

**West Flamborough - Accommodation Review Committee
Public Consultation Meeting # 3
Wednesday, December 04, 2013
6:00-9:00 p.m.**

**Spencer Valley Elementary School
441 Old Brock Road, Greensville, ON**

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Committee Members

Chair - Mag Gardner

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

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

Regrets

Voting Members - John Belanger, Patti Lee,

Non- Voting Members - Nil

Resource Staff

Bob Fex, Ellen Warling, Jackie Penman

Recording Secretary

Kathy Forde

Public - 53 public attendees were present - Beverly Central (15), Dr. John Seaton (9), Greensville (3), Millgrove (21), Spencer Valley (1); Dundana (1), Flamborough Review (1), City Councillors (2)

1. Call to Order

Mag Gardner called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone and provided introductions. The purpose of the meeting was to present the options developed to date and to gather further public input. Committee members Jessica Dymont and Stephanie Munro assisted in facilitating the session.

2. Agenda

2.1 Additions/Deletions

Nil

2.2 Approval of Agenda

Approved.

3. Purpose of the Meeting - why we are here

Too many vacant pupil spaces and low enrolment have generated the need to explore school closures. It is a long process as mandated by the Ministry of Education. As a starting point, senior staff developed a recommendation that may change. The Working Group is also developing recommendations through public engagement to ensure all input and insights are considered. Meeting norms have been established to set the tone for constructive and productive work and conversation. Ultimately, the final decision rests with the trustees. Information is posted regularly on the HWDSB website at www.hwdsb.on.ca.

4. Where the Committee is in the Process

The process began in June 2013 when a decision was made to conduct the four ARCS that are currently underway. Work is currently in the consultation stage. When the committee is finished its work, the committee will bring a report to the Director in February 2014, which will then be submitted to the trustees. It is anticipated that a decision will be made in May 2014.

5. Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) Guiding Principles and Other Considerations

Through the working group meetings, guiding principles have been developed based on public input considered important to the community. The guiding principles are focused on program offerings, transportation, resources and 21st century learning. Other key considerations include timelines, facilities and transition.

6. Committee Draft Options

From the work that has evolved, preliminary draft options have been developed through the Working Group. Further public feedback is required to develop and refine options further. Three options were presented and reviewed. The options were not numbered or presented in any particular order. Mag Gardner advised that French Immersion as an item of Interest is addressed at the Board level so is noted but will be parked to ensure focus remains on the option details. It can be added as an addendum. Attendees were given some time to process the options presented before opening the floor to comments and questions and answers. Key comments are noted below.

Option 1

- Close all 5 schools
- New school on Spencer (for Spencer, Millgrove and Greenville)
- New site (Beverly Central Community Centre) for Beverly and Seaton - this involves a realignment of catchment area to generally balance the two schools' populations

Comments (Option 1)

- Preliminary costs?
- Student success rates? Small rural schools
- Acreage considerations
- Long term thinking
- Are new school builds realistic? Timing?
- Transportation

Option 2

- **Close Millgrove and Greensville and renovate Spencer Valley (making it a JK-8)**
- **Close Beverly and Seaton with a new JK-8 school on the Beverly Central school site - this involves a realignment of catchment area to generally balance the two schools' populations**

Comments (Options 1 and 2)

- Septic tank capacities
- Soften boundaries (out of board transportation)
- Can you build a new school on existing school property while students attend - yes
- Has renovation been discounted for Beverly Central and Seaton?
- Travel time (Freelton to Spencer Valley)
- Keep ice rink at community centre
- Focus on Millgrove, Greensville, Spencer Valley
- Renovate Millgrove - heritage property
- Millgrove location within catchment
- Daycare program - seamless - 365 days/year
- Consider daycare space in plans
- Millgrove (K-8) - consider enrolment impact at Spencer Valley/Greensville (K-8)
- Combined classes can work
- Realignment of catches? Distribution of students = balance between schools
- Boundary thinking needs to be transparent
- Grandfather boundaries
- Renovate Greensville (K-8)
- Build on Greensville site
- Importance of outdoor space
- Have two working groups - Spencer Valley & Greensville / Beverly Central & Seaton
- Fight for new facilities - set aside emotions
- Build on Seaton site - bigger
- Central site for Beverly Central/Seaton
- Process for public input following ARC recommendation(s)
- Does HWDSB desire to build new schools - yes
- Does ARC recommendation matter?

- Staff has 30 days to review options
- Communication re Board meetings
- How realistic is arena site? Land trade?

