

**Central Mountain Accommodation Review Committee
Public Consultation Meeting # 4
Tuesday, February 04, 2014
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, Jenn Clarke, Leanne Friesen, Dianna Gamble, Adam Hinks, Marj Howden, Barbara Jalsevac, Jennifer Lockhart, Kathy Long, Denise McCafferty, Jamie McLean, Sharon Miller, Patricia Mousseau, Robert Nixon, Candice Romaker, Janeen Schaeffer, Lourie Vanderzyden, Laurie Walowina

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

Regrets

Voting Members - Philip Erwood, Margaret Toth

Non-Voting Members - Biljana Arsovic Filice, Linda Astle,

Resource Staff

Ian Hopkins, Jackie Penman, Ellen Warling

Recording Secretary

Kathy Forde

Public - 84 public attendees present - Cardinal Heights (3); Eastmount (2); Franklin Road (3); GL Armstrong (8); Linden Park (20); Pauline Johnson (1); Queensdale (46) Ridgemount (1)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Michael Prendergast welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Presentation

2.1 Overview of Accommodation Review Process

Meeting norms, mandate, membership, reference criteria, meeting formats and timeline were reviewed. Since October 2013, there have been nine working group meetings and three public meetings. Two more working group meetings follow to reflect on further public feedback, determine the options that will move forward and finalize the report. Both the committee report and staff report will be submitted to the Director then presented to the Board of Trustees. Another opportunity will be provided for final public comments through delegations during the period of trustee review. Procedures and dates for delegations will be posted.

2.2 Work Completed by Accommodation Review Committee

Overall, the committee has reviewed 35 options and has toured all schools involved. Additional meetings have been added to ensure public input and feedback has been thoroughly considered. The committee is currently looking at four options but the end goal is to narrow the list down to two options for trustee consideration. The ARC report will then be finalized and will include an executive summary, the recommended options and overviews of the process, purpose, resources, communications strategy and gathering of community input.

2.3 Review Accommodation Options

With declining enrolment, there are approximately 1000 empty pupil seats. The Ministry funds schools through the number of students but with excess capacity funding is insufficient for maintaining buildings and providing quality learning and teaching environments. The Board also receives approximately \$8M annually for facilities renewal but again it is not sufficient to do all the work and maintenance required so has become a challenge.

Options were briefly reviewed. Many include a consolidation of details from various options. Fallback positions have been included within each of the four options should Ministry funding not be available. Public attendees were invited to the cafeteria to view the options and provide feedback to the facilitators. Further details were provided in a handout and are also available on the Board's website at www.hwdsb.on.ca.

Option 22

- **Close GL Armstrong in 2015. Students attend either Eastmount Park or Queensdale for JK-6**
- **Franklin Road remains K-8 with current boundaries**
- **Ridgemount and Pauline Johnson are closed in 2015. Students north of the Linc attend Cardinal Heights for JK-5**
- **Linden Park is renovated to be a JK-8 school for 2015 and receives Eastmount Park and Queensdale students for 7 & 8. Cardinal Heights 6, 7 & 8s attend Linden Park**
- **New 425 pupil place JK-8 School proposed south of the Linc for 2015**

Option 32

- **Close GL Armstrong 2015. Students attend either Queensdale or Eastmount Park for JK-6**
Eastmount Park grade 7 & 8s attend Franklin Road and Queensdale 7 & 8s attend Linden Park

- Linden Park becomes JK-8 facility
- Franklin Road remains a JK-8 with additional grade 7 & 8s from Eastmount Park
- Cardinal Heights become 4-8 and Pauline Johnson JK-3 in 2014. Build new school on site or consider new site south of Linc for 2017
- Close Ridgemount in 2015. Students from north of Linc attend Linden Park and students south of Linc attend New JK-8 on Cardinal Heights site or south of Linc

Option 34

- Close Eastmount Park and Queensdale in 2015. All students attend GL Armstrong for JK-8
- Close Linden Park in 2015. Students east of Upper Wellington attend Franklin Road for JK-8 and students west of Upper Wellington attend Ridgemount for JK-8. Ridgemount would need renovations/additions to retrofit into a JK-8 facility
- Pauline Johnson become JK-3 and Cardinal Heights becomes 4-8 - Campus school

Option 35

- Close Eastmount Park in 2015. All students attend GL Armstrong for JK-8
- Close Linden Park 2015. Students east of Upper Wellington attend Franklin Road for JK-8. Students west of Upper Wellington attend Queensdale JK-6 and GL Armstrong for 7 & 8
- Queensdale remains a JK-6 facility and continues to attend GL Armstrong for 7 & 8
- Pauline Johnson and Ridgemount remain JK-5 schools and graduates attend Cardinal Heights for grades 6, 7 & 8

2.4 Next Steps - Public Delegation

By February 20th, the final ARC Report will be submitted to the Director. The committee will then present its recommendation to the Board of Trustees. The Staff Option is also being finalized and it too will be presented to Trustees. An opportunity for final comments is available through public delegations during the period of trustee review in April/May. Dates and procedures will be provided through communications with the schools and media.

