

**BUFFALO TRAIL PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Public Information Meeting

Formal School Review Process - Clandonald School  
Thursday February 25, 2021, 7:00PM Online via ZOOM

**PRESENT:**

Chair: Lanie Parr

Trustees: Darcy Eddleston, Rose Gorniak, Bruce Marriott, Barry Livingston, Marie Isaman, Jim King, Stephanie Spornitz and Sheldon Archibald (all attended via ZOOM)

Administration: Rhae-Ann Holoien, Superintendent, Michelle Webb, Deputy Superintendent, James Trodden, Assistant Superintendent Bob Brown, Secretary Treasurer Faye Dunne, Recording Secretary

Presenters for Clandonald School: Leslie Cusack, Councilor, Kaitlyn/John Snider, Laurie Hopaluk, Tracy Snider, Curtis Brodwin, Leith Matthews with Shelby Rowien, Ron Harasiuk, Angela Irvine, Carri Gallop and Nathan Matthews

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:03pm
2. Board Chair Welcome - Board Chair Parr welcomed and thanked everyone for all the work that was done to prepare for the presentations. She told those online that the purpose of the meeting is to collect and share information as we all want what is best for the students, staff and families of Clandonald School.
3. Treaty Acknowledgement - Board Chair Parr shared the Treaty 6 Acknowledgement.
4. There was an introduction of the Board of Trustees and Senior Administration from Buffalo Trail Public Schools. Board Chair Parr passed the meeting to the Superintendent to begin the presentation.
5. Purpose of the Meeting: The Superintendent thanked everyone for joining the meeting. She told those online that we are here to gather information from the community presenters and share information from the division.
6. Information:
  - a. Legislation and Policy - As per the Education Act and 802BP the annual school review was presented to the Board in January where there was a motion to investigate closure of Clandonald School. The investigation process is the time to gather information regarding Clandonald School. The Board will continue to accept submissions for the March board meeting.
  - b. Enrollment - There are currently 18 students in Clandonald school. A map of school draw area was shared as well as a breakdown of students by division (grades 1-3 and 4-6).
  - c. Education Programming Information - Assistant Superintendent Trodden shared programming information for the two scenarios, if school remains open or if it closes.
  - d. Financial Information - Information regarding funding from the Alberta Education funding model was shared. The Clandonald School deficit information was shared.

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- e. Staffing - The previous and current staffing information was shared. Clandonald currently has 1.1 FTE teachers and 1.0 FTE educational assistant and 1 FTE custodian.
- f. Facilities - The Clandonald School is at 18% utilization and the total cost of operation is \$96,454. The information regarding upgrades recommended from the RECAPP Facility Evaluation Report was shared.
- g. Transportation - The grant money received for busing students attending the Clandonald School is \$23,781 and bus routes cost 63,530.90 showing a deficit of \$39,749.85. There is currently no updated information from the provincial transportation task force.

7. Community Presentations

- a. County of Vermilion River - Leslie Cusack Councilor for the area thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. He shared that the last time the community met there were over 100 in attendance. Since that time the railway has been abandoned and the community has joined forces to brainstorm new ideas and initiatives for Clandonald. There has been a commitment for clean-up of houses by the community and parents support wherever they are needed. He shared that he is proud of our little school. The custodian cleans it like it is a hospital. He said it would be a shame to see it go and understands it will be a hard decision for the Board.
- b. Young Families of Clandonald - Kaitlyn Snider - A video of the young families hoping to attend Clandonald School in the future was shared. John Snider shared that as a local business owner he is disheartened. He believes a small population promotes closeness in the community and the school and he is counting on school to remain open so his kids can go to school like he did. He shared that he is looking for leadership from the Board and direction from BTPS to work together to find solutions. He said there are incredible people here supporting and reimagining Clandonald to look at every avenue to keep the school open.
- c. School Council - Laurie Hopaluk with Tracy Snider shared a powerpoint presentation with the group titled Educating Hearts and Minds that highlighted the caring community, the school family the many student activities and events and videos of students sharing why they like Clandonald School as well as why parents choose Clandonald for their kids. Additional highlights shared were the many programs and innovations including Genius Hour, Stem projects and the Sparkle program with activities like baking, sewing, cross-stitch, simmer pots, healthy habits and environmental and global awareness. The schools recycle programs were recognized with the Emerald Award. The whole community is supportive of the events at the school. Clandonald also has a private kindergarten. The rural Alberta has a decreasing population let's be a leader in the rural Alberta solution.
- d. Friends of Clandonald Community Group - Tracy Snider told the group a bit of the history of school reviews and closures and when the junior

(d. Continued)

high closed the Friends of Clandonald group was formed to work toward revitalization. Friends of Clandonald supported the community building and housing project helped purchase additional Chromebooks, contributed to field trips and the Friendship Centre. Part of the community building includes promotion and marketing. Friends of Clandonald purchased a lot and mobile home for its innovative rental incentive program. Lot clean up in the community is the new focus as they work to improve the community and draw new people to Clandonald. She shared that everyone is dedicated and looking for a partnership to save the school.

