

Bath Community School
Sustainability Study Meeting #2

January 25, 2020

Mr. McTimony, Mrs. Douglass, Members of ASD-W District Education Council (DEC), staff of ASD-W, staff of BCS, Ladies and Gentlemen.

My name is Gerald Sullivan. I am a retired teacher and principal of 32 years and taught in Bath and Florenceville throughout my career.

I was principal of Bath Middle School (BMS) when the Sustainability Study was announced for the school in October 2014 and became the first principal of Bath Community School (BCS) when the middle and elementary schools merged in September 2015.

It shocks me, to be standing here today, almost 5 years to the day, giving a presentation for a Sustainability Study of a Bath school. Although it is not uncommon for schools to go through a second sustainability study, it is uncommon after the original study had been approved by the DEC and signed off by the minister and cabinet of a government for the refurbishment of a school. To me, since the project has been started and is six months from completion, the original decision should be honored regardless of what government is in power.

My objectives today are to revisit the process of the 2014 – 15 sustainability study and explain how the original request from our parent committee should be honored. In addition, I want to enhance your understanding of the turmoil and stress inflicted on the staff of BCS as a result of the Policy 409 process and delays in construction. I will finish by offering key points for the completion of a refurbished school.

As I said earlier I was principal of BMS when the Sustainability Study was announced in October, 2014. Prior to the first meeting the community believed the most likely recommendation from the district would be to close BMS and transfer the students to Florenceville Middle School (FMS). The initial response was “it's a done deal. However, after the first Sustainability Study the DEC decided to include Bath Elementary School (BES) into the study.

A strong parent committee representing both schools was created to evaluate the schools options. After much consultation the committee effectively took on the challenge to convince the DEC that refurbishing one of the two existing schools into a “new born to grade 8” school as the best option for the Village of Bath and surrounding area. The driving force behind this was the desire to “keep our children in our community”. The DEC concurred and in April, 2015 made this recommendation to the minister. The minister approved this recommendation in June 2015 and in September 2015 all students were moved to BMS creating a new K to 8 school later called Bath Community School.

Throughout the study everyone was constantly encouraged to allow the process to work. After all the consultations and meetings the option to do a mid life upgrade for a K to 8 school at the former Bath Middle School was the best option for our community. Therefore I want to reinforce to the DEC that this decision was the right decision then, and is the right decision now. Nothing has changed. The process worked and the K-8 school should be completed.

The beginning of the school year in 2015 was the start of what is now 5 years of challenges to the staff and students of Bath Community School. During the summer the district made some physical changes to accommodate the elementary students, this included; painting classrooms, building elementary washrooms, creating two classrooms in the former library and moving the library to the K-3 floor. Even with these changes the school was functioning at more than 100 % occupancy. This means our school occupied every space available in the building with little to no space for extras such as music rooms, science labs, break out rooms or places for consultations with leads or specialists. For most staff, it was palatable knowing that a newer facility was coming and this disruption was short term. But, as we know now, it continues today and seems never ending.

It is upsetting to know that things have not gotten better and the return to the former elementary school have made things ever tighter, with no alterations done to accommodate middle school students as previously done for elementary students. Middle School indoor sports are offered in a rented church gym in Florenceville There is no extra room for the Step Ahead Learning Center to offer parenting classes nor allow outside agencies the opportunity to provide services for parents and families.

Additional school challenges presented by ASD-W at the November 30th 2019 meeting include:

- Lack of physical space
- Library in a portable not attached to the school
- Teachers assessing students in the hallway
- Speech therapist assessing students in the hallway
- No technology room or regulation gym for middle school students
- No middle school change rooms or washroom
- One toilet, for 20 plus staff members

These problems create huge challenges for BCS staff to effectively meet educational outcomes and use best practice. This is NOT the community school envisioned by our parent committee in 2015.

All of these challenges can be relieved and stress on staff greatly reduced if the DEC recommends to the minister that the government finish the refurbishment of Bath Community School. According to the current contract, construction can be completed within 6 months. Therefore, if approved early enough it would be ready for the next school year.

I sense that the challenge to support and strengthen a refurbished K – 8 community school in Bath would gladly be accepted by our parents, teachers and community members. This is evident through their drive and determination observed over the last 5 years to bring a new K-8 school to Bath. I challenge the DEC to demonstrate strong leadership in doing the same.

Citizens of Bath and surrounding areas want their children to receive their education in their community. This message has been sent to the district, DEC, and provincial government through the members of our PSSC over the last five years. An updated school in the Village of Bath will give our students a quality education, improve the local economy and maintain our local cultural identity. Completing the refurbished K-8 school will satisfy these needs.

For the last five years the staff and students have suffered through an overcrowded school, with insufficient space and adequate facilities to provide a high quality education to our students. Currently, in the former elementary school, teachers struggle to support their students and deliver curriculum because of these same problems. Constant change of administrators, superintendents and provincial governments and schools has added demands and increased stress for everyone.

These challenges have taken a physical and psychological toll on staff and students. The completion of the refurbished K-8 school will help alleviate this.

It is irresponsible for a government to demolish a refurbished school 6 months prior to its completion. The mid life upgrade of the Bath Community School was approved by the DEC and minister and money for the project approved by cabinet. Cost over runs would be a norm for mid-life upgrades and asbestos removal would be required whether the school is completed or demolished.

I strongly urge the members of the DEC to consider the importance of this school to our community and the extensive amount of time and energy our PSSC have given to this project. There should be a genuine concern for demands placed on the school staff and a desire to assist them quickly and efficiently. And finally the DEC needs to promote the best facility that can produce a quality education for our students.

Therefore it is our belief that the DEC recommend to the minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to finish the mid life upgrade of Bath Community School.

Thank You