

West Flamborough - Accommodation Review Committee

Public Consultation Meeting # 2B

Wednesday, November 13, 2013

7:30-9:00 p.m.

**Beverly Central Elementary School
1346 4th Concession Road, Troy, ON**

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Committee Members

Chair - Mag Gardner

Voting Members - Sara Ardiel, Karen Baillie, Pamela Beech, John Belanger, Tania Brittain, Jessica Dymont, Colleen Evans, Kristin Glasbergen, Candice Goodale, Cairine Grantham, Brett Humphrey, Anthony Hunter, Patti Lee, Callie Matthews, Shelley McGuire, Marguerite Richer, Heather Ryan, Melissa Slote, Janine Vandenneuval, Sue VanEgdom, David Wardell

Non- Voting Members - Stewart Cameron, Doug Dunford, Kate Fischer, Eddie Grattan, Kim Short, Karen Turkstra

Regrets

Voting Members - Rachel Kott, Stephanie Munro

Non- Voting Members - Nil

Resource Staff

Bob Fex

Recording Secretary

Kathy Forde

Public - 30 public attendees were present - Beverly Central (19), Dr. John Seaton (5), Greenville (3), Millgrove (2), Dundana (1),

1. Call to Order

Mag Gardner called the meeting to order and introduced co-chairs Candice Goodale and Brett Humphrey. Committee members have been working hard since October 02 through a series of Working Group Meetings and Public Meetings to lead us towards development of a recommendation that will be presented to trustees who will make the final decision. No decisions have yet been made on which schools will be recommended for closure. Information is posted on the website at www.hwdsb.on.ca.

2. Agenda

2.1 Additions/Deletions

Nil

2.2 Approval of Agenda

Approved.

3. Where the Committee is in the Process

Mag Gardner indicated that the Working Group continues to work in an advisory capacity with intent to develop a meaningful recommendation. Work is in the midst of community engagement. Meeting dates have been posted online.

4. Review Community Input from Public Meeting #2A

4.1 Guiding Principles Adaptation

Candice Goodale noted that since the last public meeting, all comments and public feedback have been reviewed. Committee members have also toured four of the five schools involved. Public Meeting # 2B was added to the original schedule to allow viewing and participation of all schools under review. Following careful examination of data and public input, initial Guiding Principles were developed based on common themes that emerged. Guiding Principles include Program Offerings, Transportation, Resources, 21st Century Learning and will assist in the decision making process. Each Guiding Principle was reviewed.

5. Commitment Statements Related to the Guiding Principles

Brett Humphrey outlined additional commitment statements as developed at Working Group Meeting # 4, based on public feedback from Public Meeting # 2A. These will be used as the guidelines to narrow down the decisions that are made.

- **Timeline** - extend to at least September 2015 or until facilities/construction completed; commit to quality teaching and learning environments that support student achievement
- **Facilities** - school facilities and infrastructure meet the needs of our students in the 21st century
- **Program Offerings** - ensure we have specialty rooms (e.g. technology, science lab, music, French space, art rooms, learning resource) along with technology that is current date; ensure quality and consistency of programming across all children with the ARC
- **Transportation** - will not exceed 45 minutes

Two questions were also raised for public input.

Question 1: Importance of French Immersion Program

By a show of hands only a few public attendees expressed interest in French Immersion. However, the public noted that likely only a few parents are interested because French Immersion is not offered at their schools. Some kids are bused 60 minutes to attend schools with French Immersion. It was suggested that a

public survey be conducted to see who is interested. In response, it was noted that students learn best before 12 years of age. The province does have grants for French Immersion but are not significant enough to warrant an entire school. There are guidelines that designate programming across the entire system. French Immersion cannot be provided at all schools. Data from October 2013 indicates there were 22 students in this area taking French Immersion at other schools. However, French Immersion boundary considerations must be done so carefully as students are essentially taken away from another program (e.g. regular tract) or another school not within the Terms of Reference of this accommodation review. The Working Group will take comments into consideration.

