

HWDSB

Accommodation Strategy Advisory Meeting

Thursday February 8, 2024

6:00 p.m. Waterdown Secondary School

In Attendance:

Graeme Noble	Trustee Ward 15
Matthew Gerard	Associate Director, Business Services and Treasurer of the Board
Nicole Lee	Superintendent of Student Achievement
Steven Yull	Principal Allan A. Greenleaf
Matthew Reid	Vice Principal Allan A. Greenleaf
Matthew Lingard	Allan A. Greenleaf School Council
Glen Spry	Allan A. Greenleaf School Council
Kristi Keery Bishop	Principal Balaclava
Nancy Kucic	Principal Flamborough Centre
Leah Young	Flamborough Centre School Council
Angela Devall	Flamborough Centre School Council
Josie Dalley	Principal Guy B. Brown
Priyanka Arora	Guy B. Brown School Council
Kelly Korkerus	Guy B. Brown School Council
Susete Bloom	Principal Mary Hopkins
Paula Thomas	Acting Vice-Principal Mary Hopkins
Carley Casey	Mary Hopkins School Council
Mohamed Khamis	Mary Hopkins School Council
David Anderson	Senior Manager
Robert Fex	Senior Planner
Ellen Warling	Manager, Planning Accommodation and Rentals
Bob Avery	Manager, Facility Operations
Sally Landon	Manager Research and Analytics Department
Kathleen Hussey	Executive Assistant to Superintendent of Student Achievement

Welcome and Introductions:

The meeting commenced at 6:03 p.m. and Superintendent Lee welcomed all, introduced the members of the Advisory Committee, and the agenda was reviewed. A PowerPoint presentation supported the meeting.

Meeting Goal and Guiding Principles:

Associate Director Gerard thanked the panel for their participation and reviewed the goal for the meeting advising that while a consensus from the panel would be ideal, he acknowledged that emotions are involved and recognized that the panel might not get to a place of consensus.

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Associate Director Gerard urged panel members to try and represent their own schools as well as all students impacted noting that the focus is on students that need a school to go to and students that need relief. Recognizing that the goal is a solution for September 2024 he shared that not landing on a solution at the meeting might mean a solution is not in place for September 2024 which would also mean no relief for Mary Hopkins.

The status quo of all 5 schools was reviewed with an understanding that we cannot stand still as we support the students.

The Guiding Principles which provide the framework to supporting a path to solutions were each reviewed, and the Community Feedback was highlighted.

Q- Are we looking for consensus tonight?

A – Meeting is to navigate a conversation and receive feedback. Ideally, we want consensus from the group as the report is going to Finance and Facilities on February 20th. Recognize that that may not be the case.

Q- If the panel agrees on a scenario how much sway will that have on the outcome at the Board?

A – If the Advisory Committee, staff included, are all in consensus, it is good.

Advisory Panel Observations from Public Meeting and Feedback:

Superintendent Lee shared that staff has collected feedback and observations from the Public Meeting and asked that the panel members each share one of the main themes they heard from the community at the Public Meeting.

Mary Hopkins- Shared that they heard the community voice overwhelming disappointment in options. Only one scenario helped their capacity concerns. The other 5 scenarios have the school at 12 portables. 2 more portables are not manageable. Noted Scenario 6 is not perfect as no school wants to be over capacity.

French Immersion families were not happy with Scenario 6 as it separates friends, and they feel they are being backed into a decision. Referenced concerns of how school will manage if the numbers are wrong noting that the ongoing HVAC construction project has students taking a class in the library. Voiced a plea for help indicating that conditions are not sustainable.

Mary Hopkins Panel member reviewed the Scenario Boards at the Public Meeting to determine how many parents from Mary Hopkins had identified themselves as a Mary Hopkins family in sharing their feedback. Noted that many approved the scenario that did not change French Immersion. Concern that parents will leave French Immersion and asking that decision made does not impact one community heavily.

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Allan A Greenleaf – Feedback not complimentary. Overarching takeaway is that the process was substandard. Feel the level of detail was not sufficient. Three parents approached School Council member to indicate they were considering removing their students from HWDSB. Have to go back to School Council and have yet to receive feedback on the document submitted. Spent 8 hours preparing the document and feel this is disappointing and disrespectful. Believes that the current state at Mary Hopkins cannot continue. Feels that academic outcomes are impacted.

