



**Woolwich & Wellesley Townships
Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation Review
Minutes of Public Meeting #2
April 4, 2012
Elmira District Secondary School – 7:30 p.m.**

The second Public Meeting of the Woolwich & Wellesley Townships Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation Review was held at Elmira District Secondary School on Wednesday, April 4, 2012.

Approximately 35 members of the public were also in attendance.

1. Welcome/Introductions:

Dennis Cuomo, Manager of Planning for the Waterloo Region District School Board welcomed members of the public, school communities, and Board staff present for the evening, and noted that purpose of tonight's meeting is to share information about the Elementary Schools Accommodation Review running in the Woolwich and Wellesley Townships.

Mr. Cuomo made the following introductions:

Board Planning Department staff:

Nathan Hercanuck, Senior Planner
Lauren Manske, Senior Planner
Andrea Kean, Recording Secretary.

The Superintendent of Education for the review area:

Diane DeCoene

Principals/Vice Principals sitting on the Accommodation Review Committee:

Floradale P.S.

Vlad Kovac, Principal (sends his regrets)

Linwood P.S.

Geoff Suderman-Gladwell, Principal (sends his regrets)
Susan Marchiori – Vice Principal

St. Jacobs P.S.

Paul Milne, Principal (sends his regrets)

Three Bridges P.S.

Wayne Dunham – Principal

Trustees:

Margaret Johnston

Mr. Cuomo noted that the Woolwich and Wellesley Accommodation Review was initiated in February 2011 and since then the Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) has been established and is comprised of the school principals, parent representatives, community representative, Township staff and Board staff. The ARC has met 11 times and held its first Public Meeting on October 18, 2011. Since that time the ARC has looked in detail at the issues in the area and established some draft objectives to assist in their work which are printed on the back of the comment sheets handed out this evening. The ARC will use the draft objectives they have developed to assist them in developing a scenario and making a final recommendation(s) to the Board.

Mr. Cuomo advised that the display boards located at the side of the gymnasium outline several of the scenarios that the ARC has considered so far for accommodation options for the area. He advised that at this point nothing has been decided. Referring to the scenarios on display, he noted that they may suggest a change to your child's school or the closure of a school in the area; these are just options being discussed by the ARC. At this point in the process the ARC is looking at a wide-range of options and discussing them in detail; those with merit may be further modified and others will be rejected and new options may be developed.

Mr. Cuomo informed those in attendance that the purpose of tonight's meeting is to give a flavour of what the ARC has been discussing and the issues that have influenced their discussions. He advised that the scenarios will not be presented in detail in the presentation portion of the evening but Planning staff will be happy to discuss the scenarios individually one-on-one during the open house portion of the meeting.

Mr. Cuomo also pointed out that the Board is dependent on the Ministry of Education for funding for any new schools or major renovations. The Ministry has changed how it funds Boards and the Board will be required to present a solid detailed business case which the results of an ARC would factor into if capital construction is recommended by the ARC. He also noted that the Province's recent budget announcement did not give an indication of how it will be funding new schools. Whatever the ARC puts forward as its recommendation will be affected by the decisions that come from the Province.

Mr. Cuomo reminded those in attendance that the idea behind these public meetings is to gather community feedback. He reminded those in attendance to please complete a comment sheet and deposit in the comment box provided or to send in via fax to (519)570-2172 or to send in via email to boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca

Mr. Cuomo advised that Mr. Hercanuck would be conducting the presentation this evening and turned the meeting over to him.

Mr. Hercanuck led the group through the evening's presentation (available at: <http://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/accommodation-reviews/woolwich-and-wellesley-townships-elementary-schools>)

Mr. Hercanuck advised that tonight is the second of a minimum of four Public Meetings to be held to seek feedback from the community on the work of the Accommodation Review Committee.

Tonight's meeting will be in two parts:

1. Formal presentation and question and answer session
2. Open house with Planning staff available to answer questions one-on-one around the display boards illustrating the draft objectives and scenarios.

