



**West Hamilton-City Accommodation Review  
Public Meeting #1  
January 11, 2017- 6:00 pm  
Sir John A. Macdonald School, 130 York Blvd. Cafeteria  
Minutes**

**Attendance**

**Committee Members** – John Efthimiadis, Khantavy Sayavon, Tracy Upham, Sarah Sirkett, Matt Allen, Allison Savage, Shelly Turk, Joanne Cheyne-Miller, Eleni Jalbout, Jennifer Walsom, Nadine Bernacki, Melissa Crawford, Teri Lantagne, Katherine Graham, Janine Durajlija, David Heska

**Committee Member Regrets** – none received

**HWDSB Resource Staff** – Superintendent Sue Dunlop, Mary Finstad, Steve Johnston, Estella Jones, Sean Malcomson, Karen Koop, Tannis Hamill, Bob Fex, Ellen Warling, Carol Broer, Sandra Chow, Jolene John, George Mantik, Kelly Maudsley, Joe O'Connor, Tracy Weaver, Carol Gaudet, Richelle Bratuz

**Trustees** – Chair Todd White, Christine Bingham, Jeff Beattie, Alex Johnstone, Dawn Danko, Greg Van Geffen

**Public** – Hess – 135, Strathcona – 2, Ryerson/EK – 10, Bennetto-4, Central-9, Community - 14

**Recording Secretary** – Sue Phillips

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Sue Dunlop welcomed the group and introduced herself as the facilitator and chair of the working group for the West Hamilton-City Accommodation Review. Sue introduced Todd White, Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Sue introduced the Chair of the Board Todd White.

Todd welcomed the group on behalf of the Board of Trustees. He noted it would be a very positive evening in terms of discussion. We have eleven trustees on our board and we are here to strengthen education in Hamilton. What can we do in terms of a long-term vision over the next 20 or 25 years. The challenge for us is how to strengthen our schools and make them stronger. We have great schools here in Hamilton but we can make them better. Todd introduced the Trustees in attendance – Jeff Beattie, Christine Bingham, (Trustee for eight of the nine schools in the review) Larry Pattison (Trustee for one of the nine schools in the review), Alex Johnstone, Greg Van Geffen, Dawn Danko. He noted that the Trustees are not in attendance to lead discussions but rather to observe and support people as needed. He pointed out that the group's audience is really the Accommodation Review Advisory Committee which consists of 27-30 individuals. The committee is made up of approximately three people from each of the schools in the review area.

Sue Dunlop noted that Chair Todd White needed to slow down for interpreters to interpret his words.

Comment: please slow down for the interpreters.

Comment: Can we announce the interpreters available?

Sue Phillips clarified the interpreters available with help from Sue Dunlop. Spanish, Arabic, Somali, Bengali, Swahili, Vietnamese, and Karen.

Todd introduced Ward Councilor Jason Farr and Sarah Lowe (from Andrea Horvath's office).

Todd reviewed the purpose once again - to review the nine schools that have been selected.

Tonight we will be posing three questions to you about your schools, the schools you know so well. Your feedback will be collected and provided to the review committee.

In terms of options available, the Trustees at this point, do not have a precise plan. The conversation started with an option that our staff created, a very technical report. It is not a process that is easy, nor one that we chose. It is mandated by the province that we provide option(s) to start the conversation.



Q. Can we have a French conversation?

A. We do not have that available but we are going to break into groups to look at the three questions and it might be easier to assist with translations. I will keep my comments short for now. There will be many of us moving around. This venue is not as conducive as we would have liked.

Todd White explained that additional information is going to be presented before moving to the table activity asking the group for attention for a little longer.

Sue Dunlop (allowing time for translation) reviewed the agenda and meeting norms and directed people to the HWDSB website indicating the availability of google translate. She noted there is time for community consultation where the community would give ideas.

Sue Dunlop introduced Bob Fex from the Facilities Department, who welcomed and thanked the group for being at the meeting.

Bob reviewed Ministry Guidelines, board policy and directives and directed people to the website to view the slide presentation, guidelines, policy and directives.

Bob Fex reviewed the timelines and where we currently are in the process. In November, 2016 the Board of Trustees received a report and approved the report to start the review process. There will be a public delegation phase in April with a report going to trustees in May. We are roughly just past the beginning stage and we have many months to go before we complete the process. Also in November, 2016 Advisory Committee members met for an orientation session where we examined the purpose of the review, identified roles, responsibilities, goals and timelines. Minutes from that meeting are available on the website.

