

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB)

Dalewood Elementary Accommodation Review Committee Meeting

Dalewood School

October 5, 2011

Public Meeting #3

Minutes

ATTENDANCE:

Committee Members

Chair –Krys Croxall

Voting Members – Suzanne Brown, Maria Carbone, Nadia Coakley, Pamela Irving, Anita McGowan, Kim Newcombe, Michael Reid, Kristen West

Non-Voting Members –Judith Bishop, Joanne Hall, Margaret Jobson, Debra Lewis, Peter Martindale, Denise Minardi, Colleen Morgan, Michelle Rodney-Bartalos

Regrets

Voting Members - Emily Reid

Non-Voting Members – Heidi Harper, Silvana Galli Lamarche, Brian McHattie

Resource Staff

Ellen Warling, Daniel Del Bianco, Ron Gowland, Jackie Penman from Corporate Communications.

Recording Secretary

Tracy McKillop

1. Welcome and Introductions – Superintendent Krys Croxall, Chair

Superintendent Krys Croxall thanked everyone for joining the meeting and for their interest in the process. She shared that this is the third of four “town hall” style public meetings hosted by the Dalewood ARC. The first was held on April 6th to review the ARC Process and the second on May 19th to review the staff recommendation. The Chair stated that the meeting tonight will focus on the work completed by the ARC to date along with a number of options created by the Committee. Superintendent Croxall introduced the members of the Committee. The Board staff were then introduced which included Ellen Warling from the Accommodation and Planning Division, Ron Gowland from the Capital Projects Division, Daniel Del Bianco acting as Support Staff to the ARC and Tracy McKillop, the Recording Secretary.

2. Purpose of the Meeting

The Chair commenced the evening by providing a bit of background about the accommodation review process. In February of this year, the Board of Trustees approved the Terms of Reference for the Dalewood ARC. There are four key reasons behind any accommodation review and they include:

1. To ensure efficient use of available space to accommodate students appropriately as it relates to long-term enrolment demands and facility utilization
2. To ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of our school facilities
3. To continue the revitalization of our schools by reducing long-term capital renewal requirements
4. To continue the implementation of the Board's evolving program strategy

As an organization the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board must address these challenges so that funding can be directed to students and programming. As part of this evening's presentation, you will hear more about these challenges.

Tonight's meeting will do four things:

1. The first is to provide an overview of the accommodation review process.
2. Review the work that the Committee has completed to date.
3. Review accommodation options created by the ARC
4. And, finally to provide members of the community the opportunity to ask questions and make comments about the process and accommodation options.

Superintendent Croxall shared that along with the Agenda was a copy of the norms for the meeting. She stated that it is important to have a robust dialogue about the matters before the Committee and these norms help to achieve that.

She also stated that included as part of the agenda is an information package containing the maps, enrolment figures and the financial data that will be reviewed this evening.

3.0 Presentations - Ellen Warling, Anita McGowan and Michael Reid.

To view the presentation please click on the following link: http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/arcelementary/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/DalewoodARC_PublicMeeting3_Presentation_Oct5_2011.pdf

Ms. Warling reviewed "Why we are here tonight" as well as the ARC process.

Why we are here tonight?

- Provide an overview of the *Accommodation Review Process*
- Review the work completed by the Accommodation Review Committee (ARC)
- Presentation of alternative accommodation options
- Review the next steps of the ARC
- Address any questions/ comments pertaining to the ARC process or proposed accommodation options

3.1 Brief Overview of the Accommodation Process

The Accommodation Review Process

- The process follows Ministry of Education guidelines, Board Policy and the Terms of Reference
- There are committee working meetings and public meetings.
- All meetings are open to the public

- The Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) is tasked with developing an accommodation solution that will address the long-term requirements of the community

ARC Recommendations

- The ARC will prepare a report that will be presented to the Board of Trustees
- This report will include the ARC's recommendations
- The Trustees will also receive a report from Senior Administration with their recommendations to the Board of Trustees
- The Board of Trustees will make the final decisions

