



**NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BUSINESS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING
INFORMATION SHEET**

DATE: December 13, 2023
TO: Business Committee
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer
SUBJECT: Rutherford Elementary

Background

In October 2023, the Board of Education supported the opening of Rutherford Elementary School in September 2025, with the following motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) direct that Rutherford Elementary School be reopened as of September 2025 and that staff are directed to create a School Transition Working Group to address issues associated with reopening the facility and provide the Board with recommendations with respect to appropriate catchments for Rutherford and the surrounding schools and potential programming, if applicable, to ensure the long-term viability of the school.

This information sheet is intended to outline the process and timeline for the planning of the school to re-open.

Discussion

Following this meeting District staff will send out invites to the Rutherford Working Group. The purpose of the Rutherford Working Group is to deliver a report that will provide the Board with recommendations on the following issues:

1. The Catchment Boundaries of Rutherford and impacted schools including Randerson, McGirr, Frank J. Ney, Departure Bay and possibly Seaview and Uplands (likely minor if any) and Pleasant Valley (unlikely);
2. The manner in which the school will open (e.g. a staggered multi-year process or an immediate start) and whether enrollment will be voluntary or mandatory;
3. Discussions to ensure long-term viability including potential programming;
4. Discussions regarding the status of the facility including condition but also potential aesthetic improvements;
5. Whether a new name should be considered; and
6. Potential staffing implications (note that where collective agreement implications are present the committee and the Board may have limited say).

Catchment Boundaries

Currently, Licker Geospatial has been engaged to provide updated development and enrollment forecasting for the North End. The external group will provide support to finance's enrollment projections on future expected enrollments. They will also be able to provide scenarios as requested by the Working Group (within certain parameters):

1. Parts of the catchment area of Departure Bay Elementary must move to Frank J. Ney;
2. Growth at Randerson must be limited;
3. Parts of the McGirr catchment must be incorporated in the new Rutherford catchment to ensure a sufficient school population.

Nevertheless, there will be some options available to the Board.

The Configuration of the School at Opening

The most optimal situation for the open is for new boundaries to be set and students within those boundaries to be moved. However, the community may have concerns that the Board must consider. The Working Group will discuss the issue, potentially survey parents and then determine what recommendation to make to the Board. Without limiting the outcomes some possible configurations are as follows:

1. K-3 with mandatory attendance and then working to k-7 over 4 years
2. K-5 with mandatory attendance and then working to k-7 over 2 years
3. K-7 with the same requirements
4. K-7 allowing voluntary enrollment (likely creating combined grade classrooms) etc.

Long Term Viability

While the boundary discussion is intended to provide long term viability of the school the Working Group may wish educators to lead a discussion on a focus for the school. While there are a host of complexities with such a discussion, the Board is intending to make Rutherford a viable long-term school and staff are committed to doing our best to deliver that goal.

Facilities Matters

There are not a lot of specific facilities issues to address given the recent upgrade to house Pleasant Valley. Rutherford is an older and not particularly attractive school. It should be noted that the grounds are excellent and the facility is very functional. Therefore, the Working Group will spend some time understanding what options are available to enhance the school prior to opening.

School Name

The Working Group will discuss whether the Board should consider a new name. The Working Group would not be tasked with making a recommendation on what a name would be but rather whether the Board should consider engaging its policies to pursue this topic.

Potential Staffing Impacts

Individual discussion with our unions will be prioritized if the collective agreement is engaged. However, the Working Group will engage in general discussions regarding school staffing and resource allocations and will consider the shifts that may be required to facilitate the catchment changes from an operational and educational perspective, aligned with regular district-based resource allocations falling within budget. For instance, if Rutherford opens with 250 students and shrinks surrounding schools, how will we address the issue? Notably, if the process is intended to help Departure Bay and Randerson then they will lose the most students (and therefore the most staff). However, Frank J Ney will be impacted significantly having the most student turnover (e.g. Departure Bay students shift to Ney, Ney students shift to Rutherford).

Timeline

2024

January 31, 2024 - Initial meeting. Discussion of themes above and provision of initial information to the Working Group;

February – Working Group continues to discuss themes and starts to decide on recommendations to the Board (if available);

March – Working Group discusses report to the Board;

April - Report (including catchments) provided to the Board and is sent for consultation (if approved);

June - Report to the Board on outcome of consultation;

October - Revised (if required) report sent for further consultation;

December - Board approves report (including catchment)

2025

January - Enrollment begins, school open house and current families are informed of outcome of report. Transfer period for students not wishing to move begins (depending on the outcome of the report)

September - School Opens

Working Group membership

Secretary-Treasurer - Operations Lead

Assistant Superintendent Elementary - Education Lead

Associate Secretary-Treasurer - Enrollment and Finance Lead

Manager, Administrative Services

Director of Facilities - Facilities support (as required)

Executive Director of Communications (as required)

Dover Bay Family of Schools Trustee - Trustee representative

Expected Rutherford School Principal

Principal of Departure Bay, McGirr, Frank J Ney and Randerson

Leaders for Learning representative

NDTA executive rep, NDTA school representative (preferably from an impacted school)

CUPE Rep executive rep, CUPE school representative (preferably from an impacted school)

DPAC and School PAC representatives from McGirr, Departure Bay, Randerson and Frank J Ney