

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 28, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Response to Delegations from the Kingsway Business Association and the Edmonton Airport Association

ORIGINATOR: A. McBeath, Department Head, School and District Services
G. Reynolds, Department Head, School and District Services

RESOURCE
STAFF: Phyllis Cardinal, Beatrice Denboer, Gary Holroyd, Roland Labbe,
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RECOMMENDATION

1. That the request by the Kingsway Business Association delegation for the Board to abandon consideration of the former City Centre Airport Terminal Building as a location for Amiskwaciy Academy be denied;
2. That the request by the Edmonton Airport Association delegation for the Board to abandon pursuit of the former City Centre Airport Terminal Building as a location for Amiskwaciy Academy be denied;
3. That the administration continue to demonstrate due diligence by communicating to Trustees the results of each stage of required approvals to locate Amiskwaciy Academy in the former City Centre Airport Terminal Building.

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Background

This report is provided in response to presentations to the Board of Trustees on November 7, 2000 by delegations representing the Kingsway Business Association and the Edmonton Airport Association regarding the district's initiative to locate Amiskwaciy Academy in the former City Centre Airport terminal building. The Kingsway Business Association presented a position that school uses and airport uses are incompatible, and that locating a school adjacent to the City Centre Airport would pose an unacceptable risk to the users of both the airport and the school. They also questioned the choice of the former City Centre Airport Terminal building over the closed H.A. Gray School. The Edmonton Airport Association also presented a position that school and airport land uses are incompatible. They specified

concerns about garbage and bird hazard increases, hazardous materials proximity, and unacceptable noise levels at the school.

Edmonton Public Schools is interested in establishing a permanent location for the Amiskwaciy Academy program. The concept for the program was initiated to improve the achievement and rate of school completion of Aboriginal high school students in Edmonton. Program development and the search for a location have been the focus of the Aboriginal community and the district administration for the past eighteen months. Programming needs were identified in consultation with the Aboriginal community, the Amiskwaciy administration team and other district staff, and space requirements were determined from this review. The program started in a temporary location in September of 2000, and it requires additional capacity to accommodate up to 800 students by September of 2001. The current proposal for locating Amiskwaciy Academy is the former City Centre Airport Terminal building, which was deemed to best meet the objectives and criteria established for the school. The administration is working to investigate the implementation of the design concept at this location, and is involved with obtaining zoning, development permit, and airport Facility Alteration Permit (FAP) approvals from the appropriate authorities.

The design of the Amiskwaciy Academy proposal at the former City Centre Airport Terminal building has been developed by a professional architectural firm on the district's behalf. The unique factors associated with this property have been identified and studied by members of this administration, the architectural firm and their agents. The design reflects mitigating features intended to ensure a quality school environment in light of all issues and concerns raised by the administration, approving authorities and the two delegations. Prior to proceeding with school development at the former City Centre Airport Terminal building, the administration will ensure that the Board of Trustees fully addresses its fiduciary responsibilities, and that the Trustees are satisfied the administration has carried out due diligence in working to locate Amiskwaciy Academy at the City Centre Airport. This due diligence will involve continued consideration of all factors unique to this property with respect to the safety of students, staff and the public at large, recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities of the property.

The Evolution of the Choice for a Permanent Location

A significant factor in selecting a suitable permanent site for Amiskwaciy Academy was to have the program located in a setting other than a traditional school, where there would be an opportunity to create a unique identity for the school. Many Aboriginal students have historically not experienced good achievement and school completion results in traditional school settings. Other objectives of the school are to build strong relationships with the business community to secure student mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities, and to establish a good relationship between the school and post-secondary institutions such as N.A.I.T. The requirements identified for the permanent facility include: a geographically central location which is easily recognized; proximity to N.A.I.T. and businesses for partnership opportunities; good access and parking; barrier-free accessibility, a rectangular and lineal configuration; a size between 80,000 to 90,000 square feet; one or two levels; offer good natural lighting opportunities; and a good quality building where renovation and lease costs would be reasonable.

