

**Central Mountain Accommodation Review Committee
Public Consultation Meeting # 1
Tuesday, October 08, 2013
6:00 p.m.**

**Cardinal Heights Elementary School
70 Bobolink Road, Hamilton, ON**

Minutes

ATTENDANCE:

Committee Members

Chair - Michael Prendergast

Voting Members - Diana Asrani, Amber Bourque, Candice Campbell, Marney Campbell, Philip Erwood, Leanne Friesen, Adam Hinks, Marj Howden, Barbara Jalsevac, Jennifer Lockhart, Kathy Long, Denise McCafferty, Jamie McLean, Sharon Miller, Patricia Mousseau, Robert Nixon, Candice Romaker, Margaret Toth, Lourie Vanderzyden, Laurie Walowina

Non-Voting Members - Linda Astle, Julie Beattie, Maria Carbone, Biljana Arsovic Filice, Colin Hazell, Lillian Orban, Jennifer Robertson-Heath, Nanci-Jane Simpson, Doug Trimble

Regrets

Voting Members - Jenn Clarke, Janeen Schaeffer

Non-Voting Members - Nil

Resource Staff

Dan Del Bianco, Ian Hopkins, Jackie Penman, Laura Romano, Linda Sheppard, Mark Taylor, Ellen Warling

Recording Secretary

Kathy Forde

Public - 137 public attendees present - Cardinal Heights (1), Eastmount Park (7), Franklin Road (1), G.L. Armstrong (6), Linden Park (18), Pauline Johnson (1), Queensdale (103), Ridgemount (0)
Include school affiliation

1. Welcome and Introductions

Michael Prendergast welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided introductions. The purpose of public consultation is to gather input, concerns and relevant information to move forward on the work ahead. The Central Mountain ARC includes eight elementary schools (Cardinal Heights, Eastmount Park, Franklin Road, G.L. Armstrong, Linden Park, Pauline Johnson, Queensdale and Ridgemount). Three

representatives from each school have volunteered their time to form the Working Group Committee that will develop an alternate option. Only one option has been generated as a starting point as required under Ministry guidelines. All information gathered tonight will be provided to the Working Group for consideration. No decisions will be made tonight. Decisions through the Board of Trustees will be made in the spring of 2014. Appreciation was expressed to everyone for attending the meeting.

2. What is an Accommodation Review Committee?

Michael Prendergast provided an overview. Central Mountain is one of four ARCs currently underway. Voting members of the Working Group include School Council/Home & School, parent, and staff representatives. Non-voting members include Trustee Lillian Orban and principals from the eight schools involved. Committee members participate in an advisory role to study, develop and prepare an alternative recommendation. All information is public.

3. Where are we in the Accommodation Review Process?

Ian Hopkins outlined the process. Work began in June to collect data and assemble the committee. The goal is to balance enrolment, address major capital issues, ensure long term sustainability and provide equity of access to programs for all students. Committee members will review data and consider input to develop options over the next few months. A final report will be submitted to the Board in February 2014. At that time, a 60-day review period will be provided for public comment before the report is presented to the Trustees for a decision, which is expected by May 2014.

4. Why HWDSB are Conducting Accommodation Reviews

Ian Hopkins advised that with declining enrolments throughout the province and within HWDSB, many schools are underutilized. With aging schools and smaller sized buildings, we must address the current situation and spread funding out across the Board in an effective manner. In 2002, the number of students at HWDSB was just over 40,000 and now we are just under 35,000. The decline of students has created many vacant spaces and many challenges. Provincial funding is based on enrolment.

5. How does the ARC Process Work?

Ian Hopkins reviewed the Terms of Reference. Reference criteria were also outlined to describe the key factors in determining what is important as options are developed. Four public meetings are scheduled to gather input and share ideas. Committee members will meet at Working Group meetings to create various options that will be presented to the Board for review and to Trustees for a final decision.

6. Why an Accommodation Review for Central Mountain?

Ellen Warling provided an overview. The Long Term Facilities Master Plan (LTFMP) requires the review of JK-8 schools across the Board. As such, a series of 15 ARCs have been spaced geographically across HWDSB in an attempt to close the gap of approximately 5,500 vacant elementary spaces. Norwood Park however, as a single track French Immersion School is not included. Over the last several years, additional French Immersion schools have been created across the Board so as this initiative was phased in enrolment at Norwood Park has been reduced allowing the removal of portables. Enrolment at Norwood

Park will continue to decline. Guiding principles for the review include the consolidation of smaller schools. Ideally, the JK-8 model would accommodate 500-600 students.

7. Current Situation and Staff Option

Ellen Warling provided an overview of the current boundaries and data for each of eight schools (year of construction, capacity, current and projected enrolment, Facility Condition Index). Current enrolment ranges from 250 to 633 students providing an average school utilization rate of 72 percent, which means many schools are underutilized. School maintenance costs are high.

The staff option is intended as a starting point only to initiate the process and is not a final option. Community input will be required for the committee to develop an alternate recommendation that is submitted for consideration. It is recommended that Cardinal Heights, Franklin Road, G.L. Armstrong, Pauline Johnson and Ridgemount remain, and that a new elementary school be built, which means a combination of new construction, closures, and renovations/additions. Closures would include Eastmount Park, Linden Park and Queensdale in June 2014. An 8-room addition would be built on Ridgemount ready for 2016. Pauline Johnson would be a JK-3 school; Cardinal Heights would become a 4-8 school; and, if funding is secured for construction of a new 550 student JK-8 school on the existing site both schools would close once the new school is constructed. Ideally, school consolidation into a JK-8 model is the approach. By decreasing the number of facilities, maintenance dollars could be used to enrich learning and teaching environments. Transportation would be provided as needed in keeping with policy.

