

Jay Aspin, Chair

Craig Myles, Director of Education

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**W.J. Fricker Build Committee**

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

Head Office of the Near North District School Board  
963 Airport Road, North Bay, ON

Committee Members Present

Bill Steer, Committee Chair  
Louise Sargent, Trustee  
Jay Aspin, Board Chair

Staff Members Present

Gay Smylie, Acting Superintendent  
Marianne Speirs, Capital Projects Manager

Minutes:

Krista Messenger, Executive Assistant

Invited Guests:

Nathan Jensen, Mitchell Jensen Architects

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**1.0 Call to Order**

**1.1 Adoption of the Agenda**

Committee Chair Steer called the meeting to order at 2:31 PM. Attendance was called to confirm all invitees are present. The invited guest from Mitchell Jensen Architects was welcomed to the meeting

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**2.0 Project Update**

Committee Chair Steer invited Capital Projects Manager, M. Speirs, to give the Committee members an update regarding the project. Highlights noted as:

- Mitchell Jensen Architects were awarded the contract for this project in March 2020.
- From March- August 2020, work focused on template design and revisions to bring the project in line with the allotted funding.
- It is noted that this build is a similar look and feel to the Woodland Public School build in North Bay.
- From August 2020 to present day, work on the project has focused on developing the documents for the Ministry of Education capital planning division to move the project forward to the tendering phase. SBO Easton has been instrumental to preparing the documents for submission. It is expected to be provided to the Ministry later today following the committee meeting.
- Following the meeting today, a request will be sent to the ministry to request the project move to tender. The Ministry is aware and expecting this update.

Committee Chair Steer thanked M. Speirs for the update. It is noted that reports have been brought forward to the Board of Trustees from the Fricker Build Committee, and here forward the meetings will be minuted as well.

### 3.0 Project Update Presentation

Committee Chair Steer welcomed Nathen Jensen to the meeting as the Fricker Project Lead. N. Jensen projected a PowerPoint presentation and lead the committee through a review of the plans and timelines. Highlights of the presentation are noted as:

- Thanks expressed for the invitation to share a project update to the committee today.
- Review of the site design. Committee was shown a satellite image of the current build and proximity to adjacent streets. Satellite image shown of the project design, which strives to make best use of the adjacent streets and traffic flow. Principal access to the school will still be located on Norman avenue, with improvements to the view from McKee avenue and with more viewable access to the playgrounds. The bus route and parent drop off locations have been separated to allow for more efficient traffic flow.
  - Question from Board Chair Aspin regarding the easements on the property. Comments from N. Jensen to note there are currently two easements on the property. One running parallel to the west side of the site across the front yard for sanitary sewer. Through the site planning control agreement, a second easement was discovered (storm sewer) perpendicular to the property on the north side. The storm sewer easement is not currently registered but will be during this project.
- The school layout is designed to lend itself well to community use of the school (for example- shared space is easily accessible so members of the public do not need to walk through the school to visit the gym). All visitors enter through the same location as well which creates continuity.
- Review of the Early Years Centre and childcare space. It is noted that there are divided play spaces for these children, with direct access from their building space.
- Review of the ELK areas. Two kindergarten classrooms have been designed with a shared vestibule and exits.
- Question from Trustee Sargent regarding the size of the dedicated play space for the ELK program versus the daycare, as it appears the childcare play yard is larger.
  - Response from N. Jensen to note the EKL space in the plan is comparable to the current space at Woodland Public School, however Woodland has four ELK classes, and Fricker has two. There have been no comments offered on the size of the ELK play yard so it is anticipated the current size will meet the needs of students and educators. The childcare yard space is generous due to how the building sits on the property.
- Review of the floor plan for the administrative space. The office is intentionally located very close to the main entrance and includes a meeting space. Additionally, there are touchdown spaces included in the plan off the main hallway suitable for individual meetings.
- Review of the plans for the primary wing. Six classrooms are included in the plan, with an exit out to the fenced play area.
- Review of the junior wing. The design includes four junior classes and four junior portables. The Ministry has provided specific funding for four portables to respond to declining enrollment trends. Intention is to have these portables face the rear of the building so the spaces are easily accessible with a similar classroom feel compared to the spaces within the building.
- Gym has ample storage, accessible on both sides to allow for the gym to be sectioned without limiting use from either side.
- Review of the childcare/ early years wing. This space is accessible from the main entrance. It is an open and flexible space with storage. The restrooms are barrier-free. Plans are included for a full kitchen, as well as office space and meeting rooms. Spaces are dedicated to individual childcare populations and needs, with direct access to their play areas.