- 4 Public Meetings
- Originally 4 Working Group Meetings
- ARC has added 4 more Working Group Meetings
 - June 22, 2011
 - September 7, 2011
 - October 5, 2011
 - October 12, 2011
- *ARC has proposed extending the report deadline until December 2, 2011– Requires approval from the Board of Trustees
- After receipt of final report Trustees have to wait a minimum of 60 prior to voting on a final decision

Ms. Warling spoke of the information that had been shared with the ARC to date, which can be found on the web site, as well as what the ARC considered when developing their options which included:

Reference Criteria (as outlined in the Board policy):

- a) Facility Utilization
- b) Permanent and Non-Permanent Accommodation
- c) Program Offerings
- d) Quality of Teaching and Learning Environments
- e) Transportation
- f) Partnerships
- g) Equity

3.2 Work Completed by the Dalewood ARC – Anita McGowan

Anita McGowan spoke on behalf of the Committee detailing the work that the ARC has completed since the last public meeting. This includes:

- 5 Working Group Meetings
- Reviewed data contained in the School Information Profiles (SIPs)
- Requested additional data/ information
- Developed alternative accommodation options
- School Tours
- Proposed extending the ARC report deadline from October 28, 2011 to December 2, 2011 – Still requires approval from the Board of Trustees

Summary of Working Group Meeting:

- Review of the data collected in the SIP
- Request/ review of additional data
- Presentation by Antonio Paez – “Walkable Schools for Sustainable Communities”
- Develop and review of alternate accommodation options

Ms. McGowan spoke of the Key areas of examination which include:

- Board Rationale and Scope for the ARC
- School Information Profiles [SIP]
- School Utilization
- Enrolment Trends and Projection Accuracy – Historical and projected enrolments by-school, School Capacity
- Facility Condition Index [FCI]

Data and Information used in the Creation of Alternative ARC Options:

- HWDSB transportation policy
- Enrolment projections by program
- Grade structures for new HWDSB facilities
- Student plots by-school, by-program
- Enrolment projections by program
- Financial Impact of proposed options

Ms McGowan shared that the FCI was different and the enrolment numbers were not the same as the original data so they revised the information. The Committee looked at the utility costs of Dalewood and the Recreation Centre and stripped out the costs of the Recreation Centre. They also requested a copy of the report approving the initiation of the Dalewood ARC.

Ms. McGowan spoke of the method of enrolment and she contacted the schools and learned that there were 30 more students enrolled this year than was projected. She shared that the Committee is not sure how the projections will be affected by McMaster University. They looked at capacity and how the classrooms are designated and loaded according to the Ministry of Education guidelines e.g. kindergarten 20 and primary cap of 23.

Ms. McGowan explained what they had learned about the facility condition on fixed assets and their life cycle. She shared the money that had been spent on each of the schools and why two were previously designated as Prohibitive to repair (PTR). She stated that the Board still has significant maintenance requirements and limited funds.

School Tours:

- 30 – 45 minute tours
- June 22, 2011 (all 3 schools)
- Including site walk, gymnasium, classrooms, library, etc.

Ms McGowan was pleasantly surprised at the condition of the buildings. She feels they are great old schools with great learning environments and found it to be a very positive experience.

3.3 Accommodation Options – Michael Reid

Development of Alternative Accommodation Options:

- The ARC initially proposed 9 new options in addition to the original staff recommendation
- Through group discussions this total grew to 13

Mr. Reid shared that the Committee looked at reconfiguring the schools to see if this would address their concerns, would they have the right number of students to run great programs because currently split classes are common.

Mr. Reid spoke to the following slides:

- The ARC initially proposed 9 new options in addition to the original staff recommendation
- Through group discussions this total grew to 13 – the Committee combined two of the schools in every kind of combination.
- Options included:
 - Closing all schools and building a new “super school”
 - Consolidating the three schools into two of the existing schools considering all sites, and program offerings and grade models
 - Consolidating with local partners to optimize building utilization

Some of the options were not workable. Dalewood could not accommodate the GR Allan students.