The search for a suitable location included a review of existing district space, as well as numerous other sites. No district facility was deemed to meet the criteria for the permanent school location, including H. A. Gray School. H. A. Gray School is located in a residential area with limited business partnership opportunities. It has a provincial rated capacity of 690 students in traditional classroom configurations. This configuration and floor plan would not easily lend itself to be renovated to meet the unique needs identified by Amiskwaciy's administration team and the Aboriginal community. H. A. Gray School is comprised of two separate buildings with a connecting hallway on one level only, and is not barrier-free. It is also presently leased by N.A.I.T. until Aug.31, 2001, and they wish to extend the lease by 15 months. This would not permit establishment of a permanent location for Amiskwaciy Academy by September of 2001. The architectural styling of H. A. Gray School is from an era that evokes negative images of the type of schools used by religious institutions when charged with the responsibility to educate Aboriginal people on behalf of the government.

The search for other sites was conducted in association with a commercial real estate consultant. A total of 647 landlords/developers and 200 commercial real estate brokers were approached, and 45 site options were submitted to us. Once a series of site tours was completed, the search was narrowed down to 9 sites which were reviewed by the administration. Rent and remodeling proposals were submitted by 6 landlords representing 7 of the sites. The selection was then reduced to 4 possible sites, and the former City Centre Airport Terminal site best matched the criteria for Amiskwaciy Academy. It is the preferred choice of the Amiskwaciy Academy administration team who represent the Aboriginal community on this issue.

In June, 1996, the Air Terminal Building at City Centre Airport was closed and taken out of service upon Edmonton Regional Airports Authority (ERAA) consolidating airline passenger traffic to Edmonton International Airport. The building was surplus to ERAA requirements and was subsequently put on the market for lease. On March 2, 1998, City Council passed Bylaw 11833 respecting the MA3 (Municipal Airport General Business) District to permit a range of non-aviation land uses at the former Airport Terminal site, including lands located on existing airport tarmac. On June 22, 1999, City Council consented by resolution to the sublease of the former Airport Terminal building to Gibralt Capital Corporation for education/training and other non-aviation uses (Appendix I). Edmonton Public Schools has submitted an Offer to Lease this property for Amiskwaciy Academy subject to receiving a development permit for the proposed public education uses.

The Required Approval Steps

Gibralt Capital Corporation, the district's potential landlords at the former Airport Terminal building, have submitted an application to amend the Land Use Bylaw to include 'public education service' as a permitted use within the MA3 (Municipal Airport General Business) District. This amendment requires approval of City Council before a development permit could be issued to permit school construction. The amendment is scheduled for consideration at a City Council meeting on December 13, 2000. The City Planning and Development Department supports the Land Use Bylaw Amendment. Should the amendment be approved, a development permit would not be issued by the City until an airport Facility Alteration Permit (FAP) is issued by Edmonton Regional Airports Association (Appendix II). The Edmonton Regional Airports Authority (ERAA) is responsible for the safe operation of the City Centre Airport, and is responsible for ensuring

that airport operations regulations established by Transport Canada and NavCanada are respected. ERAA has indicated that preliminary designs for the proposed school and site are compatible with airport operation (Appendix III), and the Facility Alteration Permit review process for Amiskwaciy Academy has been initiated (Appendix IV). The administration will recommend withdrawal from pursuing the former Airport Terminal building location to the Board of Trustees if un-resolvable issues or requirements are identified through the numerous approval processes associated with this property.

Significant Design Features

The design for the Amiskwaciy Academy property specifies a number of features to ensure separation of school patrons from airport operations. The land lease line located on tarmac areas will have a perimeter chain-link fence consistent with fencing that currently surrounds the perimeter of all operational airport land. This perimeter fence will create a minimum separation between the school building and the tarmac of 150 feet, a separation of 247 feet to the nearest non-taxiway tarmac area where plane and airport associated equipment would typically travel, a separation of 287 feet to the nearest aircraft taxiway, and 740 feet to the nearest runway. A second fence, which will be of a solid non-climbable design, is proposed inside the perimeter fence. It would create an emergency and delivery access zone that would not be accessible to the staff, students and visitors to the school. A series of berms will be placed between the school building and the solid fence to provide an attractive view from the school towards the tarmac, and to serve as an acoustical buffer against possible airport noise interference. Angled panels would be placed between the berms to serve as acoustical buffers, to further restrict access to the tarmac from the school, and to display student works and cultural symbols, etc. Small areas for informal activity would remain adjacent to the school building. Access to the tarmac from the school would be virtually impossible.