- Question from Trustee Sargent regarding special education accessible restrooms and restrooms that are gender neutral.
  - N. Jensen noted there are two shared blocks of restrooms that include barrier-free stalls. Additionally, there are two individual gender-neutral restrooms accessible off the main corridor. Confirmation that the gender-neutral restrooms have enough space to accommodate an adult change table.
  - Confirmation from Superintendent Smylie to advise this school does not serve self-contained classrooms, and the spaces within the build are appropriate to meet student needs.
- Question from Trustee Sargent on indigenous elements important to students (ie: an area for smudging)
  - N. Jensen noted there were no specific requirements raised during the planning phases of this design. Care can be taken to ensure the ventilation systems are in place to support smudging in targeted spaces (for example in the library). As a secondary option, fire suppression systems can be calibrated to detect heat in lieu of smoke to ensure they are not triggered through this activity. N. Jensen to take this back for further consideration and planning.
- Questions from Trustee Sargent on the language use of “portables”, to confirm if there is consideration to classify these spaces in line with space designations within the school.
  - Confirmation from Chair Aspin the Board has termed these spaces “edu-pods” to reflect the same level of quality expectations of the space to address negative feedback expressed by the public with regard to the notion of "portables".
  - N. Jensen noted that the ministry was firm on designating these spaces as “portables” and they will be designed to be very complementary to the school. N. Jensen advised he is pleased to re-name these spaces to reflect the integrity of these spaces.
- Overview provided on the elevation and site rendering. Material pallets for the school primarily consist of brick, wood composite panels and stone accents. These were selected for their low maintenance, cost-effectiveness, and durability. Edu-pods to be constructed with the same finish and materials to complement the building. Care has been taken to provide lots of visibility from the school into the yards.
  - Question from Chair Aspin regarding roof maintenance, given the flat peak of the building.
    - N. Jensen noted that there are many options on the market for flat roofing systems. Mitchell Jensen prioritizes the highest quality roofing membrane that meets the client’s budget considerations. No matter what system is selected, it’s likely the roof would need maintenance every 15-20 years.
- Question from Trustee Steer regarding environmental considerations enveloped into the project.
  - N. Jensen noted that this is a priority for Mitchell Jensen Architects. As a firm, Mitchell Jensen advocates for sustainability in designs. There are numerous ways this design conserves energy and supports sustainability. N. Jensen has provided a full list of items to the Capital Projects Manager for committee disbursement.
- Schedule update provided to note construction documents are being submitted today. It is anticipated the board will receive a response in 10 days. Once approval is received, this project will move to tender. It is anticipated the tender will close at the end of June 2021. At this point, construction begins.
  - Question from Chair Aspin to clarify when the students can return to the new school. N. Jensen anticipated construction will take 18 months, which brings us to November 2022, leading to a January 2023 move in date.
    - Clarification to inquire if this can be condensed to a September 2022 opening date. N. Jensen noted it is always an option to establish a “substantial performance” expectation for contractors. In this case, there is

a risk this will be identified as a “fast track” schedule that will have premium costs. As a school board, consideration will need to be given to what is more important: opening date, or cost effectiveness. Above this, there is no guarantee the aggressive schedule could be attained.

