

**West Flamborough - Accommodation Review Committee
Public Consultation Meeting # 4
Wednesday, January 22, 2014
6:00-9:00 p.m.**

**Greenville Elementary School
625 Harvest Road, Greenville, ON**

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Committee Members

Chair - Mag Gardner

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

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

Regrets

Voting Members - Kristin Glasbergen, Candice Goodale, Janine Vandenheuval

Non- Voting Members - Kim Short,

Resource Staff

Bob Fex, Jackie Penman, Ellen Warling,

Recording Secretary

Kathy Forde

Public - 49 public attendees were present - Beverly Central (7), Dr. John Seaton (3), Greenville (8), Millgrove (28), MPP Ted McMeekin Representative (1), City Councillors (2)

1. Call to Order

Mag Gardner welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided introductions. Committee members Sara Ardiel, Brett Humphrey and Callie Matthews co-facilitated the meeting.

2. Agenda

2.1 Additions/Deletions

Nil

2.2 Approval of Agenda

Approved.

3. Purpose of the Meeting - why we are here

The five schools under review (Beverly Central, Dr. Seaton, Greensville, Millgrove, Spencer Valley) are not fully populated so the task has been to determine how to make best use of the facilities. The intent of the meeting was to review the process, share the recommendations developed to date and gather further feedback.

4. Where the Committee is in the Process

The committee has been working for several months reviewing large amounts of data and public input while developing recommendations. Costs are high and decisions are tough. It has been an intense process. A respectful environment has been essential for working collaboratively where emotions are high. One more working group meeting will take place to finalize details and complete the ARC report. Both the committee recommendation(s) and staff option will be presented to the Director in February. Once the Director receives the report, there is a 30-day period to present the recommendations to trustees. Public delegations then have an opportunity to express any concerns. Trustees are expected to make their final decisions in May. The process has provided an opportunity for rich discussions that will inform the decisions that are made. Information is available on the Board's website at www.hwdsb.on.ca.

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

Callie Matthews advised that since the last public meeting two working group meetings have taken place where data and public input continued to be reviewed based on the guiding principles and key considerations. Members have toured each school and also visited Guy B. Brown to view the facilities of a new school. The guiding principles (program offerings, transportation, resources, 21st century learning environment) were reviewed. Key considerations include the timeline, quality teaching and learning environments, facilities, program offerings, transportation and transition. French Immersion has been raised but is an issue separate from the ARC process.

6. Committee Draft Report

Mag Gardner indicated that the committee has developed options and a draft ARC Report. The table of contents was reviewed. Section 3 focuses on the recommendations and rationale that will go forward. As the process evolved the committee found their discussions focused on a western portion (Beverly Central, Dr. Seaton) and eastern portion (Greensville, Millgrove, Spencer Valley) of the study area. Feedback from the meeting will be considered as details are finalized.

7. Committee Draft Options

- **Committee Option - Part 1: West Section**

Close Beverly Central & Dr. Seaton schools. Build a new JK to 8 school with a capacity of 350 in partnership with the City of Hamilton at the Beverly Community Centre.

Contingency if Community Centre is not attainable:

Close Beverly Central & Dr. Seaton schools. Build a new JK to 8 school with a capacity of 350 on the Beverly Central school site.

Brett Humphrey presented Part 1 noting that preliminary discussions with the City have occurred to explore potential for building on the Beverly Community Centre site. Failing availability of this site, the committee recommends closing both schools and building on the Beverly school site. Based on public feedback, preference is for a new school. Once both schools are closed, utilization rates will improve. This option meets all objectives. Input can still be provided.

- **Committee Option - Part 2: East Section**

Close Greenville, Millgrove, and Spencer Valley schools. Build a new JK to 8 school with a capacity of 525 on the Spencer Valley site.

or

Close Greenville & Spencer Valley schools and build a new JK to 8 school with a capacity 350 on the Spencer Valley site. Millgrove School remains status quo and remains as a Spencer Valley feeder school for grades 6-8.