- e. Supporters of Clandonald School - Curtis Brodwin spoke to the group about his experience with long bus rides as a student. He has a child on the verge of starting school and has a big concern with commute times and the potential to have his child on the bus for 2.5 hrs every day. He said that Dewberry closer than Vermilion and to look down the road 10-15 year considering the rate of population decline what will happen if Dewberry closes.
- f. Rural Development Network - Leith Matthews and Shelby Rowien - Shared a vision board, which is a vision for reimagining Clandonald. The vision board represents the goal as a community. It includes a future gas station, exercise room and others. The vision board is to keep each other accountable to reach the goals. Idea of an ag program was shared. Shelby told the group about the Rural Development Networks mandate to create solutions to unique issues with initiatives like an agri-food program. RDN is excited to partner with rural schools. Altario started a school farm program when it was suffering low enrollment and it uses the ag academy to encourage enrolment. RDN is a non-profit organization that works on a cost recovery basis. RDN would be happy to work with the community and is asking the Board to be open-minded about the possibility.
- g. Supporters of Clandonald School - Kaitlyn Snider as a past staff member and mom of 2 shared that she feels blessed to be in this community and asks to look outside the box to bring new families to our school. She shared the idea of a French immersion program and talked about the Faculty of St Jean. She would like a committee to investigate to see if it is viable. Kaitlyn thanked the Board for its time and consideration of the program.
- h. Clandonald Agriculture Society - President Ron Harasiuk told the group that the school is integral to Clandonald. The Ag Society hosts numerous events and is a big supporter of the school. One of the Clandonald Country Fair highlights is showcasing school entries. The Ag Society is helpful in the beautification of Clandonald. The school is integrated in the community and student experiences in the school enhance the community.
- i. Supporters of Clandonald School - Angela Irvine, a Registered Psychologist in Medicine Hat shared letter highlighting the foundation for a successful future for students. She said she is

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(i. Continued)

bracing for the mental health pandemic. Closing the school could be detrimental to student's relationship development. She shared closing is a great concern to her and asks the Board to reconsider or delay until more stability after COVID.

j. Supporters of Clandonald School - Carri Gallop - The Superintendent read a letter from Carrie where she shared what is appealing about the school and that closing would be a great concern to her family. Of the 3 schools her children have attended Clandonald has been truly inclusive. There is anxiety for child and parent regarding possible closure and she wants the Board to be well aware of the risk to her son.

k. School Council - Nathan Matthews school council president thanked all for attending the meeting and noted at the time there were 126 online. He thanked all the presenters from the community and told them they did a really good job. He stated that education did not just take place in the school and told the group about the students that came out to help set up people to be able to attend the zoom meeting. He also shared a thank you to the Superintendent and Board Secretary for helping with the meeting. We are proud of our community; the presentations were great. Thank you to the MLA, the CVR, Friends of Clandonald, CKSA and radio for helping to get the message out. Thanks to Kevin for the focus on a new initiative. It was all hands on deck. Thank you to Mr. Pugh and for everyone for coming and showing your support awesome job.

8. Questions and Answers - The Superintendent shared there are some questions we can answer now and others we will get the answers to.

Q. Will the slides will be posted on the website as well as the FAQ - A. yes

Q. How many students in Clandonald? A. 18 students grades 1-6

Q - How many students go to other schools. A. 17 go to JRR, 5 VES, 6 St J's and 4 go to Dewberry

Q. Does smaller classes mean more grades merge into one classroom and less education? A. The staff is outstanding at Clandonald school but it is challenging for one teacher to teach all grades.

Q. Will there be 12 students starting grade one in 2023. A. We will check.

Q. Will there be more extracurricular other schools? A. May see changes in extracurricular or other opportunities.

Q. Do other BTPS schools have a deficit? A. Will investigate and get back to you on the FAQ.

Q. How much is the deficit (other schools? A. Will investigate and get back to you on the FAQ.

Q. What is the cost to pay for school after it closes? A. The property is subject to the Education Act, disposition of property. Past practice shows the building offered to community first.