Allan A Greenleaf Panel member suggests that prior to this process their community was not fully aware of the Mary Hopkins issues. They have brought that information to Allan A Greenleaf, and they see the possibility of Allan A Greenleaf helping to share the load, in particular with new English students. A number desire to help and step up in partnership with Guy B Brown and other schools.

Guy B Brown- Stated it opened their eyes as to what is going on in Waterdown. Feeling the safety of the children is the #1 issue. Understand sharing the load and notes that safety is impacted with an increase in numbers. Concern shared regarding safety as it relates to drop off and pick up and wondering if additional support will be available. Also shared concern regarding the school footprint and outside time for students.

Guy B. Brown Panel Member shared concern with the sloping nature of school ground and questioned where children would play if portables added. Noted that new school takes time and wanting to ensure that no other school becomes the next Mary Hopkins as result of this process.

Flamborough Centre- Disappointed that the Panel did not see the slides before the Public Meeting to allow them the opportunity to prepare parents. Feel blindsided as Scenarios 5 and 6 obliterated Flamborough Centre with massive changes for kids. Believe they could result in families having 3 students at 3 different schools. Recognize that no one is coming out of this process without change and Flamborough is not opposed to taking kids at the school. Looking for the best way forward. Concerns raised regarding the septic and the school being surrounded by Halton conservation area.

Flamborough Panel member stated that they feel Flamborough Centre is unique. Parking and Portable challenges and no easy path for expansion.

Panel Member indicates that they have a petition signed by over 200 individuals asking that Scenarios 5 and 6 be removed. Scenrio #4 minimizes disruption.

Feel that the Boundary process needs an overhaul and that adding students to Flamborough should never have been put on the table. Recommend that a checklist be utilized moving

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forward and that each Principal should be able to provide their insights prior to their school being considered. Shared that the petition will be emailed to staff.

Sally Landon shared the process used at the Public Meeting to obtain community feedback and advised that feedback was analyzed using a basic theming process. Feedback was organized by school to highlight the thinking on the impacts to specific school communities and shared with the panel.

Associate Director Gerard asked if panel numbers had any questions regarding the feedback provided.

Q- Would like to hear feedback on the feedback.

A - The feedback has informed the remainder of the presentation.

Addressing Public Meeting Questions and HVAC Construction at Mary Hopkins:

Ellen Warling and Associate Director Gerard spoke to specific questions that arose during the Public Meeting sharing information, impacting factors, data and maps. Staff also spoke to the HVAC construction at Mary Hopkins and provided the link on the school's website to information regarding the construction.

Questions posed regarding Public Meeting questions:

Q- Could accommodating students in the high school be considered?

A – That is not in front of panel tonight.

Q- In light of factors discussed regarding portables are we at risk of not being able to obtain portables?

A – Not anticipating lack of access. System wide order has already been placed.

Q- Will funding Temporary Accommodation impact funding of schools?

A – Pockets of funding exist. Funding is specific to Temporary Accommodation and comes from the Ministry. Provincial bodies routinely flag to Ministry that there is an issue. This should not impact funding for additional schools.

Dave Anderson reviewed the Flamborough Centre map addressing potential portable locations. Spoke to information regarding Halton Conservation and highlighted areas of interest on the map identifying the boundary for the conservation area. Areas that could be considered for both temporary and permanent parking were identified.

Dave Anderson spoke to HVAC construction at Mary Hopkins confirming that a letter went out to the Mary Hopkins community this evening.

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Questions regarding the HVAC Construction at Mary Hopkins:

Q- Is there asbestos in the school?

A - There is asbestos in the school and will be abated in accordance with Ministry regulations.

Q - Does the construction impact the ability to accommodate students?

A - No.

Q - Are there any concerns or need to close the school?

A – Certainly not.

Revisiting Scenarios 9-11:

Scenarios 9, 10 and 11 were reviewed providing a revised approach to describing each scenario noting that 9 was shared with the panel prior to the Public Meeting and Scenarios 10 and 11 came about in response to emails received on the weekend prior to the public meeting. Scenarios 9 and 10 were discussed using a chart reflecting the data of each school highlighting the impact on the portable count and a Guiding Principle Matrix for both scenarios. Scenario 11 was discussed with the many complexities highlighted and the panel agreed to move on from consideration.