Sara Ardiel presented Part 2 noting that the committee has not settled on final details. There has been a strong voice from the Millgrove community to keep Millgrove open as a K-5 school.

Mag Gardner added that throughout the process, committee members have contributed, reflected and referenced the guiding principles as a way of staying on track. The idea of recommending new schools supports the committee's view of creating a 21st century learning environment that offers students modern facilities and technologies, enables extra-curricular activities, enriches resources, and takes them into the future.

8. Group Discussions of ARC Options

Rather than group discussions, public attendees preferred an open floor. Questions and answers and comments are noted below.

Questions & Answers

Boundaries

Q. Perhaps we should look beyond our boundaries?

A. Noted. Declining enrolment is a challenge across the province. It is a topic of conversation among educational leaders and school planners.

Daycare

Q. With the new build is there any space allocated to daycare?

A. Across Ontario, before and after school care is now mandated to be provided where viable. The Ministry does not dedicate money to care for children younger than three years of age. The committee would have to look at a special request to fund space for the provision of daycare for children at 0-3 years of age. The possibility of daycare would have to be explored during the design phase. Dollars would have to be acquired at this same time.

Enrolment Data

Q. Numbers from the report indicate 401 students between Seaton and Beverly, which is higher than 350.

A. Over the long term that number is expected to go down.

Q. Why is there a discrepancy in numbers from October to now?

A. Numbers at the initial public meeting have since been refreshed for accuracy.

Q. Do the numbers take into consideration turnover and growth?

A. Yes, through the City and Board numbers basically will stay the same in this area as little new development is expected. Numbers have been declining over time so even projected numbers can be considered steady without any significant change. Numbers were explained at an earlier Public Meeting.

Q. Are any numbers available to determine the accuracy of previous projections – say 10 years ago?

A. The methodology in projections 10 years ago might have been different so it would be difficult to compare against current numbers. In terms of research you have to consider the scope of evidence. With enrolment projections, you look at what has happened provincially and municipally including changes in rural development and Greenbelt legislation. Factors related to birthrates, the number of households and the size of households would be different today than what they were 10 years ago. An economic downturn will impact projections so the accuracy is based on provincial and city forecasts. Data has been posted on the Board's website at www.hwdsb.on.ca for viewing. Comments noted.

Facilities

Q. What is a 21st century school?

A. It is about all the available programming and resources so kids are better prepared for high school. It includes things like technology, adequate gym space, dedicated music rooms, specialty rooms, and dedicated science labs.

Q. What is the ideal school size? Is there any differentiation between rural and urban schools?

A. Small schools are difficult for programming and for providing extra-curricular activities. Increased student population reduces the number of split classes. When teachers from two classes of the same grade collaborate it helps student learning and achievement. In a school of 300-350, students have an opportunity to mix with other classes and peers as they move through elementary grades. Schools of 100 are hard to serve and are expensive.

Q. I moved here to raise my kids in a small school in a small community but things may change.

A. A facility of 300-500 kids is not considered a large school. It is not efficient to keep small schools running. Changes are needed due to declining enrolment and high maintenance costs.

Funding

Q. What has happened with the Ministry's fiscal situation?

A. The Ministry provides capital priorities funding for all 72 Boards in Ontario on an annual basis. HWDSB submits approximately eight to 10 capital projects that are ranked in priority by trustees. Submissions go forward in October and funding is usually announced in February. Boards aligned with community partners are often considered favourably due to efficiencies in dollars and space. The Ministry also values public consultation.

Greenville

Q. Any talks to find a way to partner with the City to gain lands at Greenville?

A. No talks specifically. It was discussed within the committee but was not considered to be the best option.

Q. Why are there two options for Greenville?

A. There are two options because both communities have stated they want schools in their individual communities. There is a significant feeling of loss for both Greenville and Millgrove parents. We also want to balance community desire with Ministry directives so we can get the most value for our students.

