

Bugle Observer

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Residents want a new school, but differ on location



Rebecca Howland | Bugle Observer

Florenceville-Bristol residents made it clear. They want a new K-8 school to replace their aging facilities.

Presentations from the Town of Florenceville-Bristol, members of the public, and McCain Foods were heard by the Anglophone West District Education Council during the second round of meetings for the sustainability study related to the schools in the Carleton North Catchment area held on Jan. 18.

Meetings were held at Florenceville Middle School and Florenceville Elementary. The DEC and public saw presentations by Sarah Pacey, CAO for the Town of Florenceville-Bristol, Nestor Gomez with McCain Foods, and Charles McNair, who presented as a member of the public.

All three presentations supported the option of a new K to 8 school.

"From town council's perspective, everything that was included in the DEC recommendation would be a wonderful benefit to our community," said Pacey.

Pacey said the town supports the idea of a "learning campus", which would see the K-8 school being built on land near Carleton North High School.

"This new K to 8 would replace the Florenceville Middle School, the Florenceville Elementary School, and the Bristol Elementary School," she said. "The high school is already well established [where it is] and there is a lot of space around that school that could hold a new school."

She said there were a few things the town would like to see in the new school, based on the suggested specifications presented by the DEC in the fall.

"We would really like our new school to be accessible," she said, listing other "likes" such as a community kitchen, an early childhood education space, and a theatre or performing arts space among others.

Pacey added the enrolment numbers for all three Florenceville-Bristol schools combined were comparable to the enrolment numbers of Woodstock's Townsview School.

"Our enrolment total is 528," said Pacey. "If you compare that to the two newer schools in our area...we are on par with Townsview, which is 579."

Nestor Gomez with McCain Foods, presented a letter of support to the DEC, saying McCain supports the idea of a new school, no matter where it is built.

The school system in Florenceville-Bristol is "state of the art" and it needs buildings that reflect that.

"I think it [the system] deserves a new house," he said.

Charles McNair, who is the deputy mayor of Bath, who presented as a member of the public, also supported the idea of a new school, but argued the suggested site near CNHS was not ideal.

McNair said having a K-8 school along a highway, specifically Route 130 near Florenceville Motel, would create an accessible, visible school, which would attract people to the town to live.

"This is not an easy thing," he said.

Concerns of having younger grades with older grades in a learning campus were also brought up, but teachers in attendance, along with members of the DEC, noted they are already bused to school together.

District superintendent David McTimoney said he was pleased to see to many people voice their thoughts on the matter.

"It's great for the public to be engaged," he said. "That's a big part of our Policy 409. It's all about engagement. We as a district try to give good communication with the parents mostly through letters to ensure they know, also through our website. These public really serve a purpose for all stakeholders to have their say."

DEC chair Kimberley Douglass said the DEC can make a decision and recommendation, but the province will make all the final decisions.

"All we can do is make a recommendation," she said. "[The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure] decides that [where it goes]."

All presentations can be found on the Anglophone West website.

The next set of presentation meetings will be held at Bristol Elementary and Bath Community School on Jan. 25.

The final meeting with the DEC recommendation will be held at CNHS on March 19.