

north shore news

North Vancouver school board to allow video

Recording costs prohibitive so it's DIY, trustees say

Jane Seyd / North Shore News

May 29, 2015 12:00 AM



File photo North Shore News

Lights, camera, action — sort of.

Members of the public who wish to videotape public meetings of the North Vancouver board of education will now be allowed to do so, provided they agree to certain restrictions. But school trustees stopped short of having the school district videotape its own meetings, saying the projected price of \$26,000 was too expensive.

School trustees adopted the new videotaping rules this week, formalizing an agreement that's been in place since December, after parent Shane Nelson challenged the board's longstanding policy of not allowing video recordings of meetings.

Under the new rules, anyone can video record meetings, as long as the chairperson is informed in advance, and there is no recording made of children or members of the public gallery. Anyone present at a meeting can also ask not to be recorded.

The issue of videotaping public board meetings first came up last fall, after Nelson was told twice to turn off his camera or be kicked out of meetings. Nelson was told once he couldn't film because the school district had no policy about it, and it might contravene privacy rules.

But Nelson argued those weren't good enough reasons to ban his camera at a public meeting. He was subsequently allowed to film while the board studied the issue.

A committee that examined the issue noted a video record promotes transparency of school board decisions and provides a more complete record of discussion than meeting minutes. Potential concerns included putting a "chill" on

people's willingness to take part in meetings, worries that "playing to the camera" could change discussions among trustees and the potential for misuse of video clips.

Trustees who spoke Tuesday supported the filming of meetings. Ideally, they said they'd like to see the school district take on that task — as is the case for North Shore municipal councils, which post video clips online.

"I hope in the future we can come up with a way of officially recording for the public," said trustee Christine Sacre.

Technology is changing so fast, "we have to be open to it," she said.

But trustees said they couldn't justify spending the estimated \$26,000 it would cost to buy equipment, archive footage and pay labour costs of reviewing and posting the videos.

Trustee Jessica Stanley said she hoped a more cost-effective solution could be found by the time the board reviews the policy in a year.

Nelson called the board's decision "cautious but fairly reasonable."

Nelson said he still questions why someone at a public meeting should be allowed to say they don't want to be recorded, but added he'd abide by the policy.

Nelson added he'd prefer the school district did its own recording. "I missed my kid's choir performance (Tuesday)," he said. "I would like to not have to go to every meeting."

Nelson acknowledged none of the school board videos he's posted online have gone viral yet, although he added, "some of the videos get beyond 10 viewers."

© 2015 North Shore News