

**Central Mountain Accommodation Review Committee
Public Consultation Meeting # 3
Tuesday, December 10, 2013
6:00 p.m.**

**Hill Park Secondary School
465 East 16th Street, Hamilton, ON**

Minutes

ATTENDANCE:

Committee Members

Chair - Michael Prendergast

Voting Members - Diana Asrani, Amber Bourque, Candice Campbell, Marney Campbell, Leanne Friesen, Adam Hinks, Marj Howden, Barbara Jalsevac, Jennifer Lockhart, Kathy Long, Denise McCafferty, Jamie McLean, Sharon Miller, Patricia Mousseau, Robert Nixon, Candice Romaker, Janeen Schaeffer, 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, Dianna Gamble, Philip Erwood

Non-Voting Members - Nil

Resource Staff

Ian Hopkins, Jackie Penman, Ellen Warling, Facilitators

Recording Secretary

Kathy Forde

Public - 86 public attendees present - Cardinal Heights (2); Eastmount (5); Franklin Road (4); George L. Armstrong (3); Linden Park (19); Pauline Johnson (1); Queensdale (45); Ridgemount (1); Hill Park (2); No School Affiliation Identified (3); Trustee (1)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Michael Prendergast welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologized for the late start. Due to technical difficulties material would be presented verbally. Committee members Marney Campbell, Leanne Friesen, Adam Hinks, Marj Howden, Jamie McLean, Patricia Mousseau and Laurie Walowina would assist in conducting the meeting.

2. Overview of Accommodation Review Process

Twenty-three committee members have been working since October through volunteer efforts to develop options. Meeting norms were reviewed. Respectful conversation is essential for ensuring various perspectives are shared. It has not been an easy task. It will be important for the public to understand the process and for work to be validated. The format for the meeting was outlined.

3. Work Completed by Accommodation Review Committee

The committee is mandated to work in an advisory capacity. Membership includes voting members who represent the schools involved and non-voting members (trustee, principals and resource staff). Challenges faced by the Board include declining enrolment, aging schools and insufficient funding. The task is to consider the staff option and develop new options based on public feedback and key reference criteria (facility utilization, permanent and non-permanent accommodation, program offerings, quality teaching and learning environments, transportation, partnerships, equity). Six working group meetings and two public meetings have taken place. The public is welcomed to attend working group meetings for observation and public meetings to provide input. Public input gathered at the first two public meetings and through correspondence has been examined and considered in terms of student, parent and community importance. Enrolment for all eight schools involved currently totals 71% of facility capacities, which is projected to decline to 70% by 2017 and to 68% by 2022. Capacity far exceeds enrolment. Work has evolved and from the 20 options initially developed three have been selected by the committee for presentation.

4. Review Accommodation Options - #6, #7 and #11

4.1 Accommodation Options Information Session

The three options presented are preliminary at this point and are not final. Comments and options are still being accepted.

Option 6

- Close Queensdale 2015 - students attend George L. Armstrong
- Close Eastmount Park 2015 - students north of Queensdale attend George L. Armstrong and students south of Queensdale attend Franklin Road
- Close Linden Park 2015 - students east of Upper Wellington attend Pauline Johnson and students west of Upper Wellington attend Ridgemount
- Pauline Johnson and Ridgemount remain K-5 schools
- Cardinal Heights remains a middle school (6-8) for Pauline Johnson and Ridgemount

Overall capacity with the changes suggested goes from 71% in 2012 to 92% in 2015 to 91% in 2017 to 89% in 2022.

Option 7

- Close Eastmount Park 2015 - students attend George L. Armstrong

- **Close Linden Park 2015 - students east of Upper Wellington attend Franklin Road and students west of Upper Wellington attend Queensdale**
- **Queensdale becomes a JK-8 facility**
- **Pauline Johnson and Ridgemount both remain K-5 schools**
- **Cardinal Heights remains a middle school (6-8) for Pauline Johnson and Ridgemount**

Overall capacity with the changes suggested goes from 71% in 2012 to 87% in 2015 to 87% in 2017 to 85% in 2022.

Option 11

- **Close Queensdale, Eastmount Park and George L. Armstrong - build one new K-8 facility on George L. Armstrong site**
- **Close Linden Park - students east of Upper Wellington attend Franklin Road and students west of Upper Wellington attend Ridgemount**
- **Ridgemount becomes a K-8 facility**
- **Close one of Pauline Johnson or Cardinal Heights and retrofit building to become a JK-8 school**

Overall capacity with the changes suggested goes from 71% in 2012 to 98% in 2015 to 96% in 2017 to 93% in 2022.

