



**Southeast Galt Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation
Review
Minutes of Accommodation Review Committee Meeting # 9
February 5, 2009 - 4:30 pm**

The ninth meeting of the Southeast Galt Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) was held at Stewart Avenue Public School, on February 5, 2009.

Committee Members Present:

Sue Thorne-McCaffrey, Principal of Alison Park P.S., Leslie Tinning, Principal of Stewart Ave. P.S., Cindy Benedetti, Principal of Chalmers Street P.S., Allan MacKay, Principal of Manchester P.S., Geoff Suderman-Gladwell, Principal of Central P.S., Brian Beney, Vice Principal of Lincoln Avenue P.S., Heather Forman, Vice Principal of Chalmers Street P.S., Colin and Jennifer Kevan, parents – Manchester P.S., Ann Quenneville, parent – Central P.S., Margaret Montague, parent – Alison Park P.S., Linda Roechner, parent – Chalmers Street P.S., Mary Hingley, recording secretary, Lauren Manske, Planner, Nathan Hercanuck, Senior Planner and Chris Smith, Manager of Planning, for the Waterloo Region District School Board.

Regrets:

Diane DeCoene, Area Superintendent, Brian Ward, Principal of Avenue Road P.S., Wendy Daley, Vice Principal of Stewart Ave. P.S., Jim Berry, Assistant Superintendent – Special Education, Jim Kirchin, Director of Planning Operations – City of Cambridge, Linda Rogers, Principal of Lincoln Avenue P.S., Amneh Hamdan, Immigrant Services, Cambridge YMCA, Janis Doran, parent – Central P.S., Koula Malatches, parent – Avenue Rd. P.S., Colleen Cade, parent – Chalmers Street P.S., Tracy Wegener, parent – Central P.S., Terri Nikolasevic, parent – Stewart Ave. P.S., Michele List, parent – Stewart Avenue P.S., Muhammad Arif, parent – Alison Park P.S.

1. Welcome

- Chris Smith, Manager of Planning welcomed the ARC and opened the meeting at 4:30 p.m.
- Mr. Smith introduced and welcomed Jennifer Crits to the ARC; she will be assuming the role of Principal at Central P.S. effective March 2, 2009. Geoff Suderman-Gladwell will become Principal at Linwood P.S., so he will be leaving the ARC.

2. Meeting # 8 – draft minutes approval

- Mr. Smith asked if there were any comments or corrections on the draft minutes from our January 20, 2009 meeting.
 - None were raised.
- Minutes from January 20, 2009 were approved, mover: Ann Quenneville, seconded: Brian Beney.

- Mr. Smith advised that we received the information from the principal at William G. Davis regarding the number of students attending the enhanced senior elementary program from the review area; currently there are 2 students in the program.
3. Ongoing: Questions or Comments, Draft Objectives, Valuation Templates
- Mr. Smith asked the ARC if there were any questions/comments regarding the draft objectives.
 - None were raised.
 - Mr. Hercanuck advised that the Valuation Templates are complete and available online.
4. Follow up from Public Meeting
- Mr. Smith asked for thoughts and comments from the facilitators and the group regarding the Public Meeting.
 - A comment was made that issues were brought up at the meeting that did not belong, and that it was hard to steer away from that.
 - Mr. Smith agreed that this does happen at public meetings, it can be challenging for the facilitator to keep the group focused and separate out the issues.
 - Ms. Benedetti commented that her group really looked at each scenario, had thoughtful, reflective questions, and had good discussion.
 - Ms. Forman was impressed with the group discussion. She felt that the Alison Park parents were open to discussion, demonstrated patience, and understood the process.
 - Mr. Beney noted the turnout was a bit disappointing – probably due to the weather. He felt his group had put aside any pre-conceived notions, and were interested and happy that the process was being followed.
 - Mr. MacKay felt the discussion was productive and produced good, thoughtful questions.
 - Ms. Thorne-McCaffrey was impressed with how much her group picked up from the scenarios, and how quickly they processed the details. She felt that speaking english was not an issue; however the group was glad to have a translator available to them. She also noted that her group represented a mixture of schools, and were willing to talk openly.
 - It was noted that one of the groups was quite small, they got polarized, and there was some discussion that was off topic. They felt that they did not have enough time for full discussion. It was asked of Mr. Smith if the members of the ARC were supposed to identify themselves in the groups.
 - Mr. Smith said that was up to each member; the ARC’s role was to observe the discussion and get a feel for how the public was receiving the information.
 - Mr. Smith said Planning Staff was impressed with the discussion going on in each of the break out rooms. He noted that several people were happy with the format, and there were some common threads emerging:
 - the new school, JK-8 model – favoured
 - Alison Park students attending the new school – had support
 - partnership approach – some favourable feedback on this one too

- Ms. Manske went through some of the comments/feedback from the public meeting, which she had summarized in the presentation. She will be sending a copy of the presentation to each ARC member, for them to review in detail, as well as posting the presentation on the Board website.
- Ms. Manske went through each scenario and invited some discussion:

Scenario A

- Based on feedback, this scenario does not meet the review objectives.

Scenario B

- This scenario does a good job of meeting the review objectives, and had many favourable comments.
- It does not meet a walk-in solution for Alison Park students, however.

