

Future of four Carleton County schools under review

Education council studying Florenceville-Bristol and Bath schools

By Jim Dumville

The first steps to determine the future of four northern Carleton County schools were taken Oct. 26 with meetings in two of those schools.

Anglophone West District Education Council held the first of a series of public meetings to help determine the sustainability of Florenceville Middle School, Florenceville Elementary School, Bristol Elementary School and Bath Community School.

Anglophone West superintendent David McTimoney and members of the DEC council held public forums in the two Florenceville schools on Oct. 26. The meetings begin a long consultation process, which will end March 18, 2020, with DEC's recommendation for the future of the four schools.

McTimoney explained the process to a small crowd, including Florenceville-Bristol Mayor Karl Curtis and Carleton-Victoria MLA Andrew Harvey, gathered at the Florenceville Middle School. He said the initial meeting at each school is designed to simply share facts about the school. He explained that a second meeting at each school will provide an opportunity for groups and individuals to make presentations

and recommendations to council members.

The public consultation process laid out in the Department of Education's Policy 409 will culminate on March 19 with a single meeting when the DEC will unveil the recommendations it will take to the provincial government, which will make the final decision.

The initial meeting for the Bath and Bristol schools will be held Saturday, Nov. 30, at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. respectively.

On Jan. 18, McTimoney and DEC members will be back to the two Florenceville schools to hear presentations from the public. They will do the same at the Bath and Bristol schools on Jan. 25.

McTimoney explained the initial meetings provide an opportunity to detail facts about the schools. For example, the presentation at the Florenceville Middle School on Oct. 26 outlined detailed information about the structure, the student body, staff levels, busing and other facts while placing an emphasis on the school's benefits and shortcomings.

McTimoney said he will do the same for all schools, with the studies for each available for re-

view on the Anglophone West website.

The superintendent said the end results of all the meetings will a recommendation from DEC to the provincial government. He said the DEC decision would be one of three possible outcomes.

He said the DEC will recommend each school either a) maintain the status quo, b) undergo needed structural repairs to meet future needs, or c) be closed and students transferred to a newly constructed K-to-8 school. He added no site for a new school has yet been determined.

While the three schools in Florenceville-Bristol have undergone little change in recent years, the situation is much different in Bath.

That community recently went through the Policy 409 consultation process, which led to the closure of the Bath Elementary School with the Bath Middle School next door renovated to become the K-to-8 Bath Community School.

In an earlier interview with the River Valley Sun, Bath Community School Parent School Support Committee (PSSC) chair Scott Oakes said parents were shocked to find out

the community was back in the same Policy 409 process.

"We were blindsided," he said.

He noted the province already invested more than \$5.5 million in building renovations last year, with another \$2 million planned to upgrade it to meet the needs of a K-to-8. Now everything is on hold, Oakes said, while the DEC and province decide if the newly renovated school will be closed after all.

McTimoney said the DEC's role is simply to recommend one of the three options — status quo, upgrades of all schools or closure of all schools and construction of a new K to 8. He said any decision to single out Bath for a different outcome would have to come from the province.

As he watched McTimoney provide details about the Florenceville Middle School on Sept. 25, Mayor Curtis already has an outcome in mind. He said he believes DEC should recommend the closure of the old schools with a new K-to-8 built near the existing Carleton North High School.

Curtis said the land is already available in the area, the close proximity



Anglophone West superintendent David McTimoney shares details about the Florenceville Middle School on Oct. 26 to kick off the Policy 409 consultation process (Jim Dumville photo)

of the school would benefit bussing routes, and the two schools could share sports fields and other facilities.

While McTimoney said that most discussions and presentations will wait for

the next meeting, he did say if a future K-to-8 was recommended, it would most likely be modelled after the recently built Meduxnekeag Consolidated and Townview Schools in Woodstock.

Woodstock gets green light for water project

Work on new water source likely to begin in spring 2020

By Jim Dumville

With environmental approvals in hand, Wood-

stock back-up water source in place.

A major flood in April

process of clearing the way to drill the well and build the infrastructure to

work, Slipp said, the arrival of winter will likely delay construction.