An opportunity followed for the public to circulate viewing stations and offer feedback. Handouts, maps and details for each of the three options were provided. Facilitators were available to record comments and post-it notes provided for anyone who wanted to write down thoughts or pros and cons.

5. Accommodation Options - Discussion

A question and answer session followed. A speakers list was used to ensure all voices were heard.

Questions and Answers

Data

Q. Where did you get the numbers and statistics? Who will buy houses if there are no schools around? When we have an overabundance of kids where will they go to school?

A. Enrolment projections are based on historic trends and yields.

Q. Have you considered the turnover of the aging population? New families are moving into the neighbourhoods when houses are sold. Where will the kids go to school?

A. An old community does not turn over overnight. We look at historic enrolment. We also use information from Census Canada. Growth is cyclical.

Q. As a financial advisor I find it hard with this house of cards. I cannot talk to investors about the future. The data speaks to historical trends from Statistics Canada. There are trends and geopolitical things that happen but in this process nobody is looking at the geopolitical landscape of the central mountain. Public transportation on the mountain will soon be booming - there is a buzz. The downtown area is also buzzing and it will impact the mountain. The Board needs to consider the Hamilton landscape.

A. Comment noted.

Reference Criteria

Q. Options should reflect quality of education and community partnership as reference criteria.

A. Good point - noted.

Q. We are here because we have kids but the decision is about the fundamental makeup of the entire Hamilton mountain area. We moved to our community so that we could walk to school, to work, to our babysitters and to stores. Many other parents feel the same way about having a walkable community. At the East Hamilton ARC, key criteria include transportation and walkability. I have talked to various board staff and trustees but get no response. Comments requested from Trustee Orban.

A. It is a tough situation. Having just gone through the secondary ARC, the central mountain has been devastated. Some students will be switching schools - some will go to the new south high school and some will have long bus rides. Money is needed for renovations. Secondary communities have been lost. Hopefully the elementary ARC will have schools that are walkable. (Lillian Orban)

Students

Q. It will break my heart to lose Linden Park. My daughter with special needs has a feeding tube and it is important to be near the school - we are only two minutes away. She loves Linden Park and her teachers. My child will not suffer because of changes to schools. She will go to a Catholic school if necessary.

A. Any special needs students currently receiving educational assistance or with severe medical needs will continue to get the support needed. Support would travel with the child to a new school.

Q. An article in the Hamilton Spectator on December 07 talked about the population in the city and premature death due to respiratory problems. With increased bussing comes more pollution. Has anyone considered the impact of the environment on our children's health?

A. No, we have not discussed this specifically but will certainly take this into advisement for discussion.

Q. If Linden Park students move to two different locations, what happens when kids do not want to leave their friends? Will they have options? It does not seem fair to Linden Park students. Even if kids apply for out-of-catchment it is not realistic.

A. With ARCs whenever possible we try to provide options to keep communities together.

Q. Chicago is going through a similar process. The impact of school closures on low income communities has been raised as a human rights and freedom issue. Splitting up Linden Park and forcing kids to take on other services infringes upon the human rights of children. A case can be made in terms of social services. How is this being taken seriously when it has not yet been identified as a priority?

A. Comments noted. No decisions have been made in terms of splitting communities. Voice is being heard. Splitting communities is not a preference. Equal access is important.

Option 6

Q. Option 6 appears to be the staff option. Why is the committee not coming up with its own option?

A. It is similar. Only the boundaries and timeline are different. The committee narrowed down options from all submissions to what was considered feasible.

Q. Why do Ridgemount and Pauline Johnson stay open yet other schools close?

A. These are options only based on enrolment projections. When the breakdown of capacity is reviewed, some percentages are high and some are low. You can see how numbers work and some do not work.

Option 7

Q. It sounds like a smorgasbord of crazy ideas. It is not a good option. It is all over the place and it is complicated.

A. After reviewing 20 various options, the suggested options are based on what is best for the kids. We hear the frustration. We need feedback and open discussion. Committee members are also parents. It is not an easy process.

Q. If you sifted through 20 options, how did you base your criteria and how did you vote to select the three options presented? What concrete facts or costs moved you towards these three options?