Question 2: Importance of Before/After School Program

Childcare is currently provided at Greenville within the school and at Millgrove outside of the school. Millgrove also has a buddy up program. At Beverly Central, execution was not well organized from the beginning and the deadline passed so lack of registration was considered as a lack of interest. Flyers go out every year but from past experience some parents did not want to pay the \$12 cost. In terms of equity, it would be important for all families at all schools to have a program available. In response, the Working Group will take comments into consideration.

6. Additional Enrolment Information - Projection Methodology, Residential Development, Demographics

Bob Fex presented an overview of information related to enrolment data. Historical enrolment in 2001 for the West Flamborough ARC was 1225 students but that number declined to 966 students in 2012. Apportionment rates were illustrated to show numbers and percentages of students split between the Public and Catholic School Boards. It was noted that new families coming into the area are not all sending their kids to HWDSB schools. Regarding new residential development, projections are tracked and incorporated with the data. However, for elementary student yields, it takes 100 single houses to generate 24 students (the HWDSB 'Board-wide' average), spread across the entire grid of elementary grades. The population in rural Hamilton is currently at approximately 44,000 and is expected to decline 4% by 2031. Although assumptions are based on trends, the population grid is not far off in terms of declining enrolment. The total fertility rate during the baby boom of 3.8 children per woman dropped to 1.59 children per woman in 2008. Immigration remains important to the stability of Hamilton's population but these numbers tend to impact the urban population. Overall, the number of school age children continues to decline.

Karen Turkstra recognized the emotion that comes with the ARC and closure of schools. She noted that almost 600 schools in Ontario are only half full and approximately \$380M per year is dedicated to maintaining these empty spaces. Money is not being well spent. Both the education and healthcare sectors are looking for efficiencies due to high costs. Two documents related to the ARC review were highlighted for information. One Ministry booklet (School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Consultations) focuses on how we can become more efficient and modernize our facilities and technology. The second document (Standing Committee Report on 10-Year Capital/Deferred Maintenance Costs) focuses on numbers related to HWDSB. Comments serve as a reminder of why committee members are

here doing this important collaborative work. We may not like the review underway but we have to be financially responsible and move forward. Documents will be posted on the website for reference.

7. Group Discussions - Creation of ARC Option/s

An opportunity was provided for public attendees and committee members to share ideas in an open floor format. Comments captured and suggestion box remarks are noted below:

Boundaries

- Boundaries and existing catchments should be reviewed.

Enrolment

- The rural population is aging so those who move closer to city services may sell their homes to young families with children. In response, it was noted that people are living longer and generally want to stay in their homes. This assumption cannot be supported with hard data. Historical 'turn-over' of homes and new occupants are captured through progression factors. In terms of potential growth, land available in Waterdown far exceeds this area in comparison.

Facilities

- Deferred maintenance for each school should be made public.
- Leaking pipes and roofs are a concern.
- Adequate sized gyms are needed to accommodate students and playing requirements.
- At Spencer Valley there are no sidewalks or lighting. Infrastructure needs to include adequate sidewalks and street lights.
- Has someone gone to each school to document what maintenance actually needs to be done?
- School Information Profiles (SIPs) provide data on each school and are posted on the website for reference. Information provided at the Working Group meetings is also posted online.
- Data pulled together at different stages has been clarified, verified and scrutinized.

Program Offerings

- Historically, we have not had French Immersion or before and after school care opportunities due to restrictions but if available would probably be interested.
- French Immersion
 - Student access is important in terms of equality.
 - How many kids will it bring back?
 - Survey of parents in community - how do we reach everyone?
 - What is the role of the Board?
 - Can this be a part of the ARC recommendation?
 - How many students in this area attend an outside school because of French Immersion (22 families).
 - How does the Board designate programs - is French Immersion even a consideration?

- Before/after school programming - need clear communication with families.

Staffing

- Staffing at Dr. Seaton is a concern. Most staff do not live locally and come from areas outside. There is a lot of turnover so the school has many entry level teachers and staff.

