

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB)

South Accommodation Review Committee Meeting

Education Centre Board Room

September 15, 2011

Minutes

ATTENDANCE:

Committee Members

Chair -Scott Sincerbox

Voting Members - Bill Barrett, Beverly Bressette, Jackie Brown, Alexandra Butty, Ken Durkacz, Margaret Eagle, Al Pierce, Anne Pollard, Cheryl Poot, Susan Pretula

Non-Voting Members - Wanda Bielak, Gary Deveau, Angela Ferguson, Manny Figueiredo, Mag Gardner, Wes Hicks, Peter Joshua, Deb Jukes, Ted Kocznur, Renee Majic, Joanna Maull, John Miholics, Lillian Orban, Laura Peddle,

Regrets

Voting Members - Donna Dixon, Kim General, Derek Hambly, Julia Shen, John Whitwell

Non-Voting Members - Donna Clappison, Ken Durkacz, Scott Duvall, Randy Gallant, Brian Greig, Tom Jackson, Kevin Robinson, Terry Whitehead, Paul Vukosa

Resource Staff

Daniel Del Bianco,

Recording Secretary

Tracy McKillop

1. Call to Order

Superintendent Scott Sincerbox welcomed all of the North Committee members who were attendance and shared the seating arrangements with the Committees.

Agenda <http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/arc/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/South-ARC-Agenda-September-15th-.pdf>

2.1 Additions/Deletions – There were no additions or deletions.

2.2 Approval of the Agenda – The agenda was approved by consensus.

3.0 Meeting Purpose and Overview – The invitation from the South ARC Committee to the North ARC Committee was scheduled in order to share ideas and thoughts around the Vocational School Programs and how each Committee viewed the future placement and programs of these students.

4.0 Discussion – Vocational Schools

The meeting commenced with thanks going out to the North ARC Committee for accepting the invitation to the meeting. The idea behind the meeting was to look at what solutions would be of benefit for both schools. The South ARC has not put a lot of thought into Mountain Secondary to date and have invited the North to share where they are with Parkview.

A Parkview staff member indicated that he was happy to be having this meeting. He indicated that the Staff at Parkview does not believe their school is a vocational school but rather a Special Ed School. They are not comprehensive students or vocational students. They have special needs – for example: mental health concerns. The Community is helping with determining the needs of the students. Mr. Root likes some of the programs that HWDSB is offering, for example, the Wilson program yet feels there are a number of programs that these students need and have not received to date. He feels that the students would benefit from a safe environment. He shared that they are very accepting of one another. The North Committee would like to see a school of choice and would like to have it centered in the lower City. He feels that the Parkview students would not be interested in travelling to Mountain School.

C. A Mountain parent representative appreciated Michael's vision and wording. Although her son has chosen to go to a regular school she would like to see a program of choice at a new school with great equipment as well as the opportunity for integration for those who are ready to do that.

C. A South member shared a story about student success at Mountain. This student attended Mountain Secondary School and then she went to a regular school and then back to Mountain Secondary again.

To view these questions and answers please click on the following link:

<http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/arc/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Mountain-Secondary-School-Student-Voice.pdf>

A Parkview staff member shared that a transitional school is something that the North Committee is looking into with the goal to transition them into the regular school if and when they are ready. Mohawk College is very interested in working with them to develop more programs and currently McMaster University is doing a study on them. They are very gifted students; however, they don't fit into a conventional school. They are looking at alternative styles of teaching for the students for example: gaming. Some of these students are geniuses.

C. We are aiming high and it is an experiment.

C. Mountain has been a Special Ed school for a number of years. Most Vocational Schools are becoming Special Ed.

C. Vocational programs like SHSMS are just getting under way. We would like state of the art programming and to work with Mohawk College for further development of programs.

C. Parkview School readies the students for the adult world. We work with Ontario disability, get the students into training programs e.g. helping hands, learning to resume write or support them with getting part time or full time work. We are not so much vocational but support them in readiness for the adult world.

Q. How would this model be different than what HWSDB already has on the table?

A. This would be the hub of the community. We would have one centre with professionals linked to it as well as a community centre. Paul Johnson shared that this would be remarkable for the entire community.