Q - Models are based on assumptions that will not be helpful. There is concern that potentially numbers have been under forecast.

A- As Trustees make their decision, we will be able to see the impact on retention for French Immersion. This is why we discuss factors. Staff believe they understand the numbers and each year as we move closer to the new school opening, we will know more. Staff acknowledged that they cannot predict behaviours.

As the panel prepared to break after first portion of the meeting, they were asked to provide one word to indicate where they were at.

The following was shared:

Looking forward to the scenarios to be addressed after the break.

Ready to talk and important to not lose focus of how to accommodate new students.

Want to hear more.

Need to come to an answer and need to understand that we won't get it all.

Request that if a scenario won't work we move through it quickly to avoid talking things to death.

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New Scenarios based on Community Feedback:

Staff shared that in response to what they were hearing they had conversations and determined it was appropriate to condense the Guiding Principles to 4 or 5 and shared these focused Principles with the panel.

Scenarios 12A, 12 B and 12 C were shared. Each of these three scenarios were reviewed using a 2024, 2025 and 2026 Data Review with a focus on portables required along with a 2024, 2025 and 2026 Guiding Principles Matrix.

After each Scenario was reviewed, the presentation was paused to obtain feedback from the panel members.

Scenrio 12 A:

Q- Could Allan A Greenleaf share new students with Balaclava?

A - This could be revisited in 2026 based on the developments in the area. Staff committed to revisiting pieces that can trigger or factors that can impact where students land. Advised that this is a factor that staff would watch.

Comment- Optically this does not work.

Response- We will know more in the spring and more in the fall with regards to developments.

Comment- Acknowledges the capacity for Mary Hopkins and Flamborough Centre and shows a gradual pull of students.

Q- Concern with the play area for Allan A Greenleaf. Black top would be closed, and the other play space is not reliably available. Are there regulations regarding how much black top has to be available?

A -There is no regulation determining black top. In the next step the Transition Committee could champion things for the school. There are also opportunities to change the configuration.

Comment- It is logical to balance across all schools.

A – Could look at a 2025 2026 redirect to Balaclava if warranted.

Q- Could high school greenspace not in use or collaboration with the Y be considered?

A -As part of the Transition Committee staff would be willing to reach out.

Comment- The notion that scenarios were malleable over time would have changed the panels approach to initial scenarios.

A – The hope is that we find a scenario that works for 3 years however staff is aware that there are factors that can impact, and staff will continue to monitor. All schools are monitored each year.

Comment- What to do if a family ends up with 3 kids at 3 different schools.

Comment noted.

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Scenario 12B:

Comment – There is a lot of merit to having all students graduate at the same time. Likes 12B better than 12A. Likes that it further decreases the portables at Mary Hopkins. Reinforced the feedback from the public meeting and the potential impact of students dropping out of French Immersion.

Q – Could it be written into the scenario that Allan A Greenleaf would be reviewed if getting additional portables?

A- Suggestion noted.

Comment- Request that what happens to the septic at Flamborough be affirmed.

A – Discussions occurring now with the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks. Working directly with the consultant and have advised that they will help through the process.

Q - Is there any chance that this puts Flamborough Centre at risk and what are the financial implications?

A - Should it be deemed necessary the tank could be pumped more frequently. 469 is the number that we can work around with the current system in place. Do not believe there is inherent risk with this scenario. 1 million dollars has been earmarked for Flamborough Centre in the 5-year Plan.

Q - Concerns exist for parking, the road and bussing at Flamborough.

A- Staff will work with the City of Hamilton on both short term and long-term solutions. The lay by the driveway will likely allow for short-term gravel between the street and the drive and a permanent solution is anticipated closer to the septic bed.

Scenario 12C:

Q - Do we have any data regarding kids at different grades?

A - There are changing dynamics in Hamilton. Extremes exist from families with 1-2 students to families with 4-6 students. We do not know the particular data.

Comment - Do not hate scenario. Its biggest concern is that it takes away a soft place to land.

Q - Do we expect bussing issues of over more than 1 hour?

A - HWSTS plans routes to ensure rides are less than an hour.

Q - Is it possible a ride could take more than an hour?

