

October 28, 2019

Public consultation on sustainability begins



The first of many public consultation meetings surrounding the sustainability of the schools in the Carleton North area began on Oct. 26.

The Anglophone West district education council hosted the initial meeting at Florenceville Middle School Saturday morning to provide the public with information on the sustainability process, the options for FMS, the specifications of the school, and more.

Anglophone West superintendent David McTimoney presented to the information to a group of school staff and parents.

DEC chair, Kimberly Douglass explained to the public the meeting is as much for informing the DEC as it is for the public.

"We're hoping what you can do is listen as well and ask questions about the material that is presented," Douglaas said. "[Keep] your suggestions and ideas for the meeting in January when we're back to hear the community's presentations."

McTimoney's presentation began with an explanation of Policy 409-- titled Multi-year school infrastructure planning--the piece of legislation behind the sustainability.

"It outlines a number of responsibilities that have much to do with the facilities our systems," he said, going to say the policy states three public meetings are required to be held before a decision is made regarding a sustainability study.

The superintendent said there are three possible outcomes the DEC has to consider. The first option is to maintain the status quo at FMS. Option two is to repair the aging school, and option three is to close the school completely and merge the students with others into a new K-8 school.

"That one wouldn't happen overnight," McTimoney said, adding the potential location of the K-8 school and its catchment area are still to be determined.

With the building continuing to show its age, one member of the audience questioned whether status quo was really an option.

"It could be," said McTimoney.

Even though the school is operating at 42.8 per cent functional capacity, the age is what is causing the biggest challenges. Built in 1955, the two-storey building got an addition built on in 1965.

Overall, McTimoney said, it cost Anglophone West \$1.5 million to operate FMS in the 2018-19 fiscal year.

McTimoney listed a long list of challenges they face at the school, including boiler issues, a non-functioning dust collection unit in the wood shop, and asbestos containing materials.

The latter, McTimoney assured, is not a concern because they have a management program in place.

When it came to knowing the impact on the local community and economy if the school did close, McTimoney said that is something he and the DEC could learn more about in the next round of public meetings.

"That's when community groups might step up and talk about the impact on the community," he said.

As the meeting came to a close, Douglass reminded everyone the members of the DEC have to be the ones that make the final decision before it goes on to the provincial government.

"Please remember it is a DEC decision," she said. "[But], there are things that are out of our control."

The FMS meeting was followed by the public consultation at Florenceville Elementary Saturday afternoon. Meetings focusing on Bath Community School and Bristol Elementary.

For those who cannot make it to the public consultations, the PowerPoint presentations will be posted on the Anglophone West website. People can click on the DEC tab and the Sustainability Studies tab.