Q. We would want this for every school so would your school be more intensive?

A. Yes.

C. These students have to be lead into a composite school - they can't be dropped in.

C. Students are sponges. We aren't looking for a quick fix but an edifice where they feel respected. I do not believe in dumbing it down.

Q. What size of school have you talked about?

C. We have talked about this and it would be an experiment. We would have to try out different size classrooms.

Mr. Del Bianco shared that this is not a North ARC proposal – it is a proposal that has been presented to the ARC.

Q. Have you considered location?

A. We have talked about the old Scott Park site. Asbestos is being removed at the moment by the owner so this could be a possibility. The North ARC has come up with two options that have a wing for the Parkview program; however, I believe that this would create the “dumb wing” of the building. We would like to see a separate school.

Q. What would be the pros and cons of the Board's recommendation?

A. The Committee dropped the Board's recommendation at the last meeting as well as other options.

C. The main thing was that with many of the students going to the composite school we felt that some students needs would not be met and all students deserve to have their needs met.

Q. Would you like the school in the downtown core or where in the lower city?

A. Paul Johnston presented on Tuesday and the City is looking at revitalizing the area around Ivor Wynn Stadium and they are willing to work with the School Board to meet the needs of the people in the area.

Q. I like the idea of their goals. Have you looked at transitioning the students in grades 7, 8, 9 and 10 or do you feel that the Board should begin transition earlier?

A. We want to watch that we don't open it to too many students which is the reason why we have a cap of 300 students. This is in order to keep it small and close knit.

C. I feel that grades 7 & 8's need to remain in the elementary schools.

C. We are looking at the precinct area; however, we don't have a property yet.

C. The North Committee have three proposals – leave Parkview as it is and the construction of a new school and the other two options would be a new school with a wing for the Parkview students.

C. LRT students– “students of promise” numbers are increasing.

C. I don't think that going down the mountain would be a problem since a lot of the students are bussed anyway.

C. Building on Sir John A Macdonald (SJAM) was not rejected solely on the fact of the Parkview students but also because of the amount of space between SJAM and the remaining schools.

C. It will take a lot of money to fix up the existing schools so we decided that would like to aim big and shut down more aging schools with the hope to build a new school. This would help revitalize the red code district; however our challenge is what to do with the Parkview students. We can't go with status quo. We asked ourselves “can we put a new school in if we don't close enough schools” and “can we give these students programs of choice” if we don't close down the aging schools. We want them to have a state of the art facility.

Q. What happens to students if you close Parkview?

A. I don't feel that putting both vocational schools into an old building would be beneficial for anyone. We want to leave a legacy.

Q. 60% of the students are from the mountain and would they go downtown to a state of the art school? How can we take this barrier (the Hill/Mountain) out of the equation? How accessible is it to the students who live a distance? We are responsible to look after all of the students - not just the West, North or South but as a whole.

C. I see value in having a common recommendation that would have power going back to the Trustees. I would like to have a common Agenda going forward to make a stronger proposal.

Mr. Del Bianco shared that the two Committees have two separate Terms of Reference and separate schools within those Terms of Reference. The Committees can make boundary recommendations; however, any schools outside of the Terms of Reference can not be brought into the equation.

Q. We have a self paced school. What if we have two self paced schools? We could have one below the mountain, which would incorporate the students that come to Westmount from below the mountain, as well as the Parkview students and one on the mountain to include the Mountain students?

Q. Why are students from below the mountain bussed to the Mountain School?

82.4% of Mountain students re bussed and it is approaching 86% this year.

A. Anne Pollard shared that bussing was a solution and it allowed door to door service. Her son chose Mountain over Parkview.

Q. Have you look at any closure of your schools in the South ARC like the north ARC?

A. We are not there yet. We are setting the criteria at the moment. We have agreed that they all can't stay open and that things can't stay status quo.

