

**Dr. J. H. Gillis Regional Feeder System School Review  
School Options Committee**

**Public Meeting 2**

**Thursday, January 26, 2017 – 7:00 p.m.**

**Antigonish Education Centre, Antigonish, Nova Scotia**

**Attendance**

**Committee Members:**

**Voting:**

Deepak Prasad, Community Representative - Chair  
Maria Fraser, AEC School Advisory Council Parent Representative  
Karla Chisholm, AEC School Advisory Council Parent Representative  
John Blackwell, DJHG School Advisory Council Parent Representative  
Allan Armsworthy, Dr. J. H. Gillis School Advisory Council Chair  
Amanda MacDonald, HMM School Advisory Council Parent Representative  
Jacqui Briand, HMM School Advisory Council Parent Representative  
Beth Maloney, SACS School Advisory Council Parent Representative  
Mary Anne Burke, SACS School Advisory Council Parent Representative  
Minu Sharma, SAJS School Advisory Council Parent Representative  
Angela Penney, SAJS Advisory Council Parent Representative

**Non-Voting:**

April Weaver, Principal AEC  
Wanda Fougere, Principal DJHG  
Jason Dayman, Principal HMM  
Glenn Austen, Principal SAJS  
Bob MacEachern, School Review Facilitator  
Sherman England, SRSB Director of Operations  
Kevin Walker, SRSB Coordinator  
Leah Duggan, Recording Secretary

**1. Call to Order (B. MacEachern, Facilitator)**

The Public meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

**2. Record of Attendance**

Regrets from Kirk Johnstone, Principal, St. Andrews Consolidated School

Bob MacEachern, School Options Committee Facilitator, introduced Board Members in attendance:

Joanne Reddick, Mary Jess MacDonald, Jamie Samson, Anne Peters, Paula Paul, Chelsea Burke, Rosalee Parker, George Kehoe, Richelle MacLaughlin, Jim Austin, Barbara Quirk, Francine Boudreau along with Superintendent, Ford Rice and recognized Antigonish Mayor, Laurie Boucher.

B. MacEachern then introduced the voting and non-voting SOC members, and welcomed D. Prasad, School Options Committee Chair for opening comments.

D. Prasad opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the second public School Options Committee meeting. The Chair stated the Committee had been working hard since Christmas and had met off-campus on a few occasions during the labor relations issue between the NSTU and the Department of Education. With work-to-rule now ended, the School Options Committee will be able to get more needed information as they progress forward with their options. During this meeting, the public will see what scenarios the School Options Committee had come up with and the work they have completed to date. D. Prasad stressed the importance of feedback and welcomed any questions at the end of the presentation.

**3. Explanation of the Provincial School Review Process** – Presentation attached as part of the public record.

B. MacEachern, explained the Role of the Facilitator and SOC Membership. He also went over the committee's guiding documents, terms of reference as well as the Dr. J. H. Gillis Regional High School Feeder System School Review objectives and the reference criteria that is being used for the School Review.

The School Options Committee follows a mandated process as laid out in the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development School Review Policy. The SOC will conduct a review of the Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School feeder system. As such, it will consider and make written recommendations to the board respecting the Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School feeder system.

Information on the process, policy and minutes of the committee meetings are posted on the School Board's website.

**4. Summary of Work Conducted to Date**

The School Options Committee has met on the following dates:

- Wednesday, October 26, 2016 (Dr. J. H. Gillis Regional High School)
- Monday, November 7, 2016 (Dr. J. H. Gillis Regional High School)
- November 22, 2016 (H. M. Macdonald Elementary School)
- November 28, 2016 (Saint Andrew Junior School/Antigonish Education Centre)
- December 6, 2016 (Town Hall – Antigonish)
- January 9, 2017 (County of Antigonish – Meeting Room)

Public Meetings held to date:

- Public Meeting 1, November 15, 2016 at Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School
- Public Meeting 2, January 26, 2017 at Antigonish Education Centre

Public Meeting to be held:

- Public Meeting 3, TBA

B. MacEachern reported on the Committee's work;

- Review of existing schools and school configurations;
  - AEC (P-4)
  - SAC (P-6)
  - HM MacDonald (P-6)
  - SAJS (5-8)
  - Dr. JH Gillis (9-12)
- Review of 8 possible scenarios that were narrowed down to 4 scenarios for further review of the Dr. J. H. Gillis Regional High School feeder system:

1. Status Quo

2. SAJS (P-6), SAC (P-6), HM MacDonald (P-6) and Dr. JH Gillis (7-12) - Closing AEC

3. AEC (P-4), SAC (P-6), SAJS (5-8) and Dr. JH Gillis (9-12) - Closing HM MacDonald

4. AEC (P-6), SAC (P-6), HM Macdonald (P-6) and SAJS (7-12) – Closing Dr. JH Gillis

## 5. Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the Public Meeting is to outline the school review process, present work completed to date and to receive feedback from the public.

## 6. Public Feedback

Facilitator, B. MacEachern, requested public feedback

1. Karen Clifton, AEC Parent: Asked if there is any supporting research on developmental learning for elementary grades. Does school configuration, P-4 or P-6 schools make a difference?