8. Small Group Discussions

Michael Prendergast invited public attendees to participate in focus groups to share ideas and concerns. Public consultation provides an opportunity to share best thinking around the possibilities of what might work. Facilitators reported on the top three priorities raised in group discussion. Feedback is attached and will also be provided at the next Working Group meeting for review. Feedback will be posted on the website at <http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/elementaryarc/files/2013/08/Community-Feedback-from-Public-Meeting-1-CentralMountain.pdf>

An opportunity for questions and answers was also provided.

Q1. Displeasure was expressed on the secondary ARC process that occurred for the central mountain area. It was then noted that for the elementary ARC process there should be assurances through Trustee Orban to guarantee credibility of the data and to ensure no hidden agendas exist.

A1. Comment noted. Updated information can go to the Working Group as needed.

Q2. Where did the 2002 FCI data come from?

A2. Dan Del Bianco explained the FCI numbers noting that the Ministry originally did their assessment 10 years ago. The 10-year FCI data presented this evening runs from 2013 to 2022. The original assessment conducted by the Ministry was done so by engineers, in consultation with Board staff. Figures are updated

on a regular basis as work is completed. While a building may look in good condition from the outside, the components that cost the most are often not visible, such as heating systems and roofing. Professionals and engineers are involved in various aspects of work.

Q3. Renovations at Queensdale in terms of value, condition and cost were raised. If Queensdale is in good condition, it is not understood why students would be moved to G.L. Armstrong where renovations would be needed. Any schools taking on more students will need to be in good shape. Data appears to be misleading, especially around the number 10-year FCI number reported for Queensdale. A breakdown of data on why Queensdale was rated only as fair was requested.

A3. Basically, the Ministry outlines the criteria (checklist) then staff at the Board builds datasets to determine how to move forward. More information will be provided on how criteria are developed, data is gathered and conclusions are generated. Numbers on renovations related to Queensdale will be verified.

Q4. The accuracy of numbers and data related to Queensdale renovations remained in question. It was also noted that some numbers related to the secondary ARC for Sherwood were wrong.

A4. In response, it was noted that the Committee could ask for an independent review if deemed necessary.

Comments

- Meetings should have occurred over the last two years to ensure a good plan was in place.
- The importance of green space must be considered.
- We are passionate about our schools and students and we want direct answers, however we are not getting the answers we want and do not have a lot of faith in our trustees.

9. Next Steps

- Input gathered will be provided to the Committee for review at the next Working Group meeting
- Possibilities for a larger venue will be explored for the next public consultation session
- **Next Working Group Meeting - October 15, 2013 at Pauline Johnson**
- **Next Public Consultation - November 05, 2013 at G.L. Armstrong**

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Handouts

- Agenda
- Presentation
- Administration Staff Accommodation Option

Facilitator Report Back - Central Mountain Public Meeting #1 - October 08, 2013

Facilitators reported on the top three priorities raised in group discussion as noted below. Information will be provided to Committee Members for information and consideration as an alternate recommendation is developed.

Community

- understanding the importance of a school community to the students and parents - many parents were raised in this area and have children attending the same schools - must not lose sense of historical significance
- closures will create a sense of loss of community, friendships, partnerships - community values must be recognized
- Linden Park provides a community hub - closure would create a concern for the senior centre

Costs

- Is it cost effective to amalgamate if busing costs increase and renovation costs are incurred
- What is the annual savings overtime by following the staff option

Data

- Data - discomfort with demographic data - need to ensure data is not misleading - any consideration of statistics or plans beyond 2022
- Current programming and enrolment projections do not reflect opening of full day kindergarten
- Need current data on facility conditions - transparency is a concern
- Research indicates that smaller schools good too, which are preferred

Daycare

- Will our own facilities be available for students who require daycare

Enrolment

- Has a survey been considered to determine how many families will stay with HWDSB
- Students should perhaps be shifted from schools with portables to increase enrolment in schools with high vacancies
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Funding

- Where is the funding coming from
- How do we know funding received will be directed to items identified

Reference Criteria

- Proposed option does not appear to consider all reference criteria equally
- How was enrolment and school utilization criteria rated

- Does not account for special needs, special programs, safety aspect to be considered - students need safe places and opportunities to be involved in organized activities
- Grading of schools seems to be inaccurate in terms of air conditioning and accessibility
- Queensdale was not fairly assessed - moving to another school that has similar rating seems illogical
- A new school for north central mountain should be considered

School Closures

- School closures may create a decline in real estate values
- When schools close, if these properties turn into housing developments the population may increase enrolment numbers
- Long term effects on green space and on the environment should be considered
- School closures may create enrolment loss - some families may refuse to change schools

Student Impact

- The social and emotional needs of our children must be considered - students will feel different levels of loss both socially and emotionally
- Won't move kids from one straw house to another - what makes it better learning environment
- Is closing schools/putting more students into one school really better - it needs to be what is best for the students - human impact on students does not compare with any cost savings
- Increased walking distances will create a concern for student safety - greater walking distances means more students will have to cross major traffic arteries - reducing the number of students who can walk to school is in contrast with healthy living
- There appears to be disrespect for transition - has a transition plan for students been considered - what will this look like
- Will there be building capacity for students during construction
- During renovations asbestos may be a concern if students are in the school
- For those schools that remain open, accessibility will need to be considered

Timelines

- Process appears to be too fast - timelines very tight considering extent of work to be completed
- Reality must be considered
- Timelines appear to be unrealistic

Transportation

- Moving students to a central school will create busing concerns
- Fewer buses creates a healthier community

Vacancies

- Why can we not shift boundaries to bring in new students to fill our vacancies