

**PIERREFONDS COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL
GOVERNING BOARD 2018-2019
Notes taken during the Special Meeting held Thursday January 31st, 2019
13800 Pierrefonds Blvd. (Library)**

Members Present: Aaryn Bradley, Susan Brown, Amy Campbell, Luciana Cifarelli, Angela Crosbie, Meghan Guyver, Heather Himbury, Kate Lagendyk, Juan Lamosa, Sarah Larkin, Isabelle Leduc, Kathleen Martleton, Dayo Odubayo, Greg Piggins, Bill Riddoch, Jennifer Sholzberg,

Administration: Colleen Galley
Lyanna Bravo, Vice-Principal

Commissioner: Craig Berger

School Board Representative: Christopher Fuzessy

Community Representative: absent

Regrets: None

Absent: Aaliya Farid, Susan Stacho, Luciano Cannucci

Recording Secretary (Note taker): Susan Brown

Public: Rosana Pissilli, Tracy Bieszez, Nathalie Azran, Marisa Petruzzo, Jessica Ferraro, Pamela Lobo, Susan Melishi

1. Call to Order

Quorum having been established, the meeting was called to order at 6:04pm by Juan Lamosa (Chair). This meeting was called to gain additional information about Riverdale H.S. and what will happen moving forward for PCHS. Christopher Fuzessy (Sector Director) has made himself available to provide us with additional information and answer our questions.

2. Presentation by the School Board Representatives

History:

The Commission Scolaire Marguerite Bourgeois (CSMB) has received a significant increase in enrollment, partly due to the many newly arrived immigrants. There have been conversations between the LBPSB and the CSMB over the last twelve months to discuss solutions to the overpopulation problems at CSMB. Two agreements of renting out space in the LBPSB schools to the CSMB schools were created. To correct information that was released in the media, LBPSB received a letter in late December 2018 from MEES indicating that they were considering alternatives for possible solutions and restricting them from discussing any of this with their stakeholders. In that letter, references were made to the paragraphs of the Education Act related to school mergers including the paragraphs that reference the Minister of Education ability to making the unilateral decision to close a school without consultation. Then during the week of 21 to 25 January, the school board was informed of the decision taken by the Minister to close Riverdale (ceding of the

school with the exception of the adult ed), again prohibiting disclosure and it was indicated that it was going to be formally communicated through media interview on Monday, 28 January.

However, the information was leaking on the weekend without informing the LBPSB.

Emergency meetings were called with school staff to discuss the announcement and the process that would have to take place. Since then, the LBPSB sector director has been meeting with both Riverdale and PCHS school principals, and others involved in the process.

It was then decided by the LBPSB that the two schools would be merged (close both schools and open a newly constituted school in the PCHS building). This decision takes effect July 1st, 2019. As always parents can decide to move over to the newly constituted school or apply to other schools (as they can always do so). Students who are currently at either of the schools will be registered into the PCHS system for administrative and planning purposes.

Merger Committee:

A merger committee as described in the major school change document, must be created to meet monthly.

It will start meeting in February as there are many decisions that must be made so that registration can proceed, and everything can be ready for the opening of the school in August 2019.

This merger committee includes:

2 Parents from each school (includes GB chairs)

2 Students from each school

2 Teachers from each school

1 Support Staff member from each school

Principal from each school

Regional Director

The Merger Committee will be tasked with discussing and making recommendations on the following:

Anti-bullying/ anti-violence plan

Code of conduct

Programs to be offered

Resource / support required for children with special needs

Logistics of merger

Timeline, including a critical path

The Educational Project

The school name

Any many more issues related to the merger

They will make recommendations to be approved by the governing boards at both schools.

Meetings will also take place between both staff, staff councils and then their recommendations will also flow to the merger committee through the principals and their staff representatives and then back to both governing boards for final approval. The initial staff meetings have and will be taking place this week.

3. Question Period

-What is the total current population of the 2 schools combined? About 950-1000 students, which falls within the capacity of PCHS.

-What was the process to decide to merge the two schools into a new entity school vs closing one and absorbing them into the other? With the experience from previous Major School Change and past mergers, it was determined that it is better to merge the schools to create a new school population. It has been found that if you have 2 schools, if you move school 'b' into school 'a' (rather than merge both into a new school), there are lingering feelings that the 'a' school is privileged felt by school 'b'.

-Will the new entity (school) have a new name? Both staff and both staff councils will make recommendations which will be brought to the merger committee. The name of the new school will be discussed, including the process to follow at the merger committee.

-Is there going to be any effort made to honor the students at PCHS? Preserving the history and traditions of both schools is important along with incorporating them into the new school entity.

NOTE: from a practical point of view, more students means more staff will be allocated to the school, more specialists, more support (resource staff, guidance counselors...), and more programs can then be offered.

-Comment: It is important for us to lead everyone through this in a positive manner to be role models to the students.

-Comment: It is important to look to the future, but it is also very important not to forget and to remember where you are from and the history behind that.

