

Hello,

I am a parent from Queensdale and I have been attending the ARC public meetings and I am extremely concerned about the timeline. I am worried that the committee members are not being given enough time to consider all of the information prior to making their recommendation to the trustees. At the last public meeting it was very evident to me that committee members were not well informed on issues such as transportation costs, what will happen to special programs within schools, and several others. We were told that information that was requested would be provided, but when? Will the committee members have sufficient time to take it all in and make informed recommendations? I am very concerned. Could you please consider giving this group additional time and additional working meetings to do their job properly? The recommendations they make will have a serious impact on our community and to my family for years to come and must not be taken lightly. Thank you very much for taking the time to read this email, this means a great deal to me and to my husband and our daughter,

Very sincerely,

Jayne Jennings

Dear Mr. Prendergast,

It has come to my attention that the Board sent the members of the Central Mountain ARC an email just before Christmas imposing a deadline (which expired yesterday - January 9th, 2014) for the submittal of Accommodation Review Options and direction that Accommodation Review Options can only be formally submitted through the ARC.

These instructions from the Board seem purposefully intended to avoid meaningful consultation with the public.

I would like to remind the Board that the ARC is an independent committee, and as such, the ARC is free to set it's own schedule and procedural submission requirements.

Further, through freedom of information requests, we have documented serious and systemic errors and omissions in the information the Board has provided to the ARC as part of their decision making process.

Examples include the following:

- Former Board Chair Tim Simmons personally acknowledging that the Board's enrollment projections are drastically inaccurate.
- Numerous glaring errors in the Board's Facility Condition Index calculations, including obvious decimal place errors resulting in some schools being assigned repair costs hundreds of thousands of dollars more expensive than the same repairs at other schools and multiple repair line items being assigned the exact same cost for vastly different repairs.
- Extremely basic, fundamental information allegedly does not exist - such as the projected cost of transportation for the Board's preferred Accommodation Review Option or summaries of the annual capital cost expenditures made at each school.

The Board has also extended the deadline for many other pending Freedom of Information requests until January 24th, 2014. Further, several Freedom of Information requests have been denied and we are in the process of appealing those to the Ontario Privacy Commissioner.

As you are aware, the ARC is required to base their recommendations on factual information.

However, despite repeated concerns with the validity of the information presented brought forward by the public through written correspondence and at public meetings, the Board has remained unwilling or unable to provide the ARC with the time or information they need to perform their due diligence.

Although it may be convenient for the Board to use the ARC as a shield from their own due diligence and lack of good faith consultation with the public, blaming the ARC does not relieve the Board of its obligations.

I request the following action:

1. That this correspondence be read aloud, in full, at the next ARC working group meeting on Tuesday January 14th, 2014 and that the requested ARC votes be fully recorded in the minutes of meeting.
2. By recorded vote, I would ask that the ARC confirm that any information pertaining to requests of information from the public, submittal of Accommodation Review Options by the public to the ARC, or deadlines for submission were never formally communicated to the public through normal distribution channels (such as fliers, mail drops, newspaper or radio advertising or direct email to members of the public who attended the public meetings and left their contact information).
3. By recorded vote, I would ask that the ARC confirm that the individual ARC members rely on Board staff and the Committee chair for interpretation of the ARC Terms of Reference.
4. By recorded vote, I would ask that the ARC confirm that through this correspondence, through previous correspondence by others and at the Public Meetings held on October 8th, 2013, November 5th, 2013 and December 10th, 2013 it has been formally brought to their attention that there are serious, fundamental errors and omissions in the information the Board has provided them with to make their recommendations.
5. By recorded vote, I would ask the ARC to reject the Board's imposed deadline for the submittal of Accommodation Review Options.
6. By recorded vote, I would ask the ARC to reject the Board's imposed direction that Accommodation Review Options can only be formally submitted by a majority ARC vote, and instead agree that Accommodation Review Options can be received directly from the public.
7. By recorded vote, I would ask the ARC to postpone the Accommodation Review Process until the Ontario Privacy Commissioner has formally ruled on all Freedom of Information requests being appealed.
8. By recorded vote, I would ask the ARC to postpone the Accommodation Review Process until a minimum of four weeks after the January 24th, 2014 deadline for the return of the delayed freedom of information requests in order to allow the public sufficient time to review the information received and convey that information to the ARC.
9. By recorded vote, I would ask that the ARC agree to accept a summary of errors and omissions discovered by the public through Freedom of Information and schedule additional ARC working group meetings as required once all Freedom of Information requests have been processed and the Ontario Privacy Commissioner has made their rulings.

Thank you,

John-Paul Danko, P. Eng.

