

Public meetings for new high schools start this month

By Goldstream News Gazette

Published: **January 31, 2012 10:00 AM**

Updated: **January 31, 2012 10:4010 AM**

The Sooke School District will move into the community consultation phase of its \$100 million new high schools project in February.

The district has hired Alkins Project Services to facilitate the public process in upcoming weeks and months.

The community will have input on school design features, names and what has "high value for the community," said Jim Cambridge, superintendent for SD 62.

The community will also have input on community space at the school sites, known as neighbourhood learning centres. The West Shore Chamber of Commerce, among others, is advocating a theatre at the Colwood location.

"A big one is the Emily Carr theatre," Cambridge said. "But it could be a lacrosse box, and expanded gym, a day care or a library. It could be anything non-profit."

Any neighbourhood learning space would be leased by the district to non-profit or public sector agency.

Meanwhile, SD 62 officials are working on providing the Ministry of Education enrollment projections for the high schools, which will be used by ministry staff to draw up a more precise budget for the project.

"The ministry has given its approval (for the project) in principle," Cambridge said. "We need to prove enrollment size. The ministry doesn't want to give money for seats not filled."

The ministry awarded SD 62 two new high schools, one in Colwood's Royal Bay and the other at the closed Glen Lake elementary site in Langford, last October. SD 62 is committed to selling the current Belmont site to help pay for the schools.

Cambridge expects the high schools will need capacity for 1,200 students each.

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