Why are we here? Bob reviewed purpose. It is time to renew current facilities. It is an opportunity to revitalize programs in a big picture way and we can't emphasize enough that communities play a big role in creating great schools for the future.

Bob reviewed the advisory committee mandate.

Question: How can people access information if they can't speak English or perhaps don't have a computer.  
Sue Dunlop responded that she would address this issue later in the meeting by providing ways on how people can access information.

Bob Fex reiterated that the advisory committee wants to hear from you.

Comment: Google translate is not a good translator. How can we understand the website?  
Sue Dunlop agreed it is not a perfect translator noting that HWDSB will help the community. If a community needs more help with accessing information we can help. We can talk later in the meeting.

Sue Dunlop noted there was still additional information to share.

Comment: we need to start from the beginning.

Sue D.: we are starting at the beginning. There is information on your tables to share.

Bob Fex noted the maps on the tables. School Information Profiles are on the tables as well. We have extra copies to share. The SIP is our attempt to gather as much information as possible about all the schools in the review.

Noted that there is minimal WiFi coverage available. Signal strength is poor.

Bob Fex reviewed the purpose of Initial Option. It is by no means a final decision. It is a starting point. All the information that takes place between now and the end of May will be brought forward to the trustees for them to make a decision.

Bob shared the Initial Option.



The Initial Option is: to close Hess St. School, move 95% of students to Bennetto, move some of Bennetto students to Cathy Wever, and a portion of Cathy Wever students to Dr. Davey. Also to move approximately 5% of Hess St. students to Strathcona. There is no change to Central, Earl Kitchener, Queen Victoria and Ryerson. Enrolment information is provided based on those changes. Bob closed the slide presentation.

Sue Dunlop identified where cultural interpreters are seated. Trustees really want to hear your feedback, whatever it is. Sue identified where the facilitators are seated as well as the principals available. Sue noted that these resource people are here to help. Committee members all put up hands. It was noted there are several people available to help. Sue reviewed the three questions. You can give us more information outside of the questions. These questions are to guide you. Question one: What do you want to see in your school community? Question two: What additional things do you want the committee to think about, what do you want them to know about your school? Question three: What is working well in your school community right now? Sue asked for questions.

Q. What is the main reason for this meeting?

A. We want to know what you think of the schools in this area

Todd White provided clarification on the following questions - will the Board of Trustees close schools, is it absolutely decided, does a school have to close in the process? The answer to that is absolutely not. There is a review for a purpose, to improve schools. We have a good turnout and we want to have some valuable discussions and hear from you. Each area of the city has had a review with very few left over. Decisions have been made, but the decisions aren't the same in every community. Does the boundary of your community make sense? Does it bind your community? Does French Immersion work? Do we need more French Immersion? What does your physical and outdoor space look like? Can we provide enhanced green space? Can we work with our city partners to think outside the box and identify opportunities we may not have imagined? Those are some of the questions that we are asking in terms of what we want you to identify. Let's find areas for improvement. We have an opportunity to invest. Can a school be rebuilt? Yes. Can an addition be added? Yes. The options are endless. There are 9 schools involved with an abundance of property. Population pressures are not tremendous. Our schools are at 82% in this area which is a reasonably healthy number.

Comment: This format does not allow for good discussion. It's very frustrating.

Todd: It is clear to us that we have to find another way to hold our public meetings for this West Hamilton review, but we do want to take advantage of the meeting now. This is not your only opportunity to provide feedback on this process. We will find ways to ensure all voices are heard.

Q: Is Hess closing because the board has already decided to close it - if so it doesn't make sense to be having this discussion?

A. No. To give you some context I am chair of the board and one of eleven votes. We have not decided that any school will close. That is not even the first question on my mind. We have several trustees who vote on this and if you ask each one if they want to close a school they would say no. Right off the bat we have not decided anything. The initial report is just an "option" not a recommendation. Staff still has recommendations to make. The initial option is misleading. It is the way that is legislated.

Comment: I love Hess and I don't want to lose Hess because it is close to my home. Taking this school away is stressing me. I don't have a car. I don't want my children to take a bus. I am near my children where I can walk to the school if they need me. I am low income, with no budget to go to another school.

Response Todd White: I appreciate the comments. The majority of our trustees are here to listen. We want to find ways to build your communities. Hess School is a great school. Could Hess be better? Yes. We want all our schools to have the same opportunities as all other schools. We believe in equity and opportunity. We are trying to develop conversation here. This is a genuine process and the options are endless. We have people from the province, from the city and from the school board ready to move forward together.