Option 3

- **New school for Seaton and Beverly at a central location**
- **Greensville goes to a renovated Spencer Valley (JK-8)**
- **Millgrove remains open status quo or we explore the viability of a JK-8 - there would be no change in current catchment area**

Comments (Option 3)

- ? - no change in catchment area
- Concern re City Council re land
- 21st century thinking = collaboration with community partners
- How does vote happen?
- Development?
- Support K-5 at Millgrove (6-8 at Spencer Valley)
- Concern for loss of Greensville site - option 4?
- Support for Millgrove and Greensville and Spencer Valley
- Millgrove K-8 and Greensville K-8
- Millgrove status quo or K-8
- Impact of out-of-catchment on enrolment
- Options are still flexible
- Are three JK-8 schools possible?
- Millgrove K-8 - grandfather Spencer Valley students?
- Support for new Beverly Central/Seaton site
- Transportation policy concern - “guideline” language

Suggestions - Beverly Central/Seaton

Interest in another central site

- New school - Seaton site = 1 vote by show of hands
- New school - Beverly arena site = 23 votes by a show of hands
- New school - Beverly Central site = 0 votes

Interest in a new school

- New school - Seaton = 4 votes by a show of hands
- New school - Beverly Central = 21 votes by a show of hands
- What about more land around the Beverly Central site?

Suggestions - Millgrove/Spencer Valley/Greenville

Interest in new school / renovations

- New school at Spencer (Millgrove & Greenville) = 0 votes
- New school at Greenville = 6 votes by a show of hands
- Renovation at Spencer Valley = 0 votes
- Option 3 - status quo = 20 votes by a show of hands
- Option 3 - Millgrove K-8 = 1 vote by a show of hands
- Greenville is surrounded by Greenspace
- Change is o.k.

It was noted that votes are a reflection for information purposes only and are a representation of people present only. There was not an equal representation at the meeting for all schools involved.

7. Group Discussion of ARC Options Questions and Answers

Beverly Community Centre

Q. How realistic is the idea of using space at the Beverly Community Centre?

A. The idea has been discussed with staff but it is not positive at this point. A meeting with staff is scheduled for December 17 to do some discovery. Loss of park space is a concern so we will be looking at what the Board may have to offer the City. The possibility of trading land will be discussed. The entire community must be considered. It will be important not to rush any decisions. (Councillor Pasuta)

A. It may be a good site but is not an easy process. Discussion is needed around the council table to ensure it is a good use of tax payers' money. If building a new school, the need for childcare should also be considered. Reasonable decisions are needed. It will be important to ensure the Board is aware of growth projections for new homes and future populations. (Councillor Partridge).

Boundaries

Q. If we build a great new school anywhere in this area, with St. George and Dundas developing everyone will want to come here. This will be a great opportunity. We have low enrolment at certain times. Can we soften the boundaries?

A. If a school was underutilized, we could offer out-of-catchment to a nearby board but transportation would be a barrier. Schools are built based on projected numbers not on the assumption that because it is new and may attract students from other Boards.

Q. Please elaborate on the realignment of catchments.

A. We need to look at student distribution on both sides for balance. We try to ensure transportation and geography is fitting, feasible and logical for enrolment numbers.

Childcare

Q. Childcare is lacking for Beverly and Seaton and we have very limited options.

A. Questionnaires went home but the response was minimal. It should be considered if building a new school.

Communication

Q. Will parents receive phone messages and school letters to inform them when the options are being discussed by Trustees.

A. Yes, parents should be informed through normal procedures through Corporate Communications.

Costs

Q. Any preliminary costs available for each option?

A. No, not yet. We need to narrow down the options then have staff spend time on deep work. Staff is beginning to work on numbers but it will take some time. We are shooting for the stars for everyone at this point but refinement is needed.

Data

Q. Is there any data regarding success rates? As a teacher, we see Seaton students as leaders, which might be partially due to being in a rural school setting. How can we help our students be more successful?

A. We will look into this. At Seaton there are small numbers so when students merge grades will likely be organized in full classes.

Q. What is the status of new growth?

A. There is not a lot of new development happening within rural Hamilton. Some restrictions prevent large developments. The yield requires 10 new homes to generate approximately 2.4 students so a huge rate of growth would be needed to inject increased populations. Growth rates were provided in the presentation for Public Meeting # 2, which is available on-line.

Facilities

Q. Septic capacity at Spencer Valley is a concern.

A. Data has been requested on septic capacity. Information will be available shortly.

Q. Can you keep Greensville open?

A. FCI costs would be astronomical. The age, state and maintenance costs of Greensville make it least desirable.

Funding

Q. Don't you need to know how much money you have to spend?

A. We have to gather data and develop feasible options then costs will follow after feedback has been incorporated. The Ministry has various initiatives available and is keen on partnership proposals and on

ARC proposals. Funding is provided based on criteria so even if no funding is provided from the Ministry the Board can still self-fund.

Grade Organization

Q. What does enrolment do to grade organization?

A. It is not about closing schools because they are in bad condition. Schools are not at capacity and are partially empty so even if a school is vibrant if it is underutilized it is not feasible and lacks programming. As a Board, we are having conversations about combined grades. Often we assume a small school needs split classes but there are other reasons why Boards are implementing more and more combined grades. Many factors go into creating a class for students to thrive. We need to be creative, balance genders, provide opportunities, encourage social skills, etc. The priority is to support students with the curriculum. Many classes have a range of ability. Children in split classes can thrive with an effective teacher.

Location

Q. If building on the Beverly Community Centre property is that replacing the centre or will there be two buildings on one site?

