Southeast Galt Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation Review
Minutes of Accommodation Review Committee Meeting # 12
April 30, 2009 - 4:30 pm

The twelfth meeting of the Southeast Galt Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) was held at Stewart Avenue Public School, on April 30, 2009.

Committee Members Present:
Sue Thorne-McCaffrey, Principal of Alison Park P.S., Allan MacKay, Principal of Manchester P.S., Leslie Tinning, Principal of Stewart Ave. P.S., Brian Ward, Principal of Avenue Road P.S., Brian Beney, Vice Principal of Lincoln Avenue P.S., Heather Forman, Vice Principal of Chalmers Street P.S., Colin Kevan, parent – Manchester P.S., Colleen Cade, parent – Chalmers Street P.S., Muhammad Arif, parent – Alison Park P.S., Margaret Montague, parent – Alison Park P.S., Linda Roechner, parent – Chalmers Street P.S., Jennifer Kevan, parent – Manchester 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, Jim Berry, Assistant Superintendent – Special Education, Cindy Benedetti, Principal of Chalmers Street P.S., Wendy Daley, Vice Principal of Stewart Ave. P.S., Linda Rogers, Principal of Lincoln Avenue P.S., Jennifer Crits, Principal of Central P.S., Jim Kirchin, Director of Planning Operations – City of Cambridge, Amneh Hamdan, Immigrant Services, Cambridge YMCA, Tracy Wegener, parent – Central P.S., Janis Doran, parent – Central P.S., Ann Quenneville, parent – Central P.S., Terri Nikolasevic, parent – Stewart Ave. P.S., Michele List, parent – Stewart Avenue P.S., Koula Malatches, parent – Avenue Road P.S.

1. Welcome

- Chris Smith, Manager of Planning welcomed the ARC and opened the meeting at 4:45 pm.

2. Meeting # 11 – draft minutes approval

- Mr. Smith asked the ARC if there were any comments/corrections to the draft minutes from the April 7, 2009 meeting that they had noticed.
    - None were raised.
- Minutes from April 7, 2009 were approved, mover: Brian Ward, seconded: Brian Beney
- Mr. Smith referred the ARC to the hand out they received which was the draft notice for the Southeast Galt's Public Meeting # 4, scheduled for Tuesday May 26, 2009, and gave the timelines involved:

- We have confirmed the date for the Board to receive the ARC Report: Wednesday June 3, 2009.
- Mr. Smith noted that we would like to have the ARC attend this meeting; it will be a chance for us to formally thank you for being a part of this process. We can send directions to the Education Centre for any who need them.
- Delegates can register at this meeting to make comments on the ARC Report or ask questions.
- The Board cannot consider the report or make a decision for 60 days (according to the Ministry guidelines for the Accommodation Review) not including the summer break.
- The report from the Director will be brought to a Committee of the Whole Meeting on Monday October 19, 2009 at the earliest. Discussion/debate will take place then. The Board could send it back to the ARC, or make a decision.
- The Board meeting to formally accept the report could be as early as Monday October 26, 2009.
- We have shown you the draft notice for our fourth and final Public Meeting; it will be a drop-in format to share the ARC's recommendation(s) with the public. There will be a sign in sheet as well as comment sheets available to those present.
- As with past public meeting notices, we will try to have it translated into Urdu. We will also update our sign that we place at the Alison Park school site advising the neighbourhood of the meeting date and time.
- It was noted that due to some feedback received at Chalmers Street P.S. from the last public meeting, we will translate the notice into French as well.
- Mr. Smith asked the group for their consensus if they thought the notice looked okay, and made sure we were not predetermining a decision.
    - The ARC agreed by consensus that the notice was okay, and to go forward with it.

3. Ongoing: Questions or Comments, Objectives, Valuation Templates

- Mr. Smith asked the ARC if there were any additional questions/comments regarding the objectives. He noted that there was no feedback from the Public Meeting regarding the objectives.
    - There was one point brought forward regarding the objective to keep Alison Park students together, Scenario F splits Manchester students in 3 different directions, and the seemingly unfairness of this.
- Mr. Smith reminded everyone that the Valuation Templates are available online.