Q: I am curious - if closing schools isn't part of the agenda why are we meeting? It feels disingenuous.

A: The accommodation review isn't about school closures, it's about boundaries, structures and grade structures. If we are going to propose and significant changes – school closures, change grade structures or put an addition on a school, we must have an accommodation review. Our staff has provided a report as mandated by the province and we start the process with a proposal. It is a process that we have inherited. It's a process we cannot change.

Q. How does the feedback from this public meeting go to the appropriate review committee and to the Board of Trustees to make a recommendation to the province?

A. The review committee members receive the feedback from this meeting. If at any time, you feel that your voice isn't heard you can contact trustees, school principals and the Superintendent associated with the review. We are readily available. It is on our website.

Groups then moved to table discussions and activity.

Note: feedback from the table discussions is provided in this document.

## 2. Adjournment

The meeting was interrupted / adjourned at approximately 7:40 p.m. with a fire alarm causing evacuation of the building.

### Next Meetings

Working Group Meeting #2 – Wednesday January 25, 2017, 6:00 p.m. at Bennetto School

Public Meeting #2 – March 8, 2017, 6:00 p.m. at Sir John A. Macdonald



Accommodation Review Public Meeting #1  
Public Feedback

Table Activity Feedback – West Ham. PM#1 – SJAM Jan. 11, 2017 - DRAFT

**What do we need to consider? What do you want to see in a school community?**

- How can I be part of my school community if I/we am/are too far away (no car, transportation)
- If there is an emergency how will I pick up my child
- Why not renovate instead of closing the school?
- Why not rebuild in the same location?
- We feel this plan was not communicated to us early enough
- We feel blindsided
- With students living so far away from each other how will they build friendships, study-networks, work together on homework as a community
- More programs that help students reach mainstream
- Utilization of a multi-use facility
- Centrally located – walkable
- Small schools with close social relationships
- Promote multi-culturalism and equity
- Learn to evaluate a school based on cultural value not economic value
- More present and active trustees- community presence
- Every school should have access to a suitable play area (size/location and stimulation, play structure)
- A school that will continue to provide the core for the community
- Hess St. school is the heart of the community
- Walkability of the school allows for diversity of community, takes away barriers for access
- Without walkability, you lose all extra curricular and this community cannot afford to pay for extra curricular
- Adequate school size to accommodate enough green space, but we prefer school
- Minimal funds have been invested in the upkeep of Hess and Earl Kitchener
- Reduce the legal barriers
- Concerns of over capacity
- Staff introducing additional items to social info profiles to reflect local circumstances and priorities
- Promoting community focus with a specific process
- Multi-language presenters for public meetings
- What happened to community partnerships/creative initiatives? Were investigations done and where are the results/findings?
- Is the board taking future family growth (high density condos/apts) into consideration?
- Why are we closing?
- A close school – walking distance – 10
- Walkability to everything downtown core has to offer
- More French Immersion close by
- Safe, low traffic, good transportation
- Good walking paths
- A local school
- Parents know each other- 2
- Parents don't have to rely on bus transit to come to school



- Neighbourhood hub, co op, connectivity
- Safe playgrounds, proper security, larger sidewalks, safe streets
- Students are educated within their home community especially for those already experiencing crisis (refugees) - 2
- Support systems for new families
- Access to Spec. Ed. Resources
- An environment where students feel comfortable
- Small school size
- Green space playability area
- Most students are immigrant community-would like to see more programs so that students can reach the mainstream easily. Overall everything is fine in Hess
- Not to be on a school bus for a long time (ie. French Imm. Closer to home school)
- Parent community within the school to help each other
- K-8 in one building
- Trees/grass – nature/green space
- Music, financial literacy, piano, guitar
- Specialized programs
- Swimming lessons
- Find ways to bridge gap for parents to be involved especially for parents who don't speak English – find ways
- Parents/students/teachers working together
- Comprehensive services for new immigrant families (social agencies, community services)
- Take the time to consider the purpose that “unique” schools like Hess serve in the community
- There are fundamental principles that make a school great – parent involvement, student participation, walkable schools (these will be lost if Hess closes)
- Main library is walkable, Nations is walkable – if schools closes the neighbourhood loses the connection to these resources. Parents will be cut off from community services
- Students with special needs (ESL)
- French immersion boundaries
- Accessibility for all students
- After school programming
- Relationship/trust bank account has been growing for 30 years / partnership between home and school
- Don't just think about the money
- Religious accommodation with the mosque across the street
- Community links for holiday meals eg. Rotary club, Hamilton Spec
- Consistency
- Teachers who care
- Brings the neighbourhood together
- Library closer to the school
- “full service” community schools with varied services such as childcare, medical care, job training etc. Some vacant space to be used for this
- Playground with parkland
- Facilitation of community connects and supports through services offered in the school (any programming that brings community together)
- Safe environment (not set up on major street – set to side street of school)



