

East Hamilton City 1 Accommodation Review Committee  
Public Consultation Meeting # 2  
Thursday, November 07, 2013  
6:00 p.m.

Parkdale Elementary School  
139 Parkdale Avenue North, Hamilton, ON

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Committee Members

**Chair** - Peter Joshua

**Voting Members** - Abbie Boyko, Casey Eaton, Susan Fischer, Laurie Hazelton, Sandra Lindsay, Megan MacDonald, Brian McPhee, Barbara Mitchell, Brianna Okerstrom, Brandy Paul, Samantha Prosser, Norma Rookwood, Carla Shewell, Jennifer Voth, Chris Weston, Shannon Weston, Tracie Wilson

**Non-Voting Members** - Lisa Barzetti, Sandra Constable, Joanna Crapsi-Cascioli, John Gris, Dan Ivankovic, Ray Mulholland, Tiz Penny, Elaine Pilgrim-Susi, Todd White

Regrets

**Voting Members** - Susan Pretula

**Non-Voting Members** - Nil

Resource Staff

Rob Faulkner, Bob Fex, Peter Sovran, Ellen Warling

Recording Secretary

Kathy Forde

**Public** - 37 public attendees were present - Parkdale (8), Rosedale (16), Roxborough Park (1), W.H. Ballard (2), Woodward (5), Viscount Montgomery (2), No School Affiliation Identified (3)

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Chris Weston welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that introductions would follow.

**2. Accommodation Review Summary**

Chris Weston outlined the format for the evening session. As meeting norms were reviewed, it was noted that each school under review is represented on the committee.

### 3. Overview of Accommodation Review Process

Chris Weston indicated that the mandate of the Accommodation Review Committee is to act in an advisory role to study, report and provide recommendations with respect to the schools under review. A staff option has been developed as a starting point. The committee will also develop an option. Trustees will make the final decision. The membership structure was reviewed. Under the Terms of Reference, Reference Criteria are provided as guiding principles for developing recommendations. Key aspects include, but are not limited to, facility utilization; permanent and non-permanent accommodation; program offerings; quality teaching and learning environments; transportation; partnership opportunities; and equity. East Hamilton is involved due to declining enrolment, aging schools and the condition of facilities. Limited funds create a challenge for running schools that are half full. Fewer students reside in this area but the same number of schools continues to be maintained. It is predicted that enrolment will continue to decline so decisions are needed. A roundtable of introductions followed.

### 4. Where the Committee is in the Process

Chris Weston advised that the process began in June 2013 when the preliminary report was approved. From June to September, background material was prepared. Currently, the review phase is underway. Working group meetings and public meetings will continue until January 2014. Community input is essential. In February 2014, the committee will bring a recommendation to the Board for review. By May 2014, it is expected that Trustees will make a decision. Since the last public meeting, the committee has reviewed public feedback and identified common themes. Three of the seven schools have also been toured. The process for identifying key themes was explained.

### 5. Committee Key Themes

Laurie Hazelton reported on the key themes as extracted from feedback gathered at Public Meeting # 1. Themes focused on transportation (bus ride times, safety, cost impacts); community and community partnerships (community feel/spirit, neighbourhood schools, how will change effect them); accessibility (accessibility at all schools for washrooms/second floors); operations (scheduled day/timelines (2014), staff impacts); class sizes (what will change mean for class sizes); and, school size (effects on students).

### 6. School Information Profiles (SIPs)

Sandra Lindsay provided an overview. Profiles, assembled by Board staff, are intended to provide information on each school under review. Details are divided among 14 sections (enrolment and available space; administrative and operational costs; condition of school; space to support student learning and child care; program offerings; extracurricular activities; school grounds and physical activity; accessibility for students with disabilities; location of schools; EQAO; location of school within the community; community use of schools; school as a local employer; community partnerships). The SIPs have been reviewed, amended and approved by committee members. SIPs are posted at [www.hwdsb.on.ca](http://www.hwdsb.on.ca).

### 7. Group Discussions

Peter Joshua noted that voice from everyone is essential to provide a deeper understanding of key considerations as options are developed. Respect during dialogue is important during open discussions.

Committee members participated in breakout groups and facilitators recorded comments. Additional ideas could also be provided in written format. Two questions developed by committee members provided focus for discussions.

- Question 1: Do the presented key themes make sense to the group? What is not there that is important for us to know?
- Question 2: In creating an ideal elementary learning facility, what considerations do you feel are most important?

Feedback will go to the committee for consideration as options are developed.

An opportunity for questions was also provided.

#### Enrolment

##### **Q1. How is projected enrolment data prepared?**

*A1. A history of what we know, grade by grade progression data, plus residential development data that is updated twice a year. Declining enrolment is common throughout the Board and province. We take it down to the unit type (single family, townhomes, apt) level and plot student locations to provide yield data for new residential development.*

##### **Q2. What about movement of families?**

*A2. We are dealing with families not having as many kids. Not all students are coming to HWDSB - some go to the Catholic Board. It takes approximately four new homes to generate one student on average. Some families moving into the area have kids in various grades.*

##### **Q3. We understand how you got enrolment but what about the Drummond report?**

*A3. Referring to implementation of Full Day Kindergarten, we have birthrate and immigration data. Enrolment will stabilize eventually and plateau.*

#### Data

##### **Q4. The Census report breaks down population numbers into three categories and indicates the population will increase from now to 2036.**

*A4. Census data is for all of Hamilton and reflects mostly new residential areas like Binbrook and Waterdown. It is good information. Census aside, population has been declining since 2008. If it does plateau it will not jump to previous levels. When looking at projected populations it is speculation. Historically, enrolment data is accurate. It has been declining for awhile and is expected to continue in the foreseeable future.*

##### **Q5. Is information available by school on bullying, expulsions and violent incidents?**

*A5. There is not much public information but we could request something through the ARC committee. Principals know all students by name. Administration is responsible to raise awareness on bullying.*

**Q6. How accurate are the numbers?**

A6. Committee members have also asked the same question to ensure schools are represented accurately concerning FCI and enrolment. The confidence in numbers is high. They always fall into a certain percentage of accuracy. The guessing part comes with development but there is not a lot of development coming into this area. It is hard to dispute the decline based on demographics of this area. There are always unknowns. Trustees will look at both the staff option and the committee's option and may prefer one over the other or blend the two.

