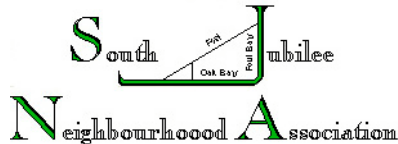




North Jubilee
Neighbourhood
Association



Camosun Community
Association



February 9, 2007

Board of School Trustees
Greater Victoria School District No. 61
556 Boleskine Road, PO Box 700
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 2R1

Dear Chair McEvoy and Members of the Board:

Re: Proposed sale of Former Richmond Elementary School

We represent local community organizations active in the community that includes the former Richmond Elementary School. We understand that the Greater Victoria School District intends to sell this public asset—located at 2780 Richmond Road near the Saanich and Victoria municipal border—and has recently listed this property with Colliers International Real Estate.

As community representatives we strongly oppose this decision and insist, that as our elected representatives, you remove the Richmond School property from the real estate market until there has been an open and broad-based community dialogue to determine the highest and best use for this public asset.

In particular, we have the following concerns:

- Your plans to sell the school are completely inconsistent with your May 13, 2003 public commitment and statement (attached) that “...closed schools will not be sold” and “...must remain in the public domain”.
- You have listed the property with Colliers International yet there has been no discussion about broader public objectives—social, economic and environmental—with the immediate neighbourhood, broader community or with local or senior government partners.
- This school property includes playgrounds, playing fields and an outstanding portion of the regionally significant Bowker Creek watershed. These assets are fundamental to the heart of our community, and also possess important habitat values and greenways connections.

North Jubilee Neighbourhood
Association
1739 Haultain Street
Victoria, B.C., V8R 4L1
(250) 704-2668

Camosun Community
Association
3205 Wordsworth Street
Victoria, B.C., V8P 4B7
(250) 598-2291

South Jubilee Neighbourhood
Association
1752 Davie Street
Victoria, B.C., V8R 4W6
(250) 595-2685

Friends of Bowker
Creek Society
2850 Queenston Street
Victoria, B.C., V8R 4P3
(250) 370-1271

- The hasty sale of surplus school properties diminishes the size of the public's asset, flexibility for the future, and the amount of public open space which schools have traditionally provided for communities around them.
- The eight-acre site lies within 600 metres of one of eight "Major Centres" identified in the Regional Growth Strategy. The local and regional community planning implications of the Richmond site should be thoroughly discussed before any decision is made to dispose of the property.
- By putting the property up for sale without public process you have ignored a fundamental principal of administrative fairness—that those affected by a decision have a right to be heard and have their opinions considered.
- School District No. 61 has a public consultation policy and process for closing schools. Why is there no consultation process for the sale of these same properties?

In closing, we urge you to withdraw this property from the market until there is an open and transparent process that fully involves community interests. We acknowledge the fiscal realities and pressures that you currently face and would like to work with you, local and senior governments, and other community partners to explore potential options that optimize overall public benefits.

Yours truly,



North Jubilee Neighbourhood Association
Soren Henrich, Director



Camosun Community Association
Sheila Critch, President



South Jubilee Neighbourhood Association
Liz Hoar, Coordinator



Friends of Bowker Creek Society
Ian Graeme, President

Attachments (1)

cc: Hon. Ida Chong, Minister of Community Services
Hon. Shirley Bond, Minister of Education
Hon. Rich Coleman, Minister Responsible for Housing
Rob Fleming, MLA, Victoria-Hillside
Carole James, MLA, Victoria-Beacon Hill
Denise Savoie, MP, Victoria
Mayor and Council, District of Saanich
Mayor and Council, City of Victoria
Denise Blackwell, Chair, Capital Regional District
Russ Fuoco, Director of Planning, District of Saanich
Deborah Day, Director of Planning, City of Victoria
Mabel Jean Rawlins-Brannan, Executive Director, Community Social Planning Council
Debra Swain, President, Greater Victoria Teachers' Association



Media Release

May 13, 2003

For Immediate Release

Schools Slated for Closure Will Not Be Sold

Schools slated for closure in the Greater Victoria School District must remain in the public domain.

Last night's meeting of the Board's Operations, Policy and Planning Committee recommended that advertisements be placed in local newspapers seeking "expressions of interest" from parties wanting to lease rather than purchase the schools.

The Committee's recommendation will go to the next meeting of the full Board but the Operation's Committee Chair Michael McEvoy said, "It is almost a certainty the full Board will reject any option that includes sale of schools to the private sector."

McEvoy said, "Eight of nine Trustees were in attendance at last night's meeting," adding "it's clear from the discussion that members of the Board believe the schools must remain in public domain".

"A broad cross-section of the public, from parents to business people, have urged the Board of School Trustees to look at community compatible parties who are prepared to lease the buildings", McEvoy said, "It's also important we find ways to ensure community use for the playgrounds and fields that surround our schools".

The Operations, Policy and Planning Committee also endorsed financial efficiencies recommended by staff, including the elimination of a school bus route no longer required due to realignment of school boundaries as well as a reduction of administrative personnel from the District's Financial and Facilities Departments.

Committee member Mark Walsh stated, "It is important that we begin the budget process immediately by finding ways to save money to ensure that the School District does not find itself encumbered with a large deficit when balancing next year's budget." Walsh added, "The provincial government funding formula means the School District could be facing more than a \$3 million shortfall in 2004/05 if one-time funds do not reappear." Superintendent John Gaipman added, "Administration will work with the Board of School Trustees to find any additional efficiencies over the course of the year."

"Whatever savings can be found will help to ease the pain for next year", Walsh said.

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For information, please contact:

Michael McEvoy, Chair, Operations, Policy and Planning Committee at (250) 383-9390
Or John Gaipman, Superintendent of Schools at (250) 475-4159