2020-2023 Capital Plan approved for submission to Alberta Education – Board requesting three new schools, one modernization project

The PWPSD Board is requesting two replacement schools, a new K-8 school, and one modernization project in its 2020-2023 Capital Plan.

The Board has identified the need for three new schools and a modernization project in PWPSD’s 2020-2023 Capital Plan, as presented by Superintendent Bob Stewart, for submission to Alberta Education by April 1, 2019.

On the list of urgent priorities is a replacement K-8 Harry Balfour School to address the school’s continuing upward trend in enrolment. The Board will also seek approval from Alberta Education for available land near Five Mile Hall.

A second urgent priority is a new high school located north of Grande Prairie to replace Peace Wapiti Academy (PWA) and to address rapid student population growth in a large attendance area that encompasses five feeder schools – Bezanson, Penson, Clairmont Community, Whispering Ridge Community, and Harry Balfour.

Addressing excessive ride times for rural students is also a priority issue for PWPSD. By relocating HBS and PWA to the County of Grande Prairie, the Board will achieve another important goal – reducing early morning pick-ups and late drop-off times for rural students who are currently bused through the busy central core of Grande Prairie.

To achieve the Capital Plan goals, PWPSD is interested in pursuing partnerships with neighbouring school districts for schools with similar grade configurations.

Two other projects are listed as important priorities.

A K-8 school, located in the Clairmont area will relieve enrolment pressure at Clairmont Community School and Robert W. Zahara Public School in Sexsmith, and respond to the current and planned residential developments in the area that will significantly add to the student population.

Modernization of the aging Bonanza School will see the facility continue to support the consistent enrolment experienced in past years.

Board to support motion calling for mandatory student vaccination

The PWPSD Board voted five-to-three in support of a proposed motion in favour of mandatory vaccination of students attending Alberta’s publicly funded schools. Peace River’s Holy Family Catholic Regional Division (HFCRD) proposed the motion to the nine Zone 1 Boards during the Alberta School Boards’ Association (ASBA) Zone 1 meeting in Grande Prairie on March 13. If the motion passes at the next Zone 1 meeting on May 8, it will be presented at the ASBA Fall General Meeting.

The motion says that students who cannot receive protective vaccines for various medical reasons, such as immunodeficiency, would naturally be exempt, noting that they are also the ones requiring the greatest level of protection from communicable diseases that could be introduced to schools by unvaccinated children.

In developing the motion, HFCRD looked at data on the declining vaccination rates in Alberta, particularly in the North Zone, where numbers have dropped below the level required for ‘herd immunity’, compared with the higher vaccination rates seen in Ontario and New Brunswick where vaccination is mandated for school-age children.

Board meeting schedule approved

The 2019-2020 board meeting schedule has been approved to include 10 meetings at Central Office, and one meeting at the Sub Office in Spirit River. The annual organizational meeting will be held at 10:30 a.m. on September 5, 2019 at Central Office, followed by a regular board meeting at 11:00 a.m. View the schedule online at www.pwpsd76.ab.ca/Board/meetingdates.