Mr. Reid reviewed the **Staff recommendation** which included the closure of Prince Philip and Dalewood would be English 6-8 and French Immersion 6-8. GR Allan would house the English JK-5, French Immersion SK-5 and the Mandarin JK-3. The renovations to the remaining schools would include:

GR Allan

- 4 additional Kindergarten spaces
- 3 additional classrooms
- 2nd General Purpose Room
- Larger Staff and Work Room
- Book Room
- Accessible washroom
- 2nd floor washrooms
- Elevator

Dalewood

- Larger Staff and Work Room
- Book Room
- Accessible washroom
- Elevator

The **Status Quo Option (Option 11)** included maintaining the three schools with renovations for the full day kindergarten program as well as meeting the accessibility needs. Mr. Reid showed the status quo boundary which indicated there will be a drop of about 150 students. The Ministry of Education funds at 85% and this option drops over the next few years. If they choose to remain with status quo they may lose the facility renewal opportunity. Status Quo maintains the programs offered at Dalewood which attracts and maintains specialist teachers and the rotary system. If we bring the Prince Philip students here it creates a challenge in keeping these programs.

He shared that when there are more parents walking their children to school there is more community involvement. It has been proven that transportation mode in childhood is often maintained in adulthood. Enrolment will increase in the next 5 years so the Committee have been asking “can we wait and see what will happen in 5 years”. The challenge the Board is having is funding all three schools. Mr. Reid indicated that the Committee would like the Community’s feedback on the status quo option.

Option 13 would entail the closure of Dalewood and two walkable K-8 schools; however, this would mean the loss of special programming that is currently offered at Dalewood. Both schools would require renovations as well as accessibility standards updated. Funding would be required which would be in the area of \$6 million dollars. English will be housed in Prince Philip School and you will have split classes.

Prince Philip would offer English JK-8 and the Mandarin program JK-3

GR Allan would offer JK-8 English and SK-8 French Immersion. This would minimize transportation needs and this would not have the program balance compared to the board recommendation.

Two K-8 schools [Option 13] Considerations:

- Community Schools
- Walk Ability/Transportation Issues
- Facility Utilization
- Facility Renewal Opportunity
- Program Balance [English/FI]
- Equity The utilization is on the slide.

Mr. Ron Gowland reviewed the renovations the proposed options would necessitate and Ms. Warling explained the financial impact of the option. One item that was not included in the RECAPP data was the air conditioning in all the schools so that cost has been added in. The Ministry of Education will fund the renovations necessary for the implementation of FDK (Full Day Kindergarten).

3.4 Next Steps – The next steps were shared with the community.

- **Working Group Meeting #7**
 - October 12, 2011 @ Board Office
 - Finalize ARC recommendation
- **Public Meeting #4**
 - October 19, 2011 @ Dalewood
 - Present final ARC recommendation

4.0 Questions/Comments from the Public

A member of the public shared that she has been to all of the working meetings and the public meetings and has witnessed and appreciates how hard the Committee has been working. She would like to keep the status quo. The elementary school and the middle school work well together. Dalewood provides effective programming and a nice transition from grade 8 to grade 9. The two gyms provide a great program and she feels the best curriculum delivery is by maintaining all three schools. She spoke of the importance of a sense of community and walkability. If Prince Philip closes there would be increased transportation costs. Although work needs to be done she believes status quo is the best.

A gentleman spoke in favour of the Dalewood programming and the middle school. Dalewood has a lot of facilities that it can offer to the students. It has specialized resources and teacher complement and fabulous extra curricular activities. He fears the specialized programs would disappear.

Dalewood offers academic and athletic success and achievement. The middle school model is wonderful and we are losing a lot of specialized programming across the Board. If we close Dalewood would we be able to have these specialized programs or rooms available. Many schools do not have auditoriums. We have specialized teachers and programs here and he was disheartened to hear that they are thinking of closing it. He loves his school and programming and the Art teacher at Dalewood.