Q. Would it not change your thinking once you decide on what you are doing with your composite schools?

A. We wanted to hear your view first regarding specialization programming.

Q. Is it possible that they Board might rent space for the specialized programming?

Q. Are we allowed to talk about a system school since it has no boundaries?

A. Under the Terms of Reference we can talk about the schools within the ARC; however, the Committee can make recommendations on boundary changes in their recommendation.

Q. How can you justify building a new school for 300 students? Have you looked at stats of having a wing and the transitioning of those students?

A. A small size school will maximize utilization and will create a close knit environment.

A. There is not a lot of data of what has been proposed because it is innovative. The Delta/Woodview – school is not integration really just sharing of the building.

Q. Is there a challenge with the two ARCs meeting together going forward?

Q. What percentage of your students of Parkview and Mountain do you think would be successfully integrated into the regular school?

A. I can't answer that.

Q. What is the direction across the province for Special Ed students – looking at schools within schools – do we have any data on that? Are the students being successfully served? What method is working provincially?

A. The Province is moving towards inclusion remembering that it will mean smaller classrooms and the students will see themselves in their environment. Other jurisdictions have done this; however, we don't have the data on hand.

Q. Is any information available?

A. We can certainly ask.

C. We would like to look at what has worked and what has not?

C. Until we decide what we do with Parkview we can't seem to move on. That is why we are here tonight. We have decided to preserve Parkview in some way so now the question is how do we do that? If both Parkview School and King George School are closed that is premium land. We would like to address the code red district.

C. The South Committee has not even made the decision to build a new school.

C. In the North we have about half the vacancies in the Board as well as a low occupancy rate. We have decided to close two or three schools. We have looked at 20 years down the road and realize that we need to close schools. Retrofitting Parkview would not work because it is attached to King George and that land is worth a lot. If we choose to keep Parkview open then a lot of the other schools will suffer so we have to look at the big picture. We are having a challenge getting the funding to build one school – we can't do both and we can't have two new schools...so we have to see how we can make this work.

Q. How can I make a recommendation when I don't understand how it would affect the students if are transitioned into a composite school.

C. SEAC was considering offering a tour of the programs currently running in the schools.

A. Superintendent Corcoran shared that SEAC has looked at that and was unsure how to make this happen. Their concern was the difficulty of having it during the day due to people's work schedule and the fact that it may disturb the students during their class time. She indicated that they are willing to look at it again if there is a group interested in doing that. Due to the challenge of having this during the day we have opted to have an open house on October 13th. We have asked the students to come and speak about the programs that they have been involved in at their schools. We would like to invite groups to come and hear the student voice.

C. Anne Pollard shared that the Principals from Mountain and Parkview gave a presentation on their schools and she indicated that she would like to have that presentation again for those would be interested.

A. If it is of interest and value to the groups we would be happy to do that if it fits within the Terms of Reference.

A. Yes if it is the will of the Committee.

Q. How can we substantiate having a self paced program at one school and yet not have one at the opposite end of the spectrum

C. It is the program that is important to the South ARC at Mountain not the location.

Consensus was given to move off of item 4 after the next six speakers that the Chair had listed.

C. If principals are willing to do a presentation I would like to have that.

Q. What is your thinking of a wing?

C. We look at Parkview as an entity and we would like to move that entity into a wing with the same program and the opportunity to transition.

Q. What do we do about funding since we can never come up with an ideal solution? It will be the final decision of Board of Trustees. We need a special needs school in Hamilton and we need a program of choice. It has to be a stand alone school. Do we renovate a school or build a new school?

Superintendent Corcoran shared that the Principal for Orchard Park and Waterdown will be presenting at the next SEAC meeting which is open to the public. She clarified that the students presenting at the open house were from all of the schools and this is also open to the public.

Bill Barrett summarized what he had heard so far from both of the groups: If we close two vocational schools would the students be sufficiently looked after? He feels that the Board does not have the money to provide this in every school yet these programs should be maintained in some way. Both groups are on the same page and don't care if the students are in same building.

5.0 Discussion – Other Areas of Common Interest

C. There is a huge corridor from lower city to upper city where Sherwood is.

A. This is one of the reasons why we eliminated the staff proposal due to the space between Sir John A Macdonald and Sir Winston Churchill.