- Further comment from Trustee Sargent to recognize the administrative coordination involved in an aggressive schedule as well.
- Comment from the Committee Chair to bring this forward to trustees for more consideration.

Committee Chair Steer thanked Nathen Jensen for the presentation to the committee. Request for M. Speirs to include some highlights presented into a brief for the Fricker Build Committee to present to the Board of Trustees. Highlights to include the similarity to the Woodland build, the barrier free restrooms, the sustainability elements, and the intention to follow-up on fire suppression system requirements to ensure a safe place for smudging.

## **4.0 New Business**

### **4.1 Establishment of Committee Chair**

Committee Chair Steer noted the value in establishing a Committee Chair to observe good governance practices and following of the direction issued to all committees by Board Chair Aspin. As the current Committee Chair, Committee Chair Steer noted he would be pleased to continue in this role. Support expressed from Trustee Sargent for this, given the strong leadership skills and value in consistency for the project. Further support for B. Steer’s nomination expressed by Board Chair Aspin. Committee Chair Steer accepted the role and thanked trustees for their support.

### **4.2 Terms of Reference Discussion**

In January, the Board of Trustees provided direction to committees to table a conversation regarding their Terms of Reference. Consensus from committee members to await the implementation of the multi-year strategic plan to ensure alignment between this document and the committee’s Terms of Reference. In the meantime, the committee will continue to meet and provide reports to the Board for review and approval.

Based on the project outline provided by N. Jensen, it is noted that the Committee will begin to meet more regularly to stay abreast of the project developments. Consensus to meet in the second week of June to receive an update on the Ministry’s response in time to report to the Board at the June meeting. Staff to coordinate a scheduling poll to set this time aside in calendars. The floor was opened for final comments. Highlights are noted as:

- Comment from Board Chair Aspin to thank N. Jensen for attending and for providing the Committee with an update.
- Frustration expressed with the impacts and delays caused by COVID. Much of this timing is outside of the board’s control. We must be patient with the timing and the costs.
- The original project timeline expected the school to open in September of 2022, so the Committee must be flexible when sharing an updated timeline as it may still be the refined timeline presented today is a “best case scenario”
- The Board must be made aware of the pressures that have caused the delays to understand the timeline is out of NNDSB’s control. Committee Chair Steer concurred and requested the Board Chair raise this in open session for all trustees.
- Last point from Chair Aspin to note the last project estimate placed this over budget.
  - Response from M. Speirs to note the original project funding was based on a flat fee per square foot. Since this time, staff have pulled apart the cost estimate and

developed proposals to seek additional funding for aspects of the constructions that are traditionally funded at a higher base amount (Early Years Centers and special site readiness funding as examples). The application for underground site work totaled approximately \$3.4M. M. Speirs is confident this will be approved. As a further strategy, SBO Easton has been consulted on board resources that could be reallocated from proceeds of disposition, while meeting with Ministry decision-makers.

- The full scope of the project is sitting at \$19.6M. When the ministry base funding of \$12M, is added to the expected special site readiness funding of \$3.4M, and the proceeds of disposition from other projects are combined- the project has a zero balance. SBO Easton will be presenting the details to the Ministry on the pockets of funding the Board could use. It is unlikely the Ministry will offer any additional funding, so this plan is the best option.
- Board Chair Aspin recognized the importance of updating the Board on these matters, as the Fricker build is not the only capital project NNDSB has underway. Board Chair Aspin reiterated the importance of providing a realistic expectation and making the board aware, as this will be a full board decision to access unaccumulated surplus to this project.
- Committee Chair Steer noted the value in developing a contingency plan. At this point, the Build Committee is not able to affirm for the Board that there would be no further overruns (especially in the current climate with the cost of materials). More information can be shared once the Ministry has approved the plan so an accurate picture of the draw on proceeds of disposition/ surplus can be made.

## **5.0 Adjournment**

There being no further business to discuss, on May 5, 2021, the W.J. Fricker Committee stands adjourned at 3:52 PM.

Minutes: BS/km.