No research was available to be given during this meeting, but the Superintendent of Schools, Ford Rice, gave a background on the configuration of schools within the SRSB and spoke about achievement rates of P-6/P-12 schools being in line with P-4 schools. He also mentioned that where feasible, there would be P-6 schools, but Antigonish is an anomaly and feels all students in the SRSB receive a good education.

B. MacEachern adds that the lease on Antigonish Education Centre expires in June of 2021 and the other schools in question are owned by the Province.

2. Rochelle MacKenzie, HM MacDonald SAC Member: Wondered what the projected occupancy rate for each school option will be.

The Facilitator stated there were no numbers yet as staff couldn't actively participate in meetings, but utilization will be talked about in the next working meeting.

The Superintendent of Schools went over utilization rates (as reported in the Long Range Outlook - April 29, 2015) of each school within the Dr. J. H. Gillis Regional High School Feeder System for September 30, 2016:

AEC – 69%  
Dr.JH Gillis – 52%  
SAJS – 79%  
HM MacDonald – 69%  
SACS – 90%

Mr. Rice made an additional point on Karen Clifton's question about achievement rates. He stated that Grade 4 math results showed a number of schools, with different configurations, that scored higher than AEC, one school being P-6, one P-8 and one P-12.

**3.** Karen Clifton: Asked how old each school was.

B. MacEachern provided the following build dates:

DJHG – 1970, undergone significant renovations  
SAJS – 1996  
AEC – 2000  
HMM – 1963  
SACS – 1960; undergone significant renovations

Karen then asked the follow-up question; how many upgrades have happened compared to some of the newer schools?

Sherman England, Director of Operations noted that Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School, for example, went through an 11-phase reconstruction over the last 10 years, which includes relocation of offices, renovations to classroom spaces, technology upgrades, flooring, walls, etc.

B. MacEachern added that during a tour at Dr. J. H. Gillis High School, some SOC members commented on the difference of the school from when they attended. The size of Dr. J. H. Gillis is 141,000 ft<sup>2</sup>, which is almost 2 times the size of a regular school (AEC is 88,000 ft<sup>2</sup>). Due to a low utilization rate, the committee can look at what the opportunity might be for that school in the future.

S. England followed up by saying the capacity of the Dr. J. H. Gillis Regional High School feeder system is 3200, but they are currently at 2,000 students. The reality is that we are at 2/3 capacity in the buildings in the feeder system. As a school system, we are heating a lot more space and turning on lights that we don't really need.

**4.** Jeff Spencer: Thanked the Committee for their work done to date. In regards to the 6 reference criteria components used (see presentation), are each of the 6 criteria equally weighted?

The Facilitator indicated that each scenario was looked at separately and each criteria was fairly weighted during the assessment of each option.

Jeff Spencer also asked if they were the only criteria used to differentiate between the options already eliminated and going forward to the conclusion of one of the 4 options.

B. MacEachern said some options were automatically disregarded because they didn't fit within the mandate. Requirements based on grades is different and the Committee will get a better understanding from Principals as to how a reconfiguration of the system would actually operate from the student perspective. There could be needs that grade 7 or 8 students have, but that a P-4 student doesn't necessarily require. This will be left to the committee to determine.

Jeff Spencer then followed-up by asking if there will be additional criteria used in the future or will the 6 criteria listed be used for the 4 remaining options?

B. MacEachern responded by saying the principles that the SOC used to this point would probably guide them through the next round of decisions to come to the point where they're comfortable making a recommendation.

Jeff Spencer added his concern of the quality of education and achievement ratings previously talked about.

S. England points out the School Review Policy dictates the 6 criteria.

**5.** Karen Clifton stated her opinion that option #2 (Closing AEC) would be the best choice. If she lived in Maryvale she would want her kids to stay in their community and wouldn't want them to be bussed to town and vice versa. With Dr. J. H. Gillis being underutilized, she feels adding grades to this school would bring the utilization rate back up.

**6.** Rochelle MacKenzie asked what the cost would be to the School Board to take over the Antigonish Education Centre.

S. England responded that the purchase price for AEC in 2021 would be \$5.9 million. The cost of the lease is presently \$1.1 million/year plus operational costs paid by the Province to the developer. The cost to the SRSB to run AEC would be \$529,000/year. This includes heating, lights, maintenance, snow removal, janitorial, garbage removal, etc.

B. MacEachern stated that the lease payout information was new information to everyone as these numbers were just made available to the SRSB.

B. MacEachern thanked the Board members, Committee members and all who were in attendance at the second public meeting. He also reminded everyone that the date, time and location of the third public meeting will be advertised.

## **7. Future Meetings**

- a. Working Meeting, Monday, January 30, 2017
- b. Public Meeting 3 – February-March, 2017. The date, location and time will be advertised in advance.

## **8. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

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**BOB MACEACHERN  
SCHOOL REVIEW FACILITATOR**

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**LEAH DUGGAN  
RECORDING SECRETARY**