board and Ministry are considering partnering in order to create a community hub at this site?

It was stated that there are channels and processes regarding community hubs with City of Toronto and open partnerships.

27. Is there a composite high school approach that can be considered what has been the draw?

It was stated that every school is a composite school for eg Michael Power/St. Joseph has an IB program and also offered a full range of other educational programs. Don Bosco was a composite school.

28. Has the Board realized how difficult transition is?

It was stated by a parent that transition was a nightmare. How can the program in Michael Power/ St. Joseph be matched to the program in Don Bosco? Students were emotional and stated that they are destroying the family by “forcing” the students into other schools and no compassion was shown. It was also stated that the building can be sold/broken but the spirit of Don Bosco cannot be broken.

Students were grateful for their teachers and principal that have put in so much of love and labour during all the years and spoke about the exemplary efforts of the staff they were emotional and appreciated how well they were treated academically.

29. Would there be a mass exodus of teachers and staff? Why was Don Bosco not considered for regional programs like the other schools?

It was stated that everything would be done to accommodate the staff. It was stated that speciality schools like Cardinal Carter and Father John Redmond and Bishop Marrocco/Thomas Merton were looked at as was Don Bosco for other specialty programs.

30. There was a suggestion by a community member that Rose Avenue school entered into a partnership with Manulife and brought the community together. Why does Don Bosco not do the same moving forward and join a large corporation and rebuild?

It was stated that it was an excellent suggestion and that she should give her feedback either via Communications or the website.

31. A student mentioned that Don Bosco students were given quite a bad reputation whereby other schools would label them and what would be done in that context?

It was stated that this would not happen as there were principals in the room and they would make sure that the transition would be a smooth one. There would be mentorship programs, CSLIT and an equity committee would be formed.

32. Has a community assessment been done?

Mother stated that her daughter is at Msgr. Percy Johnson, and the community should be envisioned and an assessment should be done.

33. What if schools are full and if there is an autistic student would a spot be guaranteed?

It was stated that a spot would be guaranteed depending on the program availability.

34. Why is the Board not listening to the community to keep Don Bosco open rather than force the Grade 11s to move?

Concern noted and response provided.

35. Why are students not coming to Don Bosco why are these concerns not addressed by the Board.

Concern noted and response provided.

36. A volunteer for Air Cadets asked if the Building was closing in June would Don Bosco be available to them?

It was stated that they should follow the usual process and check with the Permits Dept. The Ministry is keen on community activity.

37. A question was asked about a physics program not being available?

Board is committed to academic programs for Grade 12 and e-learning/night school may also be an option. Parents were encouraged they could leave their information with the superintendent or call him regarding the same.

38. A question was asked if there was a class reunion planned, would they be permitted to have it in Don Bosco.

The Board stated that would not be a problem.

39. Another question raised was if there was transparency?

It was stated that the Board has followed a procedure of transparency.

40. Can a different form of communication be used to inform the community? Notifications should be more effective?

It was stated that due to the budget deficit we are not able to put it in all the paid communication that is available but every effort is to make sure that communications reaches home via schools parishes etc. and through the Board website.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m.