



Tweed's new school moving forward very quickly

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It seems only a short time ago the announcement came that Tweed would be getting a brand new school. The news was announced last spring and already there have been two community information meetings and the deadline for public input is actually going to end January 26.

The second public meeting was held at Tweed Hungerford Senior School (THSS) January 18, approximately 20 people attended, not including the panel from the committee. Many were teachers and school council members. At the meeting a preliminary drawing of the floor plan for the new school was presented by the architects and after discussion about the layout, the panel took questions from the audience.

In the week before the community information meetings, the technical advisory committee met with staff from THSS and Communications Officer Kerry Donnell said, "We held technical advisory meetings with the architects and teachers, custodians, principals, office staff, daycare partners and met with the employees in half-hour segments January 12 and 13 where we had some very valuable input.

What they did was take a look at the draft floor plans as they are right now, provided all kinds of suggestions on classroom layouts, the gym, meeting rooms and community use areas to name a few. What we are looking at tonight is a draft with some input from the December



Photo courtesy of Scott Pettigrew, EMC News ;

The following panel members were present at the second community information meeting January 18 to answer questions about the new school that will replace THSS and SH Connor. Sitting are (l-r) Superintendent of Business Services Dave Rutherford, Plus VG Architects Terry White and Paul Sapounzi and School Trustee Thelma Goodfellow. Standing (l-r) are Superintendent of Education June Rogers, Controller of Facility Services Don Tregenza, Superintendent of Curriculum Services Trish McGibbon, THSS Principal Susan Carleton-Maines and Director of Education Rob McGall.



meeting and we are waiting for the next round of drawings to incorporate the feedback from last week's meetings." The new school will be approximately 40,700 square feet of floor space and will bring both SH Connor School and THSS together in one school. The new school will be located on the site of THSS. June Rogers facilitated the meeting and in opening said, "This is a very exciting time for us, for Tweed and for our board, as we endeavour to build two brand new state-of-the-art schools." The other is in Stirling.

Superintendent of Business Services Dave Rutherford began the meeting with a review of the time lines, "We now have a web site developed where we have information from the presentations that have been made as well as questions and answers quoted on the web site, the floor plans presented this evening which will be updated as they are developed and are on the site and when they are finalized they will be posted.

The floor plans as they are do not reflect the suggestions made at last week's meetings because of the tight time line between meetings. The site plan is not ready for viewing and we have not established the exact location as we are still looking at issues like bus drop offs, parking areas etc. and these types of options can really influence the site plan, we have gone through two or three iterations and we have taken feedback from last week's meetings in our considerations. We hope to have something more formal in the next week or two."

He went on to say the new school is scheduled to be open by September 2013. "Based on that we are looking at construction taking place between May 2012 and June 2013. With construction completed in June 2013, that will allow two months to remove the existing school on the site, remove the debris, move in furniture and equipment, set up the classes and make sure the school is ready, we did not want to be in the position of doing all this in the last few weeks before school opens.

To start construction in May of 2012 we have to prepare, issue, and award a tender which will happen in April of this year, to be able to get the tender ready the drawings must be finalized early in February. We are on time right now in terms of the status of the project."

The architects started by showing some of the schools they have built recently in Ontario and there is no doubt Tweed area residents can start getting excited as these architects have some very modern and innovative ideas.

Architect Terry White said, "We are very fortunate and excited to be working on the design of this new school. We are specialists in educational architecture.



Every architectural project is unique and we do not come with a preconceived idea and try to place it on the site but we try to have a direct response to the site, we use materials sympathetic to the location."

The new school will have a very large "learning commons" area, (which is the new name given to the library), as you enter the school. The layout is interesting in that the common area is located in front of the stage which divides the gym and the common area and because



the walls can be removed, the area will open up into what the architects describe as possibly one of the largest meeting places in Tweed. The hope is that the community will be able to use the new facility a lot more, especially in the summer months. The classrooms surround the common area and gym.

At the end of the meeting questions were asked by audience members about classroom size, the ability to continue with the breakfast club, the future of the SH Connor building, and what type of heating would be used. Everyone was reassured that these issues had been brought up at the technical advisory meetings. In the case of the heat it was asked if geothermal would be used and Don Tregenza, controller of facility services, said they would be looking to see if the

boilers now in the schools could be used. Asked about solar panels he said, “We have been working with a partner on placing solar panels on school roofs as a backup but right now this is a political issue as the FIT program may be changing.”

“The school board met with council before they had any public meetings and they have been very good at keeping us informed,” said Reeve Jo-Anne Albert. “A new school will only benefit our community and will fit in well with the new twenty-first century collaborative learning style. It is important that people send their comments in by the deadline of January 26 and go to the web site and stay informed.” The planning committee is also looking for input as to what should happen with the SH Connor Elementary School building.”



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