4. Public Meeting Recap and Feedback

- Mr. Smith asked the ARC for their thoughts regarding the third Public Meeting held on April 21, 2009. Comments compiled from the Public Meeting were sent to the ARC for their review at tonight's meeting.
- He felt that it was very polite, great questions came up, thought more people would have been there now that we are down to only the 2 scenarios to present.
    - Surprised at the low numbers especially from the Lincoln Avenue area, there were some staff, but didn't seem to be any parents.

- Mr. Beney noted that the Lincoln Avenue staff has been kept up to date with the process, but that the parents often don't have the attachment with just 7/8's in the school.

- Mr. Smith noted that we are right on the timelines for the review process, it can be a lengthy one (which was mentioned at the public meeting), but the Ministry timelines do not let us go any faster than the minimums.

Q – Can we talk about the comments from the Public Meeting?
R – Yes, we can go over those.
Q – Were any of the comments coming from staff?
R – We would not know unless they identified themselves as staff.
Q – Were the comments provided to us from the comment sheets handed out at the meeting or from the minutes?
R – They were from the comment sheets and our online boundary feedback email.
Q – We are missing input from staff, it was my understanding that staff could not participate or make comments, and their comments need to be made available to the ARC.
R – Mr. Smith noted that there is no dictate that says staff cannot attend public meetings or make comments, they shouldn't beat us up however, we are all on the same team, and their opinions can be expressed professionally. It was also noted that staff are members of the school community, and welcome to comment. However, staff might also have some information that shouldn't be made public.

- We can give them a comment sheet and ask them to send it to us in Planning, it can be anonymous.
- Ms. Thorne-McCaffrey noted that the staff at Alison Park have concerns, but have also been kept up to date. It was her opinion that the concerns she has heard from staff are well represented in the comments received. Mr. Smith has been out to two of their staff meetings to take back any comments/concerns. He would be happy to talk to Lincoln Avenue staff about the process going forward with the area superintendent there as well.

5. ARC Report/Recommendation

- Mr. Smith asked the ARC if we could spend some time to go through both scenarios and gauge them as meet/doesn't meet according to the review objectives. For a full list of the Accommodation Review Committee Objectives please visit the Board website at: www.wrdsb.on.ca/accommodation-segalt.php

- As a re-cap: **Scenario B** would build a new JK-8 school, close Lincoln Avenue, put an addition onto Avenue Road and convert it to a JK-8 school.
- Ms. Manske updated the study objective meets/doesn't meet chart in the presentation during the group discussion (which is also available on the website).

- Following are questions and answers generated during discussion of **Scenario B**:

Q – New construction within the Board, do they keep an eye for future expansion, i.e. portables?
R – We have to have shown enrolment to at least 80% capacity to get Ministry approval to build, which we have in this area. If a new school opens, then enrolments explodes, we

respond to it in steps, we might take students to schools in older areas as a measure. Regarding the additional new school in Area M, this is in the long term and until development starts we don't have a timeframe for it. The current economic slow down may have an impact on this, as well as the as yet un-built trunk sewer issue.
Q – A concern was raised that part of keeping Alison Park students together has them becoming a bused community to the new school. Is there a hint that there could be another Accommodation Review down the road, making them change again?
R – We plan for the long term, which is approximately 10 years. The Board could however reconsider, and externally driven changes such as implementation of all day/every day kindergarten could affect things as well.
Q – Has this happened here before, or in other Boards?
R – Yes, we have had to address that before, i.e. W.T. Townshend and Baden.
Q – The Alison Park area is pretty concentrated with 3 buses now, is there another neighbourhood like this?
R – Yes, the Mattamy Townline Road area for instance, has 4 or maybe 5 buses going to Silverheights (the difference being that Silverheights goes to grade 8).

- Scenario B does address enrolment impact, Central however is still small.
- The overall costs for busing are down in Scenario B, even though Alison Park will be a permanently bused community.

Q – Regarding accessibility, can we improve access at Avenue Road by getting better doors?
R – Yes, that could be looked at as well as washrooms, door hardware, adding sprinklers, etc.
Q – Can we address Central's accessibility issues?
R – Yes, we can recommend an overall priority accessibility list. It may not happen the first year, but maybe in three years versus the ten to fifteen it could have taken without being in front of the Board now.