A. In all of the proposals we are closing Delta and building a new school.

Q. Can those students come to Sherwood?

A. We have not talked about that. The general feeling is if we close Delta the students would not go to Churchill so I don't see them going onto the Mountain. I believe that they will remain in the area.

Superintendent Rocco shared that it would be problematic for them to go up the mountain. It is a City driven community and currently they walk to Parkview.

C. The #5 bus goes from Delta to Sherwood. If they won't go up Mountain why not go East/West.

Superintendent Rocco shared that if we close Delta parents have already stated that their students would not go to Sir John A Macdonald.

C. The Catholic Board are closing Bishop Ryan and putting busses at the old location to bus the students to the new location on the Mountain.

Superintendent Rocco stated that he could not comment on that.

C. Both groups are dealing with declining enrolment. If you begin taking the students from below the mountain to Sherwood it would be cannibalizing one school for the other. We need to look at how do we address the surplus space instead of shuffling the students around?

Superintendent Figueiredo stated that HWDSB's boundaries are small. The Catholic Board has a vast boundary so they are used to bussing their students to various schools. That is not the mind set in the Public Board.

C. I have heard that if we do not have a good plan in place the students will not attend school at all or they will go to the Catholic Board.

C. We have a lot of new elementary schools in that area and we are interested in a new facility. We want our students to transition from a new "high tech school" to a school of similar quality.

C. I feel that we have to make public education attractive again after all of the stuff that went on with the South ARC. I feel that we need to build our reputation and make public education attractive.

C. I would like the Board to say that there is a possibility to build a new school.

A. That falls on the lap of Ministry to decide and we need to have a good business case. No one here can say 100% "yes" that can build a new school.

C. I have some thoughts about having grades 7 & 8 in the secondary school. We looked at that and with the declining enrolment if we take them from elementary level we are doing a disservice to those students. We have five new elementary schools in the North so we eliminated that concept.

A. There is declining enrolment across the Board and Province.

C. We had a costing to all of our proposals and the North ARCs proposal is cheaper than the Board's proposal provided the Ministry comes through with money.

C. We have a lot of engaged parents and this is a daunting task. We are trying to do the best for our students and if we make the best recommendation we know that we have done our job.

C. We have a few schools of only grade 7 & 8's so those are the ones that we would incorporate. Do the stats include the full day kindergarten program? Ancaster has six portables at the moment. If we move the grade 7 & 8's into secondary schools we will that make room for kindergarten.

A. Not all schools have declining enrolment because we also have growth schools. We would have a challenge telling the students in grades 7 & 8 that we are closing your school to fill up the secondary school.

Superintendent Rocco shared that when we go from half day to full day kindergarten it may not change the enrolment. Mr. Del Bianco stated that those students were included in enrolment data.

Bill Barrett shared that he did not feel that the North and South needed to meet going forward because each Committee has to stay within the Terms of Reference and deal with their own schools.

Anne Pollard put a motion forward to invite Wanda Bielak and Paul Barwinski to make a presentation as well as invite the North.

Q. Can we have that on a pod cast and have Paul and Wanda there for questioning?

A. This is a South ARC meeting and the North ARC could sit in the Gallery.

Consensus was given to have this information on September 27th. The link would be provided in advance and Wanda and Paul would be available to answer questions on the September 27th.

Consensus was given to invite the North ARC and allow participation.

Nancy Leach shared how the North ARC reached their final options. They put programming at the end. They looked at the site, acreage, stats, enrolment, etc. first and once they narrowed it down to one option that is when they began to look at programming. It takes away the emotional element because everyone wants their school to remain open. She stated that we all own the schools and we all own the programs. If everyone has a personal agenda then they won't have their agendas met and they also won't reach a decision.

Q. Should we invite the west ARC on September 27th? There are no vocational schools in the West so they don't have the same challenges as the North ARC and the South ARC.

C. We have special needs students in the West.

C. We can't say what the West is doing.

Consensus to was given move from 5 to 6

6.0 Other Business – there was none.

7.0 Correspondence – there was none.

8.0 Adjournment - Consensus was given to adjourn at 8:33 p.m.