A gentleman commended the ARC on their work. He shared that he has a son with special needs and is concerned that his son will be lost in shuffle at a large school at GR Allan. The Ministry seems to be not funding the schools for local sustainable schools. Under option 13 he found the disposition fees from the sale of Dalewood to be low and does not agree with option 13.

A community member quoted Jane Jacobs and spoke of the importance of community. She feels that closing Prince Philip would be a great loss to community, parents and families. She spoke of the value that she shares with her children/family and does not agree with it coming down to money. She spoke of walk ability and the richness of the diverse families that attend Prince Philip which has a unique spirit. She shared her fears of children having to cross Main St and feels that the uniqueness will be lost. She also feels the Mandarin will be lost at a larger school because they often speak the language in the playground. She spoke of their family's passion regarding education and feels that we should think outside of the box and not let money be the dictator.

A grandmother shared that this is a difficult position because she feels that if they don't go with the Board's decision then they won't get all of the little rewards. She doesn't agree with it coming down to money.

A Dalewood graduate is in favour of status quo. She loved the middle school program and liked experiencing the rotary system in preparation for high school. She also enjoyed the music program and she still comes back and helps with the choir program. Her heart is broken at the thought that this might be gone.

A parent in the neighbourhood who likes the status quo wonders about the underlying rationale and questioned the methodology of the enrolment of the future. Has the secondary migration been taken into account? Often people move here for the schools so was that taken into account?

Ms. Warling shared that the Committee received a presentation on the enrolment projections which can be found on the web site.

Three students would love to have status quo. They love the art, science, music and French programs and spoke of the enjoyable parts of those programs. They spoke of the water programs that they are involved in, the OELC – students who are leaders around the school and Me to We which create a better future support a positive environment at the school.

A woman whose daughter went from GR Allan to Prince Philip shared that driving does become an issue and she still drives her daughter to maintain the friendship from the students at GR Allan. She indicated that over the summer they had new people come into the neighbourhood and there will be 10 new kids within a three block radius coming to Prince Philip in the next couple of years. She wanted to know if this has been taken into consideration. Both home and school will be affected because students will no longer be within walking distance.

Losing walk ability is a huge loss and she would like to see status quo. The school has a great baseball diamond and even the elderly love to sit out on porch and watch the children in the neighbourhood. There are three generations in that community.

A woman questioned the financial impact and wanted clarification regarding why Ministry of Education funding changes so dramatically.

Mr. Gowland shared that the Ministry of Education has criteria that need to be followed. The Staff recommendation will have extra FDK (full day Kindergarten) funding for the new classrooms and the regular capital funding.

A woman shared that she put her daughter in the FI program at GR Allan and moved their home and committed to the drive for seven years. FI in public school is essential. She has already experienced a school closing and is amazed at the school community at GR Allan. She has been very involved in the school and the GR Allan community and feels that you will not lose your sense of community if you are not within walking distance. She would like to see status quo. She spoke of her personal school experiences and the importance of the elementary school experience.

Q. Could you share with us how you are going to make a choice and what criteria you will use?

A. The Chair shared that the criteria was shared in the presentation, as well as the financial summary. They are also listening to the public and will take that into consideration. They will discuss what they have heard tonight. Ms. McGowan stated that they don't have a final decision and there are pros and cons for each. The Committee has heard that the recommendation should reflect the values of the community and they will discuss that. Mr. Reid indicated that there are a couple of driving factors and the demographics are difficult – it is like forecasting the weather.

Q. The Liberal government is looking at increasing University enrolment and how will that affect the area – will there be more student housing made available and more families moving into the area?

A. Full day kindergarten is currently on hold. The implementation means renovations and the removal of asbestos which is why the costs are so high. This makes the decision very difficult and there are factors driving the decision.

Q. What are we going to get in the end? For option 13 would those schools have a dedicated drama room, science labs, and music room?

Mr. Gowland indicated “no” this was not part of the renovations.