Q. Is BTPS division running in a deficit? A. Not this year.

Q. - Do all classrooms in BTPS have an EA? A. Not all classrooms have an EA.

Q. Do the upgrades from the RECAPP Report need to happen? A. Will need to investigate and to get more information.

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- Q. What is an external envelope? A. Will get back to you on the FAQ.
- Q. Does transportation include the transfer bus? A. It does not include cost of the Dewberry transfer bus.
- Q. Is there another school with the same transportation deficit? A. Will investigate and get back to you on the FAQ.
- Q. Would parents have a say in transportation to a new school? A. Would be able to give feedback but it might not happen.
- Q. How close is the nearest school? A. Dewberry is 15 km and Vermilion 30 km. Ride times depend on the number of pickups.
- Q. How much research has been done on impact of length of routes? A. Will investigate and post to FAQ.
- Q. What has the Board contributed to help the school? A. Will take back to the Board.
- Q. What partnerships are available from the farm ed program?
- Q. Has much research gone into keeping the school open? A. Thanks for info about alternate programming.
- Q. How does the board allocate funds to schools? A. Currently a per student amount and per school from the school grant and we are very cognizant of ensuring what they need. BTPS adds additional funds for Clandonald.
- Q. Is it possible for larger schools to subsidize smaller? A. Yes this is what is currently happening.
- Q. What triggered the motion to investigate? A. The annual school review in January and the motion was made to provide the Board more information.
- Q. Are there any children going to Dewberry School? A. Four go to Dewberry.
- Q. Are the upgrades to the school cosmetic or a necessity? A. The report is outdated.
- Q. Is the custodian rate adjusted for 18%. A. The custodian cleans the entire school.
- Q. Does the attendance include online learning? A. Only one.
- Q. What resources has Clandonald been denied? A. Not denied indicated they may have access to more extra-curricular and different teachers with different skills.
- Q. How much is the insurance, maintenance and the roof? A. \$96,000 is the facility total cost.
- Q. Can you let us know how we will be able to access the answers to questions that need more research? A. Another FAQ will be shared on the website. The Board would direct administration to research alternate programs.
- Q. How come BTPS is offering our community kids a ride to other schools but not back to Clandonald? A. The policy is to have students meet the nearest bus.
- Q. What steps has the Board taken to protect and encourage growth for Clandonald School?
- Q. Have the issues outlined by Angela Irvine been factored into BTPS Planning? A. Will investigate and get back to you on the FAQ.
- Q. If BTPS does not generally run a deficit why is Clandonald under review for full closure? A. BTPS is not in a shortfall but is budgeting with less money.
- Q. Would school boundaries be able to change to help class sizes and logistics? A. It is a long procedure to change and the Board would need to have a discussion.

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Q. Is BTPS aware of the students it would lose to another division if there is a closure? A. We are not aware but know it could happen.

Q. How come parents were not contacted regarding bussing changes last year for grades 7-12 if parents are taken into consideration? A. No information at this time.

Q. Can parents be part of the conversation this time? A. Parents need to let the Board know.

Q. How much consideration will be given regarding Angela's presentation. A. The Board will consider all information.

Q. What are the next steps after this meeting. A. Other information for the Board needs to be submitted to Faye Dunne.

Q. Can other BTPS schools be willing to make the same administration sacrifices to decrease BTPS funding requirements so that Clandonald would not be required to close? A. All schools are facing budget challenges.

Q. I know we can't pay for teacher costs, but can the community contribute to the school upgrades? A. Fundraising is for extras.

Q. Do school boundaries matter? A. Students have the opportunity to meet the bus for school of choice.

Q. Can students have a bus to go to Vermilion? A. We are waiting for the transportation task force.

Q. Are we here because of funding only? A. Enrollment, programming and funding all go to the decision.

Q. There is a board motion to change transportation to Dewberry tabled correct? A. Until results of the transportation task force.

Q. What if the Minister rejects the task force recommendations? A. The Board makes the decision.

Q. What are the next two schools to be reviewed if Clandonald is done? A. Annually there is a review all school information.

Q. What about revitalizing the school? A. The Board has not made a decision and will be reviewing the information.

Q. What is the percent of enrolment that is down in BTPS as a whole? A. There is slight increase overall, will confirm the percentage.

Q. Is it possible to do a shared cost between a charter school option and BTPS? A. Would need to research.

Q. Stated changing school boundaries was a long lengthy process but there seems to be a loop hole for grade 7-12 students. A. To change the transportation service area for Clandonald the Board would engage in a lengthy process.

Q. Why is private ECS able to fundraise for a teacher but not BPTS? A. BTPS has rules from Alberta Education to maintain and sustain schools not instruction.

Q. Will the Board meet before the 17<sup>th</sup>? A. The board meeting is on March 17<sup>th</sup>.

Q. Would we be able to collaborate with private kindergarten, making our kindergarten teacher full time and being paid from kindergarten and working in the school part time? A. Would need to research.

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Q. Why were teachers given the news about possible closure in the morning? A. The motion was made in a public meeting and the information was available so the decision was made to talk to the staff in person.

The information from this meeting will be posted and any additional information can be sent in by March 10, 2021.

#### 9. Next Steps and Closing Remarks

The Superintendent thanked all at the meeting for preparing and presenting their information.

The Board Chair thanked everyone for the presentations and told those online that she appreciated everyone in the community taking the time to present and join the meeting. As well she shared a thank you for the BTPS staff helping this evening.

Time: 10:07 pm hours 22:07 (PM)

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Board Chair

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Recording Secretary