

New West Shore high schools take next step forward

By Goldstream News Gazette

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The road to two new secondary schools on the West Shore forges ahead.

This week, the Sooke School District presents the summary results of earlier public consultations at two open houses.

In late March, three open houses were held at Belmont secondary school for the people to get in their two cents on the new schools.

The project is supported in general by the provincial government but specifics regarding funding have yet to be assured.

The school district held one open house at Belmont on Wednesday. The second is Saturday, June 16, from noon to 3 p.m. The idea is to present back to the public suggestions made during prior consultations.

Generally, people are interested in seeing both new schools have similar comprehensive educational options, to avoid competition between them. This is intended to balance out the plan for the Glen Lake area school to focus on athletics, due to its proximity to Eagle Ridge and City Centre, and the Royal Bay area school to focus on fine arts, due to a proposed arts centre for the area.

"One of the key points for administrators was the importance of not creating a 'have' and a 'have not' school, or a 'jock' and an 'arts' school," states the report.

In terms of design, suggestions came in for maximizing natural light, incorporating common spaces, using First Nations design themes and ensuring the availability of modern technology. Generally, people were enthusiastic for warm, welcoming schools that encourage education and support a connection rather than rivalry between the new schools.

Name suggestions were also collected. The most popular name for the Glen Lake site is Belmont senior secondary and for the Royal Bay site the two most popular name choices were Royal Bay secondary or Royal Bay community school.

A full report will be developed and brought to the school board meeting on June 26. From there, the board will decide on what to put forward to the province. The deadline for getting information to the Ministry of Education is September.

To see the full report, visit sd62.bc.ca/schools/newsecondaryschools.aspx.

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School Report

- Popular names for the West Shore's new high schools include Belmont and Royal Bay secondary.
- The schools should complement and not compete with each other.

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