

Good evening Your Worship and members of Council. On behalf of the Board of School Trustees, Richmond Trustee Sargent and I are here to speak briefly to the draft City Centre Area Plan.

I know that we all want the City of Richmond to be the most appealing, livable, and well-managed community in Canada. By working cooperatively together we can achieve this goal. As another level of elected government in Richmond, trustees feel that we are more than a stakeholder – but a partner - and we want to work together with you, in partnership, towards this vision for Richmond.

As you are aware, the City of Richmond and the Richmond School district have an enviable record of working together collaboratively and to that end we have been very successful. We serve the same community and we feel a strong sense of duty to our constituents to express our concerns to you at this time.

In our opinion, the time frame allotted for feedback regarding the proposed changes to the City Centre area plan, was too short and did not allow for careful and considerate input.

We believe that public schools should be an integral part of the City Centre Area Plan and yet we have seen little evidence of planning for schools in the draft presentations.

The Board's ability to secure land and funds from the provincial government for future school sites and buildings, together with the reality that current schools within the city centre area are at or near capacity, has made it very evident to us that we need to work closely together to ensure we get those future sites. This is, in our opinion, a critical point to the livability and therefore viability of the plan.

Trustees urged school district staff to re-schedule the planned City Centre Area Plan presentation to Ministry of Education staff. This meeting did take place on Dec. 1 with City staff providing a presentation of the draft City Centre Area Plan to Ministry of Education staff.

When updated on this meeting the Board was advised that a fairly wide-ranging discussion followed the presentation including the manner in which the school district is funded, alternative methods of financing and the capital planning process. This is one example of how we are trying to share relevant information so that we can come to a common understanding that leads to more effective planning for the future.

We respectfully suggest that we need a viable process for consultation – perhaps a new communication process – politician to politician. We appreciate the work that both our staffs are doing – but given the magnitude and pace of these changes we feel strongly that as the leaders in our community our two political bodies need to work closely together.

We have accepted the Mayor's suggestion to come to the January 16th Planning committee where at that time we will be able to speak in more detail to the questions we have:

- The Province is in declining enrollment – expected to last until 2018. So demographics – the number of children and where they are living – is very crucial in future school site planning. Today, looking at enrollment figures – we see that the 2007 graduating class is 2170 students yet there are only 1356 kindergarden student – a difference of 800 students Or 2 elementary schools.

- Time line for conceptual and detailed planning – where will the next phase of development be so we can plan for a school site

- The future of our historic practice of joint park/school open space - we wonder if the open spaces that residents of Richmond have come to expect will no longer be available.

- Process to ensure effective collaboration at the political and staff level