**Q7. Who provided extra-curricular activities?**

A7. This data was reviewed. The committee noted every school has activities. Information came from Principals and some schools include more activities than others but no activities listed will be cut. The number of activities listed will not determine if a school remains open or not.

School Closures

**Q8. Why are they closing schools in some communities but building new schools in Binbrook?**

A8. The province gives money to all Boards to run schools. With fewer students there is less money since funding is based on enrolment so closing a school for better upkeep needs to be considered. In this area we have many schools with high vacancies and needs for repairs.

**Q9. Closing a school has a ripple effect.**

A9. Every school will be impacted one way or another. What happens with vacant school properties is still to be determined. It is unknown if the city can afford to purchase these lands.

**Q10. I do not want to see any schools close. I would rather see all K-5 schools merge before closing any schools.**

A10. Noted. You prefer to merge one K-5 with another K-5 if possible but it depends on capacity.

Funding

**Q11. Is it possible to keep the money from school properties sold in this part of Hamilton? Money from the sale of our schools should be used to update the schools that stay open.**

A11. Noted. We also have to consider the loss to the community and the loss of greenspace.

Renovations

**Q12. Why was Rosedale updated recently if the ARC was coming up? That is a lot of taxpayer money.**

A12. At that time the repairs were needed.

**Q13. The historic value of a school should also be considered. Is it cheaper to renovate or build? Is it easier to restore a historical building or tear it down and rebuild?**

A13. We would have to look at all details to bring historic schools up to standards. Further investigation would be required. The FCI does not account for upgrades for accessibility because FCI addresses replacement value of existing items only.

### Class Size

**Q14. Smaller class size will be better.**

*A14. There are caps on class size. If the number of kids increases at a school there will be more classes and class size should stay the same. There would also be fewer split classes.*

### Transportation

**Q15. Concerning transportation and busing, what happens when kids sleep in and when they are at school sick and throwing up? I do not drive so do I walk them to and from school when needed or will the school use a cab?**

*A15. Noted. We are concerned with transportation. Keeping kids close to their neighbourhoods is important.*

### Boundaries

**Q16. What about boundary changes?**

*A16. This is something we can look at. It may make sense. We need to look at how many kids are going to new schools. We are passionate about our schools but realize that something must happen.*

### Students

**Q17. Is there a plan for addressing problems on the playgrounds and in the hallways if larger schools take on more students? Will there be more portables?**

*A17. Portables are a big issue. Capacity is being looked at in terms of accommodation. Doubling the number of kids at a school is something we need to look at.*

**Q18. Best interests of the kids need to be considered. Elementary kids will be overwhelmed with a closure and change.**

*A18. Noted. Many others have expressed the same concerns.*

**Q19. I took my child out of French Immersion to be with friends in her community. Perhaps a JK-8 school will allow kids to stay with their peers throughout elementary school and they will not have to transition.**

*A19. The model is not bad. All concerns will be noted.*

### Community Impact

**Q20. Real estate will be impacted. New families will not move here if there are no schools.**

*A20. Noted. Many others have expressed the same concerns.*

### Timelines

**Q21. By June 2014, will we know what schools our kids will be going to, especially for those having to register for kindergarten?**

A21. A trustee decision is expected in May 2014. It will be important to note that parents registering their kids for kindergarten in February for September have a right to know what school their kids will go to.

**Q22. In September, principals at the intake schools may become overwhelmed when implementing FDK and taking in new students through transitioning.**

A22. Noted.

**Q23. The timeline seems unrealistic. How can we learn in June about new schools for September and make it work - it seems impossible.**

A23. It will be a community decision.

#### Options

**Q24. Any plans yet developed?**

A24. We are gathering input that will help in developing a plan. At the end of the day, we will spend time looking at the level of supervision and important questions will be addressed as work evolves. Closure of schools in 2014 may be too soon but work at this point is still in the discussion stage. We will run some scenarios. There will be more public meetings and opportunity for public input. It is an evolving process. We need to hear public voice. Decisions will be made with input from the public. We need as much information as possible to make an informed decision.

#### Written Comments Received at the Meeting

- Remove standardized testing
- Is there any way to check a school's degree of suspensions, expulsions, violent incidents, etc?
- If having to take city transit, is it going to be covered?
- Student I.D. cards
- Too young
- He said that current computer labs, library could become classes - where would those computer rooms/libraries go? Portables?

Peter Joshua expressed appreciation for all comments shared.

#### **8. Next Steps**

- During the next two Working Group meetings the committee will formulate options
- At Public Meeting # 3 options developed will be presented
- Any additional ideas can be shared with committee members from your schools
- **Next Working Group Meeting # 4 - November 14, 2013 (W.H. Ballard)**
- **Next Public Meeting # 3 - December 05, 2013 (Rosedale)**

#### **9. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

### Handouts

- Agenda
- Presentation
- Key Themes
- School Information Profiles