3. Facilitated Group Discussion

Facilitators were stationed among eight tables to gather input on the four options presented and staff was available to respond to any enquiries during group discussions. Attendees were encouraged to share comments and rationale for specific preferences. Feedback would be consolidated and reviewed at the working group meeting that followed.

4. Questions and Answers on Accommodation Options

An open floor was provided for a question and answer session using a speakers list. Michael Prendergast noted that discussions are being transcribed in response to a public request.

Questions and Answers

Accessibility

Q. Options 22, 32 and 35 all keep fully accessible schools open but Option 34 does not. How will you respond to the Ontario Accessibility Act?

A. The Board would look at the renovations required for the schools that remain and accessibility would remain a key item.

Q. Regarding accessibility issues, generally children who need a wheelchair are thought of but those who are deaf and hard of hearing must also be considered. These programs need special coverings on walls and floors. Accessibility for children with respiratory issues and asthma should also be considered. New schools are air conditioned but older schools without air systems and schools near busy traffic are a concern.

A. Air quality is a concern. New builds provide an opportunity for state-of-the-art heating and cooling so there are advantages to new builds. These ailments are common and schools need to be cognizant of this. Not sure if there is statistical data on this for the south central mountain area. Any data can be shared with the committee.

ARC Report

Q. Will the report be sent home or posted?

A. Yes, both the committee report and staff report will be posted on the website once finalized. The committee options will also be communicated to parents through correspondence sent home from the schools.

Before and After School Care / Daycare Programs

Q. Before and after programs and daycare programs are a concern. Will you be offering these programs at the new locations and perhaps looking at start and end times to accommodate parents who will now have longer commute times?

A. Yes, if we need to reallocate programs we will look to partner with providers. Any service will want to look at meeting client needs and will adjust accordingly. We do have daycare providers in some of our facilities. Funding from the Ministry would be needed to assist in relocating daycare providers whether within the eight schools or elsewhere in proximity. A needs assessment survey might also be conducted through the providers.

Boundaries

Q. In Options 22 and 32 where a new school south of the Linc is being proposed, has a boundary shift been considered? Ray Lewis and Helen Detwiler are over-capacity so perhaps boundaries could be changed to balance school populations.

A. The committee asked the same thing.

Costs

Q. Should costs not be considered before decisions are made?

A. Costs have been estimated.

Enrolment Projections

Q. I am excited about a few options. The committee has done a “180” since we started. There are a few options that benefit the mountain area. It is noted that enrolment projections are not an exact science. All statistical calculations include assumptions so a number like 89% has a variation - you need to look beyond that one number.

A. Comments noted.

Q. From a Board standpoint, when given numbers on trends for areas that are developing, would the 24 acres just sold to a developer in an accommodation review area not change things? We have basically traded school land (the Jerome site) for housing development. That property was not sold before the ARC process.

A. Enrolment projections address and include yields from new development south of the Linc. The full 26 acres cannot be developed. We look at the number of households and target communities so we are aware of the level of development - this allows us to forecast projections including intensification while looking at broad parameters. The municipality has a target set and each community will have different levels of intensity. Something can be zoned for a high-rise or low-rise but we have to assume there will be some change to land use over time. We look at demographics based on municipal numbers but zoning and bylaws do changes. That parcel of land includes about eight to nine acres of wetland that cannot be developed. It is not an exact science.

Funding

Q. We are putting in more tax money but there are fewer kids so where is the money actually going?

A. In the past, taxes were collected through a mill rate then the Board would decide how to spend that money but that has changed. Since amalgamation, funding is controlled through the provincial government. We are funded based on an industrial model. Funding from the government is now allocated and you cannot switch money around between envelopes.

Options

Q. Option 32 is good as it consolidates three buildings with minimal community impact because the three buildings are close together. Can we close one of those schools and shift students to another school to increase population where needed. Option 35 does not look good financially so if we close another school it would be more viable.

A. There are many other criteria to consider - not costs only. The working committee has reviewed many pieces of information. The three schools are already at capacity so we do not have the room without portables in this scenario.

Q. We seem to be back to the starting point with Option 34 so I am concerned about putting this forward as schools here are underutilized. The ARC has a mandate but is allowed to make a recommendation such as a boundary review which could assist in bumping up numbers - I am not sure members are aware of this.

Program offerings could also be recommended like a request for dual track French Immersion since we only have a single track - this would be a great opportunity.

A. Comments noted.

School Size

Q. How many schools have an enrolment of 500-600 students? I am concerned that GL Armstrong will have 700 students - that is too big. In a large school it is hard to know everyone especially for the kindergarten students. I was a teacher previously and really liked the smaller schools - it was wonderful to know the kids and the parents.