January 14th, 2014

Correspondence

Working Group Meeting #7

Dear Mr. Prendergast,

I would like to formally request that the Arc committee for the Central Mountain elementary review be given more time to prepare prior to the next working meeting. While I do believe that the board is trying to gain public feedback, it is impossible to gather all of the necessary information given the limited amount of time. This process is proving to be more complex and time consuming than anyone ever imagined. Thus an extension seems the only fair and plausible course.

Thank you for your time.

Nancy Kish

I am writing as a member of the public who has attended most of the working and public meetings so I can understand the A.R.C. process currently underway for Ward 7. I know that Hamilton has planned for the minimum of meetings suggested by the Ministry of Education. From what I can see, more time is needed to consider all the options. The process as designed puts a lot of pressure on the volunteers who are part of the ARCs and they are really struggling to do a good job. As a concerned citizen, I am asking for an additional working and public meeting. Several members of my neighbourhood have told me that they are having trouble finding information about what's going on and want to attend more meetings.

Thank you for your consideration.

Vicki Taylor

Dear Mr. Prendergast,

I have attended all of the ARC Public meetings, as well as all of the ARC Working meetings. I do not believe there is enough time left in the remaining meetings for the ARC to consider all of the public input and information they have to consider before making their recommendation. And unfortunately the holidays make this whole process more broken up and not at the forefront of people's minds. I believe that this Arc process deserves more consideration and that the HWDSB should consider adding additional Public and Working meetings to facilitate a better outcome.

Thank you,
Rachel Kostuk

Dear Mr. Prendergast,

I am a parent from one of the central mountain schools being considered for closure and as such have been attending ARC public meetings. I am extremely concerned that the committee members are not being given enough time to consider all of the information and public opinions prior to making their recommendation to the trustees. At the last public meeting it was certainly evident that committee members were not well informed on issues such as transportation costs, what will happen to special programs within schools, and several others raised. It was repeated several times that information requested would be provided, but when? Will the committee members have sufficient time to take it all in and make informed recommendations? I am doubtful. Despite their efforts, I believe that the ARC committee members are being particularly strained. Please consider giving this group additional time and additional working meetings to do their job properly. The recommendations they make will have a serious impact on our community for years to come, it can not be taken lightly. Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Leigh Wilson

Dear Mr. Prendergast and ARC members,

Happy New Year!

I wanted to take a moment and thank you for having the question and answer period at the last public meeting. And for all of the time you have invested in the process so far. I know that all who attended were happy to have the opportunity to ask some questions and address our concerns.

As you prepare for your next working group meeting I wanted to revisit a concern raised at the end of the last public meeting about the meeting schedule and timelines. Since you are still accepting and considering options and have not had the opportunity to consider all the costs and details I am sure you are all feeling the pressure of the deadline with only two working group meetings and one public meeting left on the original schedule. I am concerned that keeping this schedule will not allow the public to see and give feedback on the new options you receive nor will you have adequate time to make truly informed decisions.

I understand that there is a 120 day period allowed for the "public consultation process" and I think, given the amount of work still ahead of you a few additional meetings need to be added to the schedule. At a minimum, one public meeting is needed so that the new options you receive can be presented to the public for feedback before you select one and begin your draft report, this would then add at least one working group meeting as well.

I understand that this has been a big time commitment for all of you and while I am sure there is no desire to drag the process out I am equally sure that none of you want to rush such an important process.

Sincerely,
Randy Vansevenant
Mountain Resident and Parent

To Central Mountain ARC Members and HWDSB,

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season with their families.

I understand from the meeting schedule that you are set to have Working Group Meeting #7 on Tuesday January 14th. At Public Meeting #3 we were told that you were still accepting options and that you would also be provided with the costing information for the options already being considered so I am sure the agenda for this meeting covers a number of key topics including,

- Discussion of where we are in the process.
- Review of the feedback from the last public meeting.
- Review of the costs associated with the current options.
- Review and discussion of new options that have been submitted.

It is where we are in the process that I am most concerned with at this point and I hope one of the first issues you plan to address is the meeting schedule. Obviously additional meetings are going to be required if you are going to have time to consider the options and present them for public feedback prior to making your selection and writing your report. I would think at least a 5th Public Meeting and 9 or 10 Working Group meetings are going to be required for you to fulfill your mandate.

With 120 days from the first public meeting to submit your report you can delay submission until February 19th which will allow you to fit in the additional meetings required and I urge you to seriously consider doing so.

Thank you
Stefanie Sheils

I have a suggestion which could save a few mountain community elementary schools from closing – convert them to dual track French Immersion (F.I.) schools. Compared to other communities within the city, the Mountain has long been under serviced regarding F.I. sites. Currently there are 11 portables at the only two Mountain F.I. sites at Norwood and Lawfield schools, which demonstrates the need for more F.I. sites. Opening additional French Immersion Mountain sites would make the program more accessible, eventually relieve the over crowding at the current F.I. schools and provide the needed student numbers to keep some neighbourhood elementary schools from closing.