- FI – more focused, more developed, not big-kids to speak French all day long
- Fence around elem school to keep kids in
- Student feedback – would like to wear a uniform and have cooking class
- Food purchased in school to help with not leaving schools – cafeteria
- Playground at Hess poor quality concrete make it not harmful for children – grass? Daughter rips pants if she falls down.
- No split grades
- Hess well represents the community with location, culture and after school activities
- Teachers/parents getting close and they understand the needs of the community
- Want homework
- No cell phone use during school hours
- Better / bigger gym
- Better tech facilities
- Single parent – need walkable
- What does that mean – internal/external?
- Transportation accessibility?
- Hub for programs to bring new/old ppl in and opportunities for public access to internet
- Learning commons with community access
- Limitations: no one has computers/access to internet at home
- Daycare/after school/adult ed
- Centrally located – closer to homes, safer for kids
- Playgrounds
- Sustainability – driving active /healthy lifestyles outside school hours
- City and board partnerships & initiatives
- Cross-cultural learning /sharing
- Grandparent engagement

## **What is working well in your school community?**

- School is helpful – great education
- School is accessible – close walking distance
- Families don't drive
- Good community
- Hess has a very good sense of community. This will change if Hess closes -2
- Hess St. is like a home
- Hess school provides a safe recreational area for our children to play after school and on weekends
- After school programming - 2
- Hess has great teachers. We worry that the quality of education will go down
- To be connected to my school community I need to be close by. This will force me to move homes and I cannot afford to move.
- Worry about sending kids on a bus
- Small size
- Teacher relationships are good - 3
- Access to resources /support
- Walkability - 10



- No busing – reduces family time together
- Mixed community – newcomers, heterogeneous community
- Little teacher turn-over
- Parent/teacher relationships are positive, trusting -2
- Generational relationship to school
- Green space
- Programming in school so students can be part of mainstream eg. Hockey, dance, basketball etc.
- Thinking toward the future, not the past
- More parent involvement
- Maintain families in the downtown community – grow a great community
- Satisfied due to friendly teachers and staff
- No major complaints
- Hess students are from neighbourhood. No transportation necessary
- Many students walk home for lunch
- Some students go home because of unavailability of appropriate food/containers to send to school - 2
- Available space in school for ESL, ALPHA
- 3 out 4 unused classrooms are used to support high needs students- limited to no prior schooling, brand new to Canada
- K-8 in one building
- Older children can walk younger children home
- Good extracurricular activities
- Familiarity with neighbourhood
- Convenient to pick sick children up
- Relationships with staff and community
- Proximity to the arts
- Accessibility
- Wesley Early Years across the street
- Strong parent / community at smaller schools
- Hess has great relationships with city organizations, not-for-profits eg. Rotary, city kid
- Diverse community
- Great connection with SJAM/continuity between Elem/Sec.
- School partnership with local comm. Centres to offer programs eg; Bennetto, North Hamilton, Houghson Baptist Church, Wesley Urgan Ministries, Green Ventures Community Garden
- Early Years Centre at Bennetto
- Programs at school – partnerships with art gallery trips (Earl Kitchener – amazing program – promising practises – how do we even the playing field for other communities)
- Relationships with principals and teachers are positive
- “everything”
- Love the school community

### **What additional factors would you like the advisory committee to consider?**

- Transitions are difficult for students
- Supports for ESL/Spec Ed
- Safe area for students / children to play during school and outside school areas