The Dalewood School Chair and a Committee member presented a petition from the Dalewood community to keep the school open. Does the K-8 meet the needs of our students? They would like to see the status quo.

The Chair shared that the Committee has had a great deal of discussion on school models K-8 versus K-5. Auditoriums seem to be from another era. In a K-8 large school you will get all of the specialized programming; however, in a school of less than 300 students you usually do not get that.

Innovation Park or McMaster University– we are not sure how this is going to impact the prediction models. We really don't know at this point in time so we look at the trends in the area. Ms. Warling indicated that the

enrolment data is pretty stable. A lot of students, from the Dundas community, in the FI program have moved over to Dundana however the enrolment seems to be stabilizing.

Q. With the Board Option what are the implications on the 2/3 FI and the 1/3 Eng?

A. It is good to have a balanced stream. One stream can feel like they are being squeezed out. Once the Dundas population goes to the Dundana School it will begin to balance out. SK is currently 1/3 to 2/3 and that will go through the entire school.

If recommend the status quo what will be the impact?

A. We can't recommend another ARC for five years.

C. I like the space at GR Allan and Prince Philip for the students to run and play.

Q. If Prince Philip closes the only school in the area will be a catholic school. Has the Board surveyed the Community to see how many students will change Boards? She would move her child to the Catholic Board to keep their child in a neighbourhood school.

Q. Can we change the Ministry funding structure?

A. No we have no say in that.

The Chair shared that often the Board receives only a portion of what they need and usually there are strings attached dictating how that money is used.

C. I would like to thank the ARC for their work and the excellent presentation. I did not understand the RECAPP data software at the beginning of the process or that these are not necessarily items that must be replaced but are under consideration. I would like to see status quo. I moved to this area because of the schools. I like the fact that my son has blossomed at Dalewood and has had this experience.

C. I do not want to see any school close. I feel that it is important to really evaluate any school and closure will have a great impact on the families and the communities. These families dedicate a lot of time and money in their schools and this will have a large emotional impact on these families. This will affect the development of these students if Dalewood closes.

A woman from the audience listed some of the things that she heard from the community during the evening. She asked those in the audience who would like to have the status quo option to raise their hands - the entire room raised their hands.

A man spoke of his son who loves his programs at Dalewood and the passion that his son expresses about his school.

A gentleman spoke to the Committee about their difficult task and about the importance of Community. He spoke of student housing. He shared that his hope is for homes to be sold back to families and that enrolment will change. He would love to see status quo.

A gentleman shared that the Committee has done a spectacular job. He supports status quo. He studies Cities in his work and feels frustrated with how the Government messes up Cities and questioned the motivation behind closing schools when he does not feel that we do have clear evidence of what we are talking about.

Q. Why now? Funding and demographics are obviously a reason however we do have turnover in our neighbourhoods. An audience member questioned the PTR and the fact that both Dalewood and Prince Philip did not receive much money over the past few years due to the fact that they were deemed PTR. Where do we stand on that?

A. The Ministry of Education no longer uses PTR and those dollars are no longer available. That funding was no longer available as of two years ago.

A gentleman shared that his views are in synch with everyone else in the room. He shared that Option 13 should not be given any consideration. He works at Dalewood often because he chooses to supply teach at this school. He likes the middle school model and feels that it is working very well at Dalewood.

There was a request for clarification on the funding. Do we have to above 85% to receive funding or does that get cut off if we don't meet those projections?

Ms. Warling clarified the funding question and shared that her task is to come to 100% utilization. The Ministry of Education guidelines dictate that the Board could not come back to the community within the five years unless something catastrophic should happen.

Q. If we maintain status quo does the current funding idea get maintained?

A. The Chair shared that Dalewood's needs would get included along with all of the other school's needs.

Mr. Reid shared that the Committee does not make a decision they only make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees along with the Staff recommendation which is also under consideration by the Board of Trustees.

The Chair thanked the Co-Chairs for a fantastic job. As the Superintendent of all three schools she shared that it was wonderful to hear all of the stories that were shared and it made her heart happy to hear them.