Transportation

- A 45-minute bus ride will be impossible for the far reaches unless you have 80 buses on the road.
- Safety is a concern. Old Brock road is narrow and tree-lined and is a main access.
- It was noted that a sidewalk was put in at Greensville but exact details were unknown.
- Sidewalks and lighting needed for children to get to and from school.
- Sidewalks would be needed in various locations but are extremely costly so it is unlikely that the City would construct new sidewalks. Although the Board partners with the City on various things, it is unknown if new sidewalks would be covered.
- Any distance longer than 800 meters without sidewalks requires transportation.
- The committee can recommend that ride times be reduced and the number of buses be increased.
- Road renovations would be extremely costly so it will be important to determine where funds would best be spent.

School Closures

- Properties abandoned and sold for development are a concern.
- In response to concern around budget and who pays for any changes, it was noted that the Ministry looks favourably at submissions around school closures and consolidations. The Board can afford some renovations and some new schools. Funding will be sought through the Ministry first then through HWDSB self-funds through the sale of properties if needed. Savings from deferred maintenance costs also provides another source of funding.
- Properties of any schools declared surplus are offered first to preferred agents. If no interest is expressed at market value the property goes out to the open market.
- Vandalism is a concern with vacant schools.
- What will happen to properties of schools that may close?
- All five schools have many similarities although each has individual pride.

New School

- We should pinpoint an area in the middle of the boundary from all five schools and find a farmer who is willing to donate land.
- To clarify, we cannot have one school with 1000 students.
- The schools in this ARC have very different needs so the idea of a new school seems strange.
- It takes about 18 months to build a new facility on Board owned property.
- If building on an existing site, the buildings are side by side. Students are transferred to the new school then the old school is demolished.

- Renovations may perhaps cost more than a new school.
- Where is the money going to come from to build a new facility?

Options

- It seems we should have two solutions as there are two distinct areas.
- By a show of hands, many public attendees showed interest in a new school.
- Public input will help in formulating an option.
- We are not interested in a quick fix.
- We need to remember that West Flamborough is one ARC. Joining schools can be logical in some cases. It is recognized that some people may be opposed to change but regardless a unanimous recommendation should be developed and go forward. Some things may pertain to one school more than another.
- Appreciate the 2015 goal - schools need to be ready.
- Do not want band-aid solutions.
- Explore where we have been previously restricted.
- Who is paying and what is the budget?
- Need to look long-term.
- Has there been discussion around three K-8 schools, transition, buses?
- Equity - rural areas have specific rural needs.
- Moving timelines - look at effect on students.

Process

- This process is an opportunity.
- The reason these schools are involved is because these kids all feed into the same high school.
- Value to the student is first and foremost.
- Rural settings have special needs so the Ministry should not apply a city approach - the process should be equitable to all.
- It will be important to look at long-term solutions for future generations.

Suggestion Box

- How do we entertain these ideas for numbers interested in French Immersion? These people who are interested, do not attend these meetings.
- Who is responsible for collecting/developing survey for all areas? Our Board or French Immersion Advisory Committee?
- How do we get this info prior to our closure?
- Include concept of equality for students in Hamilton.
- Review guidelines of the Ministry of Education when formulating position.
- Request that the proposal of closing Beverly, Seaton and building a new school is best and feel it's supported by many.
- The points that may have been missed about offering French Immersion as an option:

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- Enrolment in rural areas
- Many people would support having the option as all people in the program seem to think it is a high quality program
- However, those same people may not put their kids in a French stream (we would want to ensure English stream at the same school)
- Due to the process and staged information given over the last 1.5 years, it is difficult to make decisions and figure out what the Board will suggest next
- Very important - the transitions for the Millgrove students to be added to a cohesive K-5 group in Spencer Valley is challenging now. However, we hold a community based rural school in high regard. Please discuss the option of renovating Millgrove to K-8 despite challenges. NE section of Greenville may feel the same.

8. Next Steps

- At the next Working Group Meeting options will be formulated
- Options will be presented at Public Meeting # 3
- Individual ideas can be shared with committee members or at arcinfo@hwdsb.on.ca
- **Next Working Group Meeting # 5 - November 27, 2013 at Spencer Valley Elementary School**
- **Next Public Meeting # 3 - December 04, 2013 at Dr. Seaton Elementary School**

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Handouts

- Agenda
- Presentation