-Comment: Is a Merger the correct answer? Are we making all of these changes (and going through this entire process) to include possibly as few as 100 students at the sacrifice for the larger population of PCHS? Instead could we not close Riverdale and merge that population into PCHS while being cognisant of the history of the Riverdale students (approx. 200 students).

-Has the discussion taken place at the School Board level regarding merging the two schools vs just closing and absorbing? Has it been considered how many of the students will come to PCHS? Will we be making all of these changes (and go through the process) and then only a very small group come? When we are saying that based on historical experience (which is based on elementary schools only), are we comparing apples with apples, as these are high schools?

This question can be asked again at the merger committee and it can be brought up to the School Board. (Note: The question was asked when principals met and the response was that the best solution is what was suggested, merging both schools.)

-Comment: Could we not keep our schools as is, but absorb the Riverdale students – carefully and with awareness?

-Note: We will not know how many of the students will be coming to PCHS until too late to make decisions. There cannot be any analysis or surveys as parents don't register until later. As high schools have open boundaries, parents can register their children in any high school. However, John Rennie and St-Thomas are at capacity.

-Will the board allow students to register at John Rennie and St-Thomas even though they are full? Registration will be done based on space permitting and following the enrolment policy. It should be noted that, by following the enrolment policy, generally during the year transfers do not get into John Rennie and St-Thomas.

-Comment: PCHS has worked very hard to improve the school's community reputation. Riverdale has a different public reputation. Some parents seem to be concerned that by merging the two schools the work done to improve the PCHS reputation will be undone. Riverdale is a diamond in the rough. There are a lot of great things going on at Riverdale. As is recommended, it is important to visit the school to see what it is actually like, to get a feel for the school, reputation is developed when parents actually visit the school.

-Note: PCHS is considering hosting a type of open house for Riverdale parents and students to come and visit and ask questions.

-Will there be uniforms in the new entity school? It is generally very difficult to bring in a uniform where there isn't one. Staff, governing board as well as 80% of parents must approve uniforms, and it must go through merger committee.

-Is there a path for parents (other than the ones on the merger committee) to bring their concerns to the merger committee? And is there a path / process for the merger committee to bring the information to the parents? The merger committee will be using the same systems / processes / paths that are already in place to communicate with the various groups (parents, staff, students). Information from the merger committee will be communicated to the GB which is an open meeting.

Note: During a past merger, staff members asked why they weren't being informed about decisions being made by the merger committee. So it is important to create paths of communication about what decisions are made and the topics that will be discussed, not only to staff but also to parents and everyone.

-what happens to field trips that will take place next year or the year after? they will be discussed at the merger committee

-what about the field trip that is taking place this summer (which overlaps this school and the new school entity)? The teacher responsible for this trip will discuss this trip with admin (the teacher may be required to be at school during the end of the school year to prep for the merger). This will also be brought to the legal department if needed to see if it can go forward. That information will be brought back to GB.

-There has been a lot of money spent on branding for PCHS (floors, gymnasium colors, scoreboards, signs at the front door – plexiglass). Do we have to remove all of these? This will be discussed and reviewed at the merger committee.

-What is the process at the merger committee if they come to an impasse? It will be discussed at the merger committee, then it will go back to the staff... And back again to the merger committee.

-Will IB still be offered in the new school entity? This will be discussed at the merger committee level. Parents and staff at PCHS want to have IB, Riverdale used to have IB and many were upset when it

was no longer offered. All programs which will be offered at the new school entity will be discussed at the merger committee.

Comment: PCHS has welcomed students and families from various communities and have created a great welcoming school which has provided an excellent education for students.

-Will soccer concentration be offered? This will also be discussed at the merger committee

-Note: Both communities are similar and many of their resources, elements (ABAV plan, Code of Conduct, etc) are similar. There have been initial discussions regarding merging the documents / elements / resources.

-Comment: There has been excellence from both schools. The process of merging includes taking the best of each of the schools and look at everything from both schools as those things may be of interest in including into the new entity. Creating the best school entity for the staff, students and parents is a goal of the merger. Creating the best possible and quality education !

-When will the principal for the new entity be selected? It will be finalized at the April / May council meeting....

-Note: it is important that parents and staff recognize that students are taking their cues from them, with regards to receiving the new students, staff and parents into the new community. It is important to remain positive and provide students with positive role models.

-Will special funds be allocated to the new school entity to assist with the creation of the new school? Yes, extra resources and funds will be provided to assist and ensure that students with special needs are supported and well taken care of. Additional resources will be provided (such as teacher release days, extra consultants, guidance counsellors, resource, aids...). Many of these costs will be assumed by MEES directly as negotiated by the board.

-Will the teaching materials and furniture come from Riverdale building to the PCHS building? Yes.

4.0 Procedure to select parents to the Merger Committee

GB Parent Members selected Juan Lamosa and Susan Brown as their representatives on the Merger Committee. (Greg Piggins and Isabelle Leduc also offered to be parent members).

5.0 Closing

We will provide a welcoming school community for all of the students.

J. Lamosa, GB Chair 2018-2019

C. Galley, Principal P.C.H.S.