- Regarding specialized programs, we plan to encourage French Immersion at the new school, Chalmers Street or Stewart Avenue. The interest does have to come from the parents, and transportation is not provided. We are trying to maintain and enhance the feed to Galt Collegiate for French Immersion.
- Regarding the objective of addressing student transitions, Mr. Smith noted that we will need specifics, and we can't really gauge this yet until a scenario is chosen. There are many components to transition: grand parenting, phasing, academic, physical and social needs to be addressed with students and parents.
- Mr. Smith noted that at the last public meeting we had a parent of an autistic child tell us that he would not want to change schools because of the support his child is receiving. We have since checked with the school and have been advised that his child would receive the same support at his new school. It was commented that principal-to-principal conversation could also take place in these situations.

Q – Can transitions take place partway through the school year? For instance, if construction is complete in December, can they move in January?
R – This can be tricky, there are staffing issues to be considered, and Ministry guidelines to follow. One transfer could change an entire organization. Bus routes are established in the summer for September implementation, and changing it in January would add considerable more work – we find starting with a new school year in September seems to work best.
Q – Could there be a more gradual transition then?

R – September is a natural fresh start date; plans are made for grade 3 and 6 testing, it might be difficult to change your teacher partway through the year.
Q – Staff does change throughout the year, i.e. maternity leaves.
R – Yes, that's true, but it is difficult for mid year changes for entire school organizations.
Q – With the construction of the new school, could it work for Alison Park to move in early?
R – We generally time the construction completion for September also, but that's a thought.
Q – In addressing transitions and the closing of Lincoln Avenue and Alison Park, we haven't taken into account neighbourhood issues and what will go on that property when the school is removed. Can the Board put conditions on who buys the land?
R – The property issue is not as high a priority as transitioning the students. We are looking at 2011, 2 years from now, and possibly 1 extra year at Lincoln if the new school opens as JK-7, so changes could be 3 years away. As mentioned in earlier meetings there is a process for the selling of Board property. Mr. Smith thought it unlikely that another school or public education institution would buy the property. The Board can put conditions on the sale; however Mr. Smith noted that as a Planner, he would not recommend any conditions, could scare buyers away, and make it harder to sell.
Q – How can parents let the Board know their feelings about this? Perhaps the Board should consider impact on neighbourhoods rather than top price.
R – Mr. Smith responded that they can contact the Planning Department as a comment, and/or contact Trustees.

- This would really be a Board decision. Redevelopment would require municipal zoning approval and the public process that entails.
- While the Board is selling a former school site, its core mandate is education, not development activity.
- Locations of Alison Park and Lincoln Avenue would preclude non-residential re-uses such as light industrial or commercial.

Q – Most likely housing?
R – Yes, but they would need to re-zone from institutional, this is an issue for the City of Cambridge and would be best to contact them about what they would see as compatible. The Manchester site might have commercial potential.
Q – Neighbourhoods need to have input.
R – Yes they do, and as noted already, there is a city zoning process, so lots of land use protection is there.

- As a re-cap: **Scenario F** would build a new JK-8 school, rebuild Alison Park as JK-6 on its current site, close Manchester and Lincoln Avenue, put an addition onto Avenue Road and convert it to JK-8.

- Following are questions and answers generated during discussion of **Scenario F**:

- Mr. Smith noted that part of our first objective is to keep Alison Park students together where possible; we need to recognize that Scenario F splits Manchester students apart.

Q – Why was Manchester split up 3 ways?
R – It was a matter of balancing the numbers.
Q – Does it have to?