A. Options were narrowed down based on reference criteria, guiding principles and public input. We also wanted to meet some of the Board criteria. Costing information is forthcoming.

Q. Will all 20 options be reviewed again once the Board provides extra information?

A. It is a process. We are shooting for optimal conditions i.e. JK-8 schools above 90% capacity on approximately six acres of land.

Q. Are you looking at properties to raise money? How are the properties assessed? George L. Armstrong is valued at just under \$6M.

A. The committee is only to consider best options without dollars involved. Options with a new build and without are being considered.

Option 11

Q. If money is an issue, why build new in a location where a facility can be renovated at a lesser cost? We are close to the escarpment so a new build near the brow and loss of greenspace is a concern.

A. Comments noted.

Q. The price tag for total renovations with the addition of FDK, classrooms and gyms would approach roughly \$19M. Will trustees even consider these costs?

A. We are not sure if the trustees will consider this. Costing details must still be considered along with savings from closures and consolidations.

Q. What is the cost on a new build and how long to rebuild a new school?

A. A new build is approximately \$11M and takes about 18-24 months to build.

Q. Where will the students go to school during a rebuild?

A. This is still to be determined.

Q. Why not keep all schools open?

A. Trustees will close schools. It is not practical to keep all schools open. We would prefer to provide options for trustee consideration.

Options - General

Q. What did not work for the ARC options?

A. We had 20 options and voted collectively. Some details within the options eliminated did not make sense. It is important to remember options and feedback were given to us from the public. It is a process and all public input will all be considered as the committee formulates its options. Costing and transportation will now be added for review. Suggestions and options can still be submitted for committee review. We are still amalgamating ideas to put final options together. Committee members are available tonight to review the options developed if needed. Minutes are posted and reflect some of the pros and cons for the various options.

Q. We need a better understanding of the criteria and process used to eliminate options. As a teacher, I would have created a rubric and scored results. Was a scientific method used to eliminate possible viable options?

A. Three of the 20 options suggested by the community were selected with slight variations to provide the best options moving forward. After careful review, examination and discussion, options were narrowed down and eliminated through committee voting. Gaps and questions remain. It is a work in progress. Further public feedback is needed to refine the options being developed. As a teacher, you provide an opportunity to bump up the work and correct items of concern. As a committee, we hope to fine tune details and improve the options that will go forward. There is also another window for public input before final decisions are made by trustees.

Q. A teacher representative was unable to make it to the last meeting so voting was not fair and lack of school voice may have impacted the options selected.

A. Voting works under quorum, which is a process where a certain percentage of voting members must be present to hold a vote. The committee is a tremendous and dedicated group.

Q. It seems the 20 options were not fully explored. We are not hearing what the committee liked about various options versus other options.

A. Please examine the options from home online and submit your preferences and reasons.

Q. The options do not include use of the Hill Park recreation centre, pool and tennis courts. These need to be kept in mind.

A. Noted.

Q. It seems that a lot of questions cannot be answered and that committee members do not have all the facts and details. With limited time left, how can you select an option? The timeline is too tight. Are you considering adding a fifth public meeting to get further feedback? I am worried there will not be sufficient time or sufficient feedback.

A. We have already flipped meetings to accommodate the need for discussion and feedback. In January, we will discuss this further.

Q. We need to know if Hill Park is available as an option. If not, we need to know so that we do not hang on to the idea.

A. Hill Park is not currently viable as an elementary school. The school is not designed for elementary students - it would require extensive renovations. Capacity is approximately 1200 students and ideally we are looking at a school size of roughly 500. Although the Board has not yet started phase one of the property disposition protocol and no decision has been made regarding the property at this point, transition has started for closure. Technically, the property is available but funds have been committed. Trustees would need to vote to reverse the decision and keep Hill Park open as an option.

Comments

- Trustees have almost always gone with their option so why bother with the process.
- Students will be bused from south of the LINC. Any schools at capacity due to busing should be carefully considered.
- Closure of Eastmount and Linden Park seems unfair.
- Thanks were expressed to committee members for leading the session and for working within a precarious situation.

6. Next Steps

Work continues on developing the final option(s).

- **Next Working Group Meeting # 7 - January 14, 2014 at Linden Park**
- **Next Public Meeting # 4 - January 21, 2014 at Hill Park**

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m. Committee members remained after the meeting to answer any further questions.

Handouts

- Agenda
- Presentation