Q – Is busing reduced in this scenario?

R – Busing would be reduced for 7/8's, so likely a “wash” financially.

Q – How many buses currently go into Lincoln Avenue?

R – 7 buses, including 2 from rural area, and 3 from the Elgin area.

- Avenue Road vs. Elgin Street (converting to JK-8)
- Elgin Street has site issues; the property is smaller with a significant hill to the side and rear. Avenue Road is relatively flat, and better geographically, to serve Elgin Street and Manchester.

Q – We seem to be leaning toward the JK-8 model, is this a mandate yet?

R – Mr. Smith responded: not at this point, we do see a lot of interest though. Senior administration does seem to be leaning towards reviewing this issue. (Note: no preference had been stated by the Board). It seems to be where the Ministry is going. We do lose some students at the grade 6 to 7 transition; the distance the 7/8's have to travel is an issue. A comment was made at the public meeting about a JK-3, 4-8 model; this is not being looked at.

Scenario C

- This scenario does a fairly good job of meeting the review objectives.
- There were some negative comments about Manchester P.S. recorded, and the costs associated with any renovations there.

Scenario D

- This scenario does a pretty good job at meeting the review objectives.
- Alison Park's enrolment is low, and would still have small school issues, i.e. split classes.

- Mr. Smith felt that this scenario was met with mainly favourable comments, there was however one group that did not see the partnership working.

Q – Has there been any further movement from either Board on partnership?

R – No, not yet, we are still awaiting direction from both Boards.

Q – It was asked what reason was given for the negative response to partnership, was it religious based, was it a bullying issue?

R – Mr. Smith noted we have the potential for these issues at all schools, but there was one individual who had a strong opinion regarding the Waterloo Catholic schools.

- Ms. Tinning, Principal of Stewart Avenue commented that we have character education in the public system, which is a similar philosophy to the values that define Catholic education – we are becoming closer.

- Mr. Smith reiterated that for a partnership to work, we have to have a “buy in” from everyone, and it would require a huge effort to work successfully. He noted that there was interest and feedback from the community at the public meeting, regarding this scenario option.

Scenario E

- This scenario doesn't really meet the review objectives.
- It is not a long-term solution.
- Bussing would stay the same as it is currently.
- Mr. Smith asked the ARC for a more general discussion on the scenarios and the public's reaction to them.
- To kick things off, he felt that overall they were in favour of the JK-8 model, and there was no negative response concerning the closure of Lincoln Avenue. Converting Avenue Road to JK-8 would give the review area a JK-8 in the north part, and the new school would give a JK-8 in the south part of Cambridge (Scenario B). This could be the start of a leading scenario.
 - Q – If we close a school, would we sell the property?
 - R – Yes, we would sell, and then we would need to purchase land for the new school, so it would offset financially.
- Mr. Smith asked Mr. MacKay, Principal of Manchester what feedback he has had from parent reps regarding closing the school (Scenario C), and the perception that the school is deficient.
- Mr. MacKay replied that he has many parents loyal to the school that do not want to see it closed, and do not feel it is deficient.
 - Q – Can we build a new JK-6/JK-8 on the Alison Park property, and close Central and Manchester?
 - R – The site is 3.8 acres, and would be a very tight fit for any more than a 400 place school (a JK-8 school would be built for 500 plus students). A multi level structure is more efficient with ground space. However, we can look at the JK-6 option, and bring results back to the next meeting.
- Mr. Smith commented that our goal is to get to 1 or 2 scenarios to take back to the public.
 - Q – Do we have a date for Public Meeting # 3?
 - R – Not at this time, it will depend on us getting down to our preferred scenario, with one backup perhaps. We want something pretty firm for the next public meeting (# 3), then some fine tuning can be done after that. The last public meeting would be for the ARC draft recommendations to the Board.
 - Q – How often have the schools in the review area been a part of an accommodation review process?
 - R – As a package of 7 schools, Mr. Smith is not aware of them being looked at previously. There have been individual schools however that have been part of a review. Chalmers Street, Lincoln Avenue and Central were part of Littles Corners coming together for instance.
 - Q – Are there any assurances for the Alison Park parents that once the process is complete they won't be moved again in a few years, with another accommodation review?

R – Mr. Smith reiterated that one of our draft objectives is: To determine a permanent option for Alison Park (not portables) and where possible, keep Alison Park students together. Our goal in this process is to come up with a long-term solution for the whole review area; we would not likely have another Pupil Accommodation Review so quickly. Again, the environment we work in can change, but we define long term as at least one JK-8 cycle, or ten plus years.

5. Roundtable

- Mr. Smith asked if there were any further questions/comments.
 - None were raised.

6. Future Meeting Dates

- Mr. Smith noted that the next ARC meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, February 17, 2009. Due to the work involved in detailing and costing out the favoured scenarios, Planning Staff asked the ARC to have the meeting pushed back one week – to Tuesday, February 24, 2009.
 - The group agreed to this change.
- Mr. Smith thanked all for coming; meeting ended at 6:00 pm.

Future Meeting Dates:

Tuesday, February 24, 2009, 4:30 – 6:00 pm at Stewart Avenue P.S.