Q. What will happen to the land and park at Greenville if it is closed?

A. The school property is put up for sale through a priority list of local school boards, colleges, universities and agencies for fair market value. If nobody is interested it goes to a tender process or open market.

Location

Q. Would you consider building on the Seaton site?

A. Yes, Seaton was considered to get everybody as close as possible in terms of proximity but water quality was a concern based on public feedback.

Q. Can you expand on conversation with the City?

A. Conversation focused on exploring items related to site suitability, septic, parking and traffic to build a school for 350 students. Discussions are ongoing with the City at the staff level. The possibility of a new build needs to be determined before pursuing further dialogue on how to engage to share the site and how to facilitate a new build.

Q. Has the property north of Greensville and south of Freelton been considered as middle-ground?

A. Not sure if the Board owns any land in this area.

New School

Q. Building a new school for September 2016 seems really ambitious.

A. Dates are a guideline only. It takes roughly 18 months to build a new school. The committee does not want kids in a state of transition so students will not move until a new school is ready.

Q. If Millgrove remains open what are the chances of building a new school?

A. It is unknown but public feedback for a new school was well expressed.

Q. Does the community get involved in the design of a new school? Will fundraising be needed to provide basic stuff like scoreboards?

A. Public consultation around building design is not part of the policy. We do however learn and grow stronger through public voice. In terms of funding allocations, whenever you build a new school the budget comes from various places to cover different things such as bricks and motor and books, etc. It is too early in the process to detail budget allocations although it has been discussed. If schools are closing we would be looking to utilize as many existing resources as available along with the standard items used to outfit a school. We are not building in a brand new neighbourhood.

Q. What happens to the kids during construction if the new build is on the same site?

A. Kids are segregated if possible while construction is underway. Each situation would have to be determined individually. This group does not want to see the learning disrupted. Depending on space available, buildings may be constructed with a second floor to allow sufficient greenspace.

Option Evaluation

Q. How do you keep Millgrove open when it has a lower utilization rate than Greensville? Are costs a factor? Is there an alternative motive like timing for bringing schools into the ARC? Why would the Board drag a school into the ARC then close it?

A. In addition to utilization rates, factors include school size, location, the existing environment and renewal costs versus new school costs.

Q. Have all options been preliminarily costed in terms of capital costs and renovations?

A. Yes, costs have been reviewed and are posted.

Q. What success will the ARC have in asking for two schools?

A. We are optimistic. We were told to ask for what we want and to strive high. Money saved from maintenance of schools that close can be better used towards a new school(s).

Process

Q. If the provincial government changes next election, will it change the ARC process?

A. That is unknown. One would hope that a process of this size would continue but is speculative. We can only control our submissions for capital priorities funding and self-funding as needed and as available through the sale of properties and severances.

Spencer Valley

Q. Who owns the land adjacent to Spencer Valley? How are we to be assured the owner will not sell off and then turns it into something big? It will be important to understand what might be developed adjacent to Spencer Valley as any changes could mean more traffic and pollution.

A. Staff has not looked into that specifically. Karen Turkstra noted that the land behind Spencer Valley is owned by a developer but only six lots can be developed at a time. It is quite a rigorous process to get permission for development and it is difficult to change residential zoning to industrial.

Q. If the trustees do not like the options presented, what are the potential outcomes?

A. When the options are presented at the Board table, trustees can embrace the committee option(s) or the staff option or mix it up. A solution for all five schools is needed. Karen Turkstra has attended all meetings to listen to discussions, input and rationale as work evolved so is well informed.

Staff

Q. What is the impact to staff?

A. Teachers are employed by the Board not the school and there are processes in place. Terms are negotiated between the unions and the Board through the collective bargaining process.

Staff Option

Q. Will the Staff Option also be presented to trustees?

A. The Staff Option will be presented to trustees. An opportunity to adapt details and modify the draft is provided. A 30-day window is provided for the final Staff Option to be submitted to the Director. Once complete, the final Staff Option will be posted.