A - The greater the distance a route is the greater issues can become. Run the risk of weather-related delays which can become a greater issue for parents.

The Panel confirmed Scenario 12C eliminated for consideration.

Preliminary Staff Recommendation and Next Steps:

Staff shared that their recommendation moving forward is Scenario 12B and its advantages with regards to the Guiding Principles were reviewed. As part of this recommendation staff committed to coming back every year to review the factors discussed this meeting.

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A round robin discussion followed, and panel members shared their thoughts.

Trustee Noble offered his thoughts sharing that he is in favour of Scenario 12B and proposed consideration be given to opening Balaclava to Out of Catchment consideration from Flamborough. He felt that this could potentially improve transportation. Trustee Noble offered that a small amendment for overflow could be offered to adjust the flow of students. Staff shared that transportation is not provided for Out of Catchment students and Trustee Noble asked if this could be amended and staff offered to take the suggestion away.

Allan A Greenleaf recognized that every scenario gives their school more students. Shared concern regarding the impact on the blacktop noting that the field does not drain properly making fields frequently unusable.

Staff advised that portable count and impact be revisited every year.

Also shared was the belief that there is a linear relationship for capacity for achievement and advised that should they see academic decline they will escalate the conversation.

Staff shared that Transition planning could address this concern.

Mary Hopkins suggested that an amendment be written and a conversation held around the factors that would trigger a review. Indicated a belief that Scenarios 12A and 12C are not viable. Staff confirmed that 12C is no longer being considered.

Mary Hopkins stated that Scenario 12B is the only right option.

Flamborough Centre stated belief that Scenario 12B is Scenario 1 in disguise. Feels they are not putting themselves in a safe spot and shared concerns that saying that weekly or monthly pumping of the septic is adequate. Repeated concerns regarding parking challenges.

Staff acknowledged feedback and indicated that comments were appreciated.

Mary Hopkins, in follow up to Flamborough Centre feedback, offered that their understanding was that the process was not solely intended to address Flamborough Centre numbers noting that Flamborough Centre in this Scenario will gain 2 portables while Allan A Greenleaf will be receiving 8. Also acknowledged that staff had offered reassurances concerns would be addressed.

Staff further offered that they appreciated Flamborough raising their safety issues. Confirmed the need to find solutions noting the Facility Department discussing parking at the front and side even absent this Temporary Accommodation process. Staff shared that in working with the City of Hamilton they have not indicated that any challenges are expected, and while unable to speak for the City in terms of timelines shared a desire that they will be in time for September 2024. Staff advised that the school, as it stands now, can have 5 portables placed at the site and acknowledged that the problem with parking is not specific to Flamborough Centre.

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Staff confirmed that safety concerns are transition type issues and suggested staff will put this as a part of what a Transition Committee would consider through Superintendent Lee who will Chair that process.

Flamborough Centre stated that the school can do their part when their issues are addressed.

Guy B Brown stated commitment to doing their part. Noted that they have the least amount of land and feel safety has to be the number one consideration.

Staff reassured that safety concerns are part of the transition planning and also urged schools who are not actively working with the City of Hamilton ASST Program to take this opportunity to re-engage.

Staff reflected that the panel has given staff a sense of their thoughts and good language to support them in preparing a good report. Staff promised to honour the discussion regarding revisiting.

Associate Director Gerard reviewed the next steps identifying significant dates and acknowledged that there was a lot of emotion involved, that a lot of information was covered and shared the appreciation from him and the Resource Staff for how people approached the meeting.

He offered that the emphasis of items that will be considered by the Transition Committee will not be reflected in the report and confirmed that they have been recorded.

He confirmed that letters will be sent home to the affected schools and in offering to funnel draft letters with the impacted School Council involved in this Panel for their review, advised that the letters would go out approximately a week after the stated date of March 5th.

Noting that two of the schools (Allan A Greenleaf and Mary Hopkins) have scheduled School Council meetings on February 22nd, Panel members asked what could be shared with their school communities. Staff advised that the Advisory would be emailed the Public Version of the Report. Staff advised that as of February 20th the Decision will be public. Advised Panel members that after the 20th they can share that this is what was passed on the 20th. Parents can be directed to the staff report on February 16th.

Conclusion:

Superintendent Lee adjourned the meeting at 9:17 p.m. thanking the Committee for their participation.