R – One of our objectives is to support optimal use of facilities. If we did not make the split, the numbers would be inequitable, and we would have under and over enrolment issues, so that is why the decision was made.
Q – Regarding the greater cost of Scenario F versus Scenario B, will the Board consider this if both scenarios end up doing a good job of meeting the objectives?
R – The cost is not everything, but if both meet the objectives, the less expensive option might be more attractive.
Q – Scenario B does not take into account accessibility costs for Manchester.
R – No it does not; those costs would have to be factored in if it was part of the recommendation. Of course, the new schools would be fully accessible.
Q – What about the insurance money for Alison Park?
R – That is a constant in both scenarios, the money goes to address the needs of the students and we can be specific about where it is going.
Q – Does the insurance company get to have a preference?
R – Not that we are aware of. It's a settlement of asset value.
Q – The numbers we were given regarding construction and property values, etc. are they accurate?
R – There is a benchmark formula for new construction for Ministry allocation that is used, for accessibility upgrades it's a guestimate, and property values are based on current market values but not actual appraisals.

- All 3 school properties are zoned institutional combined with either residential or industrial.
- Manchester is zoned: **N1M3 institutional**
- Lincoln Avenue is zoned: **N1R5 institutional**
- Alison Park is zoned: **N1R4 institutional**
- **N1** = educational, government and non-profit community institutions, public hospitals, non-profit family crisis shelters, places of worship, children's care facilities and non-profit service or social clubs or fraternal societies.
- **M3** = general industrial uses
- **R4/R5** = residential to accommodate detached one-family dwellings at varying urban densities.
- **Compound zones** = can be any combination of uses on the site.

Q – Right now they are zoned institutional, but that might change.
R – The Board does not undertake the process and pay the fees for redevelopment or to have properties re-zoned; that is a process for the developers. The Manchester site might do better commercially; Alison Park and Lincoln Avenue areas are pretty residential and are rated as about the same value.
Q – Accredited appraisals have not been done at this point; if not being accounted for in the process it doesn't really matter in the decision making.
R – We don't normally do this at this point, the Board can ask for an appraisal. In our opinion and estimate of property values, these would not likely be a deciding factor. If our estimates are low, or high, the factors would go up or down in both scenarios.

- In discussion of having regard for secondary school boundaries, it was felt that Scenario B does a slightly better job. In Scenario B, Area F goes to Galt C.I. and in Scenario F, Area F goes to the new school for 7/8 then onto Galt C.I. It was noted that Area F is the only area going to Galt (the rest go to Glenview Park S.S.)

Q – The Glenview Park boundary has been changed often.
R – We have changed the Preston/Galt boundaries, but not Glenview Park recently that I can recall (with the exception of some Fast Forward Program changes).
Q – Is this objective a deal breaker if they don't meet?
R – No, neither scenario is absolutely consistent with secondary school boundaries, but they do have regard for them which is the objective.

- Mr. Smith noted that again for transitions, a plan will have to be put in place depending on the final outcome and what scenario/option is chosen.

Q – Do we want to get down to one scenario?
R – Mr. Smith responded: that is the question; at this point do we have a front runner? If so, do you want this to be our recommended option or a recommended option with a back up?

- A comment was made that Scenario F does not make sense, it splits up Manchester, Scenario B is better.
- A key part was keeping Alison Park together; it should be equally true for another school community.

- As an observation, Mr. Smith totaled up the meets/doesn't meet as they pertained to the study objectives for each of the two scenarios.
- The tally was:
    - **Scenario B** with 8 meets and 4 doesn't meet
    - **Scenario F** with 7 meets and 5 doesn't meet
- General agreement around the group was that Scenario B does a better job at meeting the study objectives (as demonstrated by these numbers). It was noted that we agreed by consensus at the start of the process, that the objectives would be used to ultimately gauge the worthiness of the scenarios/options taken to the public and then to the Board.

Q – With Alison Park going to the new school, does that area have more development to come?
R – There is some, but it is pretty much built out. The numbers that we are aware of are already included in the projections.
Q – Rebuilding Alison Park could fill Manchester's needs, there is not a lot of development going on there, we need to keep that in mind after it's built.
R – That's correct, the rebuild of Alison Park does not help in terms of future land use, and while being fully accessible and up to date (unlike Manchester) it could not handle an addition due to the small site size if one was required down the road.
Q – The new school at the Alison Park site is off a major street, we need to think long term for the safety of the students.
R – Manchester would have to be bused to the new Alison Park school in Scenario F.
Q – Could they not use Elgin Street to get to a rebuilt Alison Park?
R – We would not recommend that.
Q – Could you not make a short cut – have them go through the tunnel under the CP tracks. Maybe ask the City to open as a street?
R – The City closed that road as a through street in order to get Canadian Transportation Commission approval for the Franklin underpass and it won't be re-opened. The JK-6 students would be bused for safety issues, not distance, as even the 7/8's are now bused, so we could not send the JK-6's through that tunnel.