A. There are many schools that size, such as Ancaster Meadow, Helen Detwiler, Ray Lewis, Winona, etc.

Staff Option

Q. When will the staff option become available?

A. Once the Committee Option is submitted to the Director, staff has a minimum of 30 days to review the Staff Option and incorporate any modifications based on the public feedback that has been heard throughout the review process before submitting its final recommendation.

Student Impact

Q. My children go to Linden Park. If you close the school it will affect everyone. The Board needs to wake up. Parents will have one remaining option and could send their children to a closer Catholic school. My daughter has a feeding tube and needs special care - I need to be two minutes away. This is serious - she was stuck in the hospital for three months. What is going to happen in regards to my daughter's needs? There are other kids with special needs too. What are you going to do for the children and parents? There is also a beautiful daycare facility open from 7 am to 6 pm that many parents rely on - it also offers March Break and summer camps. Keeping the school open is very important. It means a lot to many of us to keep Linden Park open.

A. Comments noted.

Q. As a past parent from Queensdale, my son who is deaf went to school there where a program that provides support for hearing impaired students is offered. If Queensdale was no longer to exist would the Board be ready to provide money and renovations for this special program elsewhere? The program has been open since the 1960's.

A. As part of the Program Strategy, if a school in an ARC process has a system class we would ensure there is a space for these students to land softly - there is a process. Resources within the current building would be part of transitioning with parents and students to ensure it goes smoothly. We recognize the program has been there for a long time and will ensure the program lands softly. Due to collective agreements we cannot shift everyone but staffing as part of the program usually shifts with the students including Educational Assistants.

Q. The government says it wants the best for the children and putting children first has been their motto but it seems we are putting finances first. In small schools teachers get to know the families but this does not happen in a big school as there is less one-on-one.

A. Comments noted.

Q. Student health must be considered, especially the kids in schools with three floors that do not have air conditioning or updated air systems. We need to look at numbers. With more students in a school you can expect more illnesses. Children with asthma and special needs have health issues that need to be dealt with daily. Also, many of students do not have the freedom to walk around like they use to due safety concerns these days. It takes a village to raise a child - we need to look out after each other.

A. Comments noted.

Sustainability

Q. How much does this play into sustainability? If the Linden Park site is sold and it is developed with 200-300 homes where will these new families go for school over the next 10-20 years? When older people pass there will be turnover and younger families will move in.

A. In terms of the number of students per household, the student yield in the 1960-70's was significant. There were over three children per family in the 1950's to 1970's when these schools were built but now families are smaller. Now, we only get approximately 2.5 students per grade from every 100 houses but this is spread out over public, Catholic and private schools so numbers are not sustainable.

Voting

Q. Options 22 and 32 seem to meeting most criteria. How is the committee going to come to conclusion on a final vote - what is the process?

A. We will have the four options listed on a ballot and each member will select their preferred two options for moving forward. If there is a tie, members will vote again. The majority of votes rules - it is a democratic process.

Comments

- My concern in a large school is the number of students and bullying.
- Throughout this process the quality of teaching and learning has been one main focus. Multiple classes per grade are a good experience and provide opportunities for collaboration.
- I like Option 32, as well as many other parents. It addresses the walkability issue and kids can stay in their own communities. Keeping schools open is important.
- I am concerned that Option 34 is being considered - many kids cannot walk and transportation costs seem to be high.
- Queensdale does have an updated air system. In 2005-06, new heaters and boilers were put in.
- The assumption of 400-600 students as the Board preference is an American standard and not one that would necessarily fit into our communities. The future is blended learning and using technology to provide programming. A school with 200 students would be my preference.

- I have early onset of hearing loss and a new appreciation for the hard of hearing program so as you look at options if at all possible I would ask that you do not move the program at Queensdale. Many adaptations have been done to the school and this needs to be seriously considered. Any school with this type of program needs to be properly prepared. It is important to note that change is more difficult when students have a problem or challenge.
- When I grew up I attended a one-room school house, a K-8 school and a small 100-200 student school. I believe that the 200 student sized school is best. We have beautiful neighbourhoods throughout the central mountain so walkable schools would be ideal. Rather than supporting a JK-8 school with 500-600 students as a right-sized school, we should really be protecting the JK-6 school as a supportable model. The Fraser Institute recently reported that JK-6 schools with just over 200 students and with combined family incomes of just over \$49,000 produce great results.
- Thanks were extended to the ARC volunteers.
- Appreciation was extended to committee members, as public input has clearly been considered.
- A lot of thought and diverse conversation has occurred at the Working Group meetings so the public should be grateful for this.

5. Adjournment

Michael Prendergast noted that many opportunities have been provided for public input and thanked everyone for providing honest, positive and challenging feedback over the course of the review process. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m. Board staff remained to respond to any further questions.

Handouts

- Agenda
- Presentation
- Committee Options 22, 32, 34 & 35
- Option Information Handout