

Public gives input for new West Shore high schools

By Goldstream News Gazette

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Suggestions, comments and even a few ideas on names came from a series of three public meetings hosted by School District 62 concerning the proposed new high schools.

The meetings were held at Belmont secondary and were open to the general public to come and learn about the project and offer suggestions on how they would like to see the project develop.

In October 2011 the provincial government announced its support of the construction two secondary schools in SD 62. These schools will replace Belmont secondary and alleviate pressures on a growing school district.

Sooke School District board of education chair Wendy Hobbs said the meetings went well and drew 150 people overall. Hobbs said attendees were engaged in the discussions with district administrators.

"I think they went wonderfully," said Hobbs. "We can have budget meetings and we're lucky if we get 10 (people), so it was a great turnout."

Representatives from the district, the City of Langford and West Shore Chamber of Commerce were at the meetings to talk with visitors about the project.

More than 130 people wrote feedback to the district at the meetings. Those suggestions are being looked at now and will be summarized for the public. Comments and suggestions are also being [accepted online](#) and will continue to be until the end of May.

Of all the ideas presented, one of the most talked about was for one of the schools to host a teen drop-in centre. Hobbs said there is no after-hours youth centre operating in the West Shore and those who attended the meetings seemed quite interested in the prospect.

Other ideas presented were for onsite child care, health clinics and even community kitchens in what are called Neighbourhood Learning Centres, which are additions to the schools themselves.

Hobbs said in regard to school names, people seemed keen to have the new school on the Glen Lake elementary site in Langford named Belmont. She said name changes and new names for the Colwood school were suggested but nothing has been decided yet.

Information gathered from the meetings will be presented back to the public and to the board of education in June. The deadline for getting information to the Ministry of Education is in September.

Hobbs met with Education Minister George Abbott in Vancouver recently to discuss progress. The province needs to sign off on a project agreement before any funding is secured.

"I'm very confident in this," said Hobbs. "I truly believe that when we get there in September that it's going to happen."

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