While your committee is limited to considering only the Central Mountain, hopefully the addition of F.I. sites can be used as a strategy to save elementary schools across the Mountain.

Dan Gardiner

January 14th, 2014

Correspondence

Working Group Meeting #7

Dear Mr. Prendergast,

The right decision is possible when all options are unbiasedly considered against one another, including the initial proposal that preceded the options. It is realized that this takes time and may not be possible within proposed time limits.

There is no embarrassment in extending the time frame to lend credence to the process.

After all, we do not want to put the decision makers in a hastened position of hammering a square peg into a round hole.

Oh - by the way, I'm still waiting a response to my "Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act" request of November 13, 2013. I did receive a reply dated December 13 2013, that basically stated "the Request cannot reasonably be completed in the time limit provided at section 19 of the Act" and therefore was extended to January 13, 2014.

As they say "what is good for the goose is good for the gander".

Yours Truly,

Glenn Simpson (a much concerned grandpa)

From: [REDACTED] John-Paul Danko <jpdanko@blurmedia.ca> 12/01/2014 11:34:0... 

Subject: Re: Central Mountain ARC - Schedule, Submissions Errors and Omis...

To: [REDACTED] Michael Prendergast

Cc: [REDACTED] linda.sheppard@hwdsb.on.ca [REDACTED] lillian.orban@hwdsb.on.ca
[REDACTED] pam.reinholdt@hwdsb.on.ca [REDACTED] <Scott.Duvall@hamilton.ca>
[REDACTED] <mayor@hamilton.ca> [REDACTED] pat.stones@hwdsb.on.ca
[REDACTED] John.Malloy@hwdsb.on.ca [REDACTED] jessica.brennan@hwdsb.on.ca
[REDACTED] <MTaylor@ndp.on.ca>

Dear Mr. Prendergast,

Thank you for your reply.

Respectfully, I think that it is more than obvious to all involved that there is no possible way that the Central Mountain ARC can fulfill their mandate as described under the Central Mountain ARC Terms of Reference with a reasonable level of care and due diligence within the prescribed 120 day time limit.

I believe that the scope and complexity of the Central Mountain ARC has proven to be overwhelming to both the individual ARC members and to the Board staff, and there is no good reason to force the conclusion of the Central Mountain ARC simply to satisfy a newly implemented, arbitrary 120 day time limit.

It is worth noting that no other ARC operating under the new 120 day time limit is nearly as complex in terms of the number of schools and the number of options under review as the Central Mountain ARC. It is not unreasonable to provide additional time to a more complex ARC.

As the public has pointed out repeatedly to the Board and to the ARC through written correspondence and at the public meetings, there are numerous, serious errors and omissions to the information the ARC is currently basing their decision on (three examples of which are included in my email dated January 10th, 2014). None of these concerns have ever been formally addressed by the ARC or by the Board.

Upholding the 120 time limit for the Central Mountain ARC will only serve to force the ARC to deliver an inadequate report based on incomplete and inaccurate information, which will ultimately leave the Trustees with a report of little value upon which to base their final decision.

Our community has many freedom of information (FOI) requests that have been delayed by the Board until January 24th, 2014 and several more that will be under appeal with the Ontario Privacy Commissioner. We believe that the information contained in these FOI requests will serve to clarify and fill in the errors and omissions present in the information the ARC is currently basing their decision on, and that it would be in the best interest of the ARC, the Board Staff, students and the Trustees to delay the Central Mountain ARC until all FOI requests have been processed and all FOI appeals have been settled.

I believe that this is a reasonable request that could be accommodated given the will by the Board to do so.

Printed by: Michael Prendergast
Title: Re: Central Mountain ARC - Schedule, Submissions Error...

Therefore, I request the following:

1. That this correspondence be read aloud in full, with reasonable time for discussion at the next Central Mountain ARC workgroup meeting on January 14th, 2014.
2. That the ARC hold a recorded vote to request the Trustees to extend the 120 day time limit until such time as all FOI requests have been processed and all FOI appeals have been settled, plus a minimum of four weeks to allow for the public to present the findings of the FOI requests to the ARC for their consideration.

Sincerely,

John-Paul Danko, P. Eng.

blurMEDIA

www.blurMEDIA.ca
info@blurMEDIA.ca
905 818 5711

On 1/11/2014 1:55 PM, Michael Prendergast wrote:

Dear Mr. Danko,
I have received your requests and will respond next week when I am back in the office. At our next work group meetings the committee will determine timelines for the completion of their report. Final timelines have not been determined and it depends upon how voting members wish to proceed based upon the Terms of Reference that guide their work.
Regards,
M. Prendergast

Sent from FirstClass with my iPhone