A. That opportunity is being investigated. It would be two buildings on one site. The amount of land is sufficient for another building.

New Schools

Q. Does the school board have a desire to build new schools?

A. The average age of schools is 52 years old so we are looking at revitalization including new builds.

Process

Q. Is this a short term or long term initiative?

A. It is an undertaking that occurs once over a long period of time so requires long- term thinking. It is a tremendous opportunity for the public to express what they would like to see related to their children. Consultation is part of the process. It is a once in a several year opportunity for creative thinking on the schools in various communities. A lot exploring must happen to delve further into advantages, implications and feasibility of various options.

Q. Can you explain process? How do we reach for the stars without quotes in place? What is the process for quotes?

A. The Working Group develops and presents draft preliminary options based on public feedback. In January 2015, we will come back to public with final recommendations. In February, a report will be submitted to the Board. Both the committee option and staff option will go forward to trustees who will look will look at data and school information profiles to make an informed decision. Trustees can accept one option or mix options to include the best pieces. The work of getting quotes then begins. Quotes are not obtained until an option is selected.

Q. Is there an opportunity for public input on a combined option?

A. Once the ARC finishes its work here, delegations can present opinions to trustees during their review period.

Q. How often is the committee option selected?

A. We do not have hard facts but the staff is obligated to put out an option. Their learning curve is enlightened as community comments are heard. Trustees will select an option based on what is most viable.

Q. How will the final decision be made?

A. Trustees will look at options, enrolment, data and community interest. Much discussion takes place on related details and important pieces will be referenced. Decisions will be made based on the entire ARC not by individual school.

Renovations

Q. Looking over the long term, with say 50-year projections, have renovations at Beverly and Seaton been taken off the table because they are not viable options?

A. Yes.

Timelines

Q. At the first public meeting it was noted that changes would occur next year? Each school is falling apart which seems conflicting with keeping schools open which is also quite costly.

A. The timeframe for decision-making is relatively short. September 2015 is suggested in the option as the earliest date for making any changes rather than September 2014.

Q. Are new school builds realistic within the timelines and budget and considering costs to maintain schools in the interim?

A. We do not want to move kids into anything that is not finished. If a new school is recommended, there are various funding sources. The capital priorities submission is submitted in October with Board approval then a response follows in the spring. A period of 18-24 months is the estimate to build a school. Funding also comes from school renewal grants and proceeds from disposition. Time would be required to address high urgent needs as well.

Transportation

Q. Those of us in the north are concerned with busing which would be a minimum of one hour.

A. Noted.

Q. Transportation of JK kids is a concern especially for those riding buses for long distances. Some kids are already on a bus for 60 minutes or longer. The policy as a "guideline" needs to be amended as a "rule" to provide substance to adhering to specified and reasonable ride times.

A. More buses would provide more direct routes and shorter ride times. The recommendation is a ride time of 45 minutes maximum. Exact details are to be determined. It is a priority consideration. School bell-times are a factor but if schools merge the problem may be resolved. Upcoming consultation on the transportation policy will provide an opportunity for input.

General Comments

- We do not want to see money wasted
 - I do not understand how you can make any recommendations without cost estimates.
 - Kids should be grandfathered if possible with respect to transportation.
 - Millgrove and Spencer Valley have their own dynamics, It may be beneficial to allow these two communities to work together to develop an option.
 - An old building will never be a brand new building regardless of the renovations completed. Our children deserve new technologies and facilities.
 - It is recognized that the topic school closures includes emotional discussions.
 - Busing must be carefully considered.
 - The City's decision around use of the Beverly Community Centre needs to be made in Ward 14 only not around the entire council table as the city never bought the centre. Only Ward 14 should be involved in any decision making.
 - Renovations should include 21st century thinking and should allow collaboration with community partners. Old buildings with historical significance should be renovated in a modern fashion.
 - If schools minimal changes take place we could be on the chopping block again in 10 years.
 - Daycare is a big concern for country schools so a larger population at a school might be more viable for childcare.
 - The age and condition of a school is a factor but the driving force is related to empty space.
 - The out-of-catchment change in January 2013 had a dramatic effect on Millgrove families and daycare due to FDK coming into the school.
 - Millgrove is unique and is an asset that is sustainable. Not a lot of people want to leave Millgrove. We have passion and it is in a good location. It should be considered as a heritage property. We need community partners. Childcare here is seamless.
 - Greensville also needs to be preserved.
 - Transitions are a concern.
 - Multiple transitions are least desirable.
 - Student safety is a concern where a public park connects to a school.
 - As responsible parents it will be important to deliver positive aspects and positive messages to our kids.
 - Sidewalks are a concern and need to be considered.
- Appreciation was extended to committee members for their hard work and dedication.

Any further comments can be submitted to ARCinfo@hwdsb.on.ca

8. Next Steps

- Next Working Group Meeting # 6 - December 11, 2013 at Greenville Elementary School
- Next Public Meeting # 4 - January 22, 2014 at Greenville Elementary School

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Handouts

- Agenda
- Presentation