Q – Scenario F does make some sense, I don't agree with splitting Manchester up. What is the cost of keeping Manchester and upgrading it? The scenario does have these costs included.

- Mr. Smith asked Committee members to consider if Scenario F meets the objectives that we have developed.

Q – We have lost neighbourhood schools.
R – They can't support an organization; will the Alison Park boundary eventually need to be re-done short term? We hope not.
Q – All will have to be re-done eventually.
R – We are planning for the long term, we do want to keep a reasonably placed presence and have some regard for sensibility of the community. For example, the townhouse/condo development down the hill from Central only houses four JK-6 students, that kind of infill housing is not a big draw right now for families – could be years away. We can only work with what we know now.

6. Roundtable

- Mr. Smith noted that we have 2 scenarios; one costs more and doesn't score quite as well. Do we go forward with a front runner and back up, or go forward with one preferred scenario?
- The following is a sample of the ARC's vote and comments:
    - 4 for presenting Scenario B as a front runner alone
    - 4 for presenting Scenario B as a front runner with Scenario F as a back up
    - 2 for presenting both Scenario B and F with no front runner designated

    - We need to present a front runner and keep coming back to our objectives, what meets the best? We still know the previous scenarios are there if needed to show how we got here.
    - The cost of Scenario F is high, as a taxpayer I feel Scenario B does a better job.
    - Scenario B is my preferred, but I like to say that we have a back up.
    - I do see Scenario B as a front runner, but would be remise if I don't include Scenario F as the back up.
    - Speaking for the community I would like to see both scenarios presented with no front runner designated.
    - Present both scenarios, no front runner.
    - I want to see Scenario B as a front runner, with Scenario F as an option for the Board to look at; we need to trust what we have done through this process.
    - Scenario B as a front runner, with the Board having access to Scenario F as a back up.

- Mr. Smith suggested that as a summation of this key discussion, the ARC (based on consensus) could take a preferred scenario with a back up to present at Public Meeting #4 and to the Board. The tough part is that tonight not all of the ARC's members are present. We have consensus here tonight, do we want to canvass the other members for a vote/secret ballot? We would need another meeting for that.

  - A comment was made that the committee as a whole, the people who have shown interest are here tonight, and we shouldn't be delayed by those that aren't present.
- Mr. Smith felt that the consensus reached tonight is a fair representation of the whole group.
  - A comment was made to only take the two scenarios to the Board, not to look at past scenarios.
- Mr. Smith advised that the Board can go back if they wish to look at previous scenarios; they need to know the work that went into getting to these two and why others aren't still on the table.
- Mr. Smith noted that Planning staff will draft a Board report with Scenario B as the front runner, and Scenario F as the back up for the ARC to review at our next scheduled meeting on Thursday, May 21, 2009. If acceptable to this committee, the report will then be presented at Public Meeting # 4 Open House to be held on Tuesday, May 26, 2009. If the Public Meeting feedback is favourable, we will electronically send the results back to the ARC, so there will be no need for another ARC meeting. If feedback from the Public Meeting says we missed something, we will call another ARC meeting and continue deliberation.
- Mr. Smith reiterated that this is not the Planning staff's report; this is the ARC's report. You have done an amazing job to get to this stage!

7. Future Meeting Dates

- ARC Meeting #13, Thursday May 21, 2009, 4:30 – 6:00 pm at Stewart Avenue P.S.
- Public Meeting, Tuesday May 26, 2009, 4:30 – 7:30 pm at Lincoln Avenue P.S.

- Mr. Smith thanked all for coming; meeting adjourned at 7:05 pm.

Future Meeting Dates:

ARC Meeting # 13, Thursday May 21, 2009, 4:30 – 6:00 pm at Stewart Avenue
Public Meeting # 4 Tuesday May 26, 2009, 4:30 – 7:30 pm at Lincoln Avenue P.S.