Any landscaping proposed on the airport side of the property will be of a variety acceptable to the airport authorities, such that it will not serve to attract birds. There will be no outdoor consumption of food allowed by the students, as the School program will maintain and further develop a light lunch service in the interior food service area. Appropriate student conduct on-site and surrounding the school location is a requirement of all Amiskwaciy Academy students, and other outside activities will be restricted as required by the approval authorities. Appropriate garbage containers will be provided to minimize bird attraction, and conduct with respect to garbage in outdoor areas will be strictly enforced.

Safety and Noise

We have been assured that aircraft aviation fuel storage, transportation and transfer occur under strict regulation by trained personnel within the airport lands. Storage for aviation fuel is located in a different part of the airport, and not in proximity to the former Airport Terminal building. Compared with typical vehicular fueling locations, practices and regulations, the safety of aviation fuel does not present unusual concern.

As part of the design exercise, our architects engaged the services of an acoustical engineer to monitor the frequency and levels of sound generated on the exterior and the interior of the former Airport Terminal building. The levels of sound were found to be very acceptable for educational uses inside the building, subject to some additional architectural treatment. Sound levels on the outside of the building can peak to a level that would interfere temporarily with speech. The proposed berming and fencing would improve sound attenuation at peak periods to a level that would be equivalent to the average urban schoolyard or residential backyard.

Information provided by the Control Tower Administrator Aircraft regarding 1999 aircraft movements at the City Centre Airport indicated that there were no more than 5.4 movements per hour between the hours of 9 AM and 4 PM weekdays (Appendix V). The achievable noise levels for exterior areas, combined with the limited amount of time that students, staff and visitors would spend in the outdoor areas, would not put users at risk of injury resulting from noise levels.

Recreation Facilities

Recreational and physical activity at Amiskwaciy Academy will occur within indoor areas on a limited basis. Physical education curriculum associated with typical gymnasiums and outdoor sportsfields will occur off-site. Arrangements have been made to utilize sport facilities at N.A.I.T. and numerous sportsfields are available at school and park sites in close proximity to the former Airport Terminal building, including Airway Park. The administration will continue to explore indoor physical education space options in closer proximity to this location.

Past Use and Risk

In the past, the former Airport Terminal Building served as a fully functional public structure that handled in excess of one million passengers annually, with numerous additional visitors associated with the passengers. Its location within the City Centre Airport was chosen in terms of its safe location in proximity to an active airport, and we are not aware of any safety concerns related to this property or other airport terminal buildings. N.A.I.T. as an educational facility, has co-existed in equal proximity to City Centre Airport for nearly 40 years, and we are not aware of any safety issues related to this land use. The Emergency Response Department has no concerns regarding the location of Amiskwaciy Academy in the former Airport Terminal Building (Appendix VI). Our insurers have indicated that they are prepared to insure the property as a school without additional premiums that normally accompany unusual safety and liability issues (Appendix VII). Though our design contemplates complete separation between school users and the tarmac areas, we are not aware of any safety issues that have occurred where the public has directly accessed the tarmac to board planes.

It is the administration's belief that due diligence has been and will continue to be carried out in pursuing the establishment of Amiskwaciy Academy at the former City Centre Airport Terminal building. We believe that this location can provide an excellent home for the exciting initiative envisioned for the Aboriginal community in Edmonton, equal to any other school facility in terms of a safe and secure quality teaching environment. We believe the School can co-exist and flourish in this location given that required approvals are obtained.

AMcB/rl

- Appendix I - Letter From the City to ERAA Approving Lease to Landlord
- Appendix II - ERAA Facility Alteration Permit (FAP) Process Outline
- Appendix III - ERAA Preliminary School Design Concept Review
- Appendix IV - Facility Alteration Permit Process Initiation Letter
- Appendix V - City Centre Airport Use Statistics in 1999
- Appendix VI - Emergency Response Department Position Regarding the Proposed School
- Appendix VII - Insurance Brokers' Position Regarding the Proposed Location