Student Impact

Q. Any consideration on the impact of putting three year olds in a population of 500 children and on buses?

A. New schools are designed to keep age groups in mind and segregated as needed. Positives include the opportunity for reading buddies and lunch room monitors. Many schools have JK-8 students that thrive. Also, we are in the last year of FDK implementation and much training has occurred. There is a lot of deliberate planning to ensure primary and junior divisions have effective learning environments.

Student Performance

Q. Do you look at student performance and how it compares to that of new schools? Are any percentages available?

A. There has been some discussion however performance is based on kids and teachers not facilities. It is unknown if any research is available comparing or connecting student performance with new schools. We do believe that when students and staff feel engaged and positive about a new school, this attitude leads indirectly to better achievement. We always strive to have our students perform well.

Q. Any correlation between EQAO scores and class size or school size?

A. Class size is determined by provincial mandate. In any elementary class you will not have a great disparity. There is a lot of research out there regarding engagement and achievement.

Transportation

Q. It seems the Board has no control over busing times. I have heard that guidelines are not enforced. I am concerned about my child in kindergarten having to ride a bus for over one hour to go to school.

A. This has been an ongoing item of discussion. The concern has been acknowledged. It is an important factor that we will put forward. With full implementation of FDK we do recognize that these young kids need to be considered since ages are now younger.

Q. Any thoughts on a dedicated JSK bus as was provided in the past?

A. The committee has talked about using more buses and smaller buses and will emphasize decreasing bus times. If we close schools then in theory we have more buses available to us.

Q. I am concerned about the value of my property. If kids have to travel long bus rides to school new families will not want to come into our neighbourhoods.

A. This concern has been noted numerous times. The goal is to look at communities in whole over the short term and long term.

Comments

- We need a central school site regardless of facilities.
- We want a new school as a personal priority.
- We need to consider creative ideas and recognize that schools could be on the chopping block again if nothing changes.
- It is a very emotional process.
- I worry about not coming together as a team.
- To get creative, we should ask someone to donate some land between here and Freelon.
- Every teacher knows my son - I do not want to be in a big school.
- Windows should be located on the south wall of a building to be more efficient and use less heat.
- We all commute and time is tight so maybe a restaurant should be incorporated in the Beverly Community Centre site if a new build is approved.

- St George is starting to grow and their school is also getting older so students may come into this area.
- Millgrove has the daycare nearby and is close to Waterdown so it makes sense to keep Millgrove open.
- The idea of a new school is fantastic - you do not want a small school - you need to avoid having grades 1-2-3 mixed in one class.
- New schools will be the better solution in 10 years from now.
- The idea of purchasing surrounding land should be included in the recommendation as a consideration.
- The best education in the best building is a priority for me as a parent. The overall objective should be to provide our kids with the best education possible.
- As a Greenville parent who moved from Waterdown to be near a rural school, if Greenville school is closing I do not have a voice so the next best option is to have a school on the Greenville site. We pay high taxes. We need to band together in Greenville and think about the future of our kids.
- I understand we are emotional about our preferences.
- Any consideration of a new school on the Greenville site as a possibility is appreciated.
- Environmental assessments should be done to ensure the best environments are considered.
- As a bus driver, there are guidelines that are adhered to. The Board needs to deal with the bus companies.
- Appreciation from the public was extended to committee members for their time and effort throughout the process.

9. Next Steps

Mag Gardner provided closing remarks. The committee has been very diligent and will continue to gather input. The challenge in the rural setting is the limitation with being creative. The Board is collaborating with other ARCs around the province to learn of opportunities and alternatives. Public input is important and does not end here. In the spring, delegations will be invited to speak to the trustees during their review. Dates still to be determined and posted. Comments and opinions can be submitted to your School Council representative or principal or via email by January 28th at 5:00 pm for review at the last Working Group Meeting scheduled January 29th.

- **Next Working Group Meeting # 8 - January 29, 2014 at Spencer Valley Elementary School**

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Handouts

- Agenda
- Presentation
- Draft ARC Report