- Less busing – less pollution
- Don't close any schools
- Make schools better
- Keep cultural community together
- All students have potential – don't let teachers treat them like they have less potential because of their educational background or because English isn't their first language
- Will be a disaster if families from Oxford and Queen St. have to move. The downtown area will be empty of families with kids.
- Breakfast club
- Homework club/help available
- Lunch options – pizza
- Students exposed to a variety of cultures (see similarities/differences)
- Create multicultural school – pride in culture and pride in Canada together
- Unused space in schools rented out
- Consider using data to plan new schools (ie; Dr. Davey is new but already has 300 empty spaces)
- Consider how to communicate with people who don't speak English
- There is a mosque near Hess school- moving the students would disconnect them from Mosque
- Amount to renovate/repair Hess is negligible
- Hess has truly become part of “central Hamilton”, closing the school will leave a void in the community that will not be replaced by a community centre (having a community centre & the school is ideal – community would be better having both)
- SAGE program rocks -why is it not promoted? How would school demographics / #s increase at Strathcona with more program visibility
- Location to well represent the community
- Consider the social, cultural factors in the community
- HW!!!
- Better budgeting for school facilities
- Sports, basketball, soccer nets/badminton,
- Technology – more iPads, Wifi
- Languages – more FI, Background ESL
- Cultural mix through the Arts
- People made housing choices based on school location-moving is expensive
- Have FI at our school
- Keeping school open
- Don't base closure on school performance
- The proposal affects the most disenfranchised population – it will have a ripple effect
- Children's rights – close to services
- Consider closures only in neighbourhoods where parents have cars
- Prepare parents more before a large meeting
- Consider future growth
- Consider unique population
- Comm. Consultation/input prior to making/presenting the Board Option
- Stress factors (financial, etc) where is the HSR route to Bennetto?)



- Traffic arteries – walking is not safe
- Bussing costs for info for options A & B
- Schools are important to attract families to the area
- What will happen to evening and summer camps etc.
- Accurate projections based on newcomer families and growing demographics – how does this affect the families living / moving there? West Harbour development/ Barton/Tiffany
- If kids are farther away – will they get transportation
- Need to consider the composition of community individually – not through standardized formula
- If closing Hess what are the budget costs and how better to use that budget to improve, revitalize current environment for students
- Bussing impacts parents as well as students

#### Additional comments/questions:

- I think the # of requirements for parking and playground space may not necessarily be the minimums that the board demands. Eg; staff could be encouraged to take public transit, cycle, walk etc. and incentives provided to do so. Transit tickets, safe bike storage.
- My grandchildren go to a downtown Toronto school. There is no playground, they use community parks, pools, rinks etc. The building is old yet the children, parents and staff love their school. As a friend said – bells and whistles do not a great school make.
- Are the upgrades for Hess as projected really that necessary? It's not the bricks and mortar either that makes a good school. I know of excellent school buildings in Europe that are hundreds of years old
- Concerns regarding – physical boundaries, Gr. 1-5 then school move, French Immersion, Outdoor space, Green space, inside school facilities
- Planning forecasts go up and down with ages – school must be flexible – but locations planning in communities must be stable/long term
- An existing facility provides an established neighbourhood character and use
- Will individual trustees commit to NOT close ANY schools in their present term?
- Will microphone be provided to people at next meeting?
- One thing is for sure – more planning and effort need to go into the community presentations. You have 7 or 8 translators who need to translate to entire tables and they are expected to do that while someone is standing with a microphone in front of power point slides. You have a lot of people who are here and want to contribute information and / or ask questions. There are at least 200 people in this room at the moment. You can't read from slides for an hour then take questions and act like you care about what the people in the room have to say. It took one hour and 10 minutes to get to the table sessions. And many people, myself included just got frustrated over this time as we couldn't hear anything.
- Renew old buildings, review plans for future (population, partnerships in Hamilton), better use money, people & equipment for future learning. (plan for these changes).
- Answer general questions that multiple people would need to know
- Visibility of designated areas for languages
- Large signs
- Maybe separate dates for languages
- Clear options/choices
- Which schools need funding and how much needs to go into each school?
- Why did you start with Hess? Did you feel they wouldn't fight back?



- Do you have a 10 year plan that will consider the population explosion?
- If the purpose is to open discussion, why was the closure of Hess chosen as the proposal?
- How much are projections used in the numbers going forward in time to 2026 and why are they mostly decreasing?
- Ryerson – structure of building over capacity – reallocation of programs throughout the north
- Projection accuracy – megaschools are not optimal for learning
- Consider special programs at the same time
- Only 2 schools go to Gr. 8 and you are closing one of them
- Greenspace is not an issue. Relationships and walkability are what matter
- Can the committee address Ryerson’s issues? They are ignored in the proposal 128% capacity.

How reliable are projections given immigration patterns and development of no