2. Background:

- **What is a Pupil Accommodation Review?**

Mr. Hercanuck noted that an Accommodation Review is a formal process that follows a set timeline and process which is outlined by the Ministry of Education. The process ensures that the local community is involved and informed in the decision taken by a school board when looking at the future of a school or group of schools.

- **Accommodation Review Committee:**

The ARC consists of:

- 2 parents from each school committee
- The Principal from each school:
 - Floradale PS
 - Linwood PS
 - St. Jacobs PS
 - Three Bridges PS
- The area Superintendent of Education
- Study Area Municipal Representatives:
 - Township of Wellesley
 - Township of Woolwich
- Up to 2 community representatives
- WRDSB staff:
 - Planning
 - Facilities Services

- **Reasons for an Accommodation Review:**

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the Ministry of Education guidelines for Accommodation Reviews list a number of reasons why a Board may consider doing a review. These reasons include:

- Potential to accommodate existing and future students in fewer facilities.
- Declining enrolment results in the inability to:
 - Provide suitable and equitable range or learning opportunities for students;
 - Under normal staffing allocations, organize with combined classes of no more than two grades;
- Reorganization involving the school or group of schools could enhance program and learning opportunities for students;
- Teaching and learning spaces and the site are not suitable to provide the programs and accessibility needed to serve the community, and retrofitting and/or enlarging the facility may be cost prohibitive;
- One or more of the schools is experiencing higher building maintenance expenses than average for the system and/or is in need of major capital improvements;
- The Board has received a formal request from a school community or communities requesting a review of their pupil accommodation facilities.

- **Accommodation Review Outcomes:**

The recommendation of the ARC (which is the end product of an Accommodation Review) could result in any combination of the following:

- **Boundary Changes**
Changes to a schools attendance area
- **Program Changes**
Changes to (grades being offered at each school)
- **Construction of new facility**
May range from minor renovations or additions to entirely new schools.
- **School Closures or consolidations**

- **Why an Accommodation Review for this area?**

1. Declining Enrolment:

Over the past ten years elementary enrolment in the area has declined by 18 percent.

2. Small School Organizations:

Related to this decline, some of the schools in this area are smaller than the Board likes to see for JK-8 organizations. The Board has a guideline indicating that it prefers JK-8 schools of an approximate size of 500-600 students in order to offer students better learning opportunities. This recommended size is easier to achieve in an urban setting, the lower population density of a rural area does present some challenges for this guideline. Nevertheless the small program at Three Bridges P.S. with 85 students and at Floradale P.S. with 257 is a concern.

3. Facility Challenges:

The age of some of the schools presents some challenges to the Board; some of the buildings are very old and have had numerous additions and renovations over the years. Maintenance costs, accessibility and equity of the schools have all been raised as concerns.

- **Accommodation Review Process**

Typically the Accommodation Review process proceeds as follows:

1. The ARC discusses issues affecting the review area from both the Boards perspective and from the perspective of the local school communities.
2. The ARC then takes the issues and develops objectives (statements) of what the ARC would like to accomplish.
3. With these objectives in mind the ARC develops various scenarios or options that seek to address the issues and meet the objectives.
4. The ARC will narrow down the scenarios based on how well they do on meeting the objectives and the ARC will be responsible for making a recommendation to the Board of Trustees as to which scenario or option they feel best addresses the issues identified during the Accommodation Review process.

Throughout this process the ARC will hold meetings as they work their way through to a recommendation, during this time we will also hold a minimum of 4 public meetings to inform and seek feedback from the public.

As you know we are at public meeting #2 and we are here to present the work of the ARC thus far:

- Issues and Draft Objectives of the review.
- Initial scenarios for comment and feedback.

3. Issues / Objectives:

- Declining Enrolment:

Referring to the chart on slide 10 of the online presentation, Mr. Hercanuck noted that the 18 percent enrolment decline is indicated by the purple line. The yellow bar represents where we are now the 2011/2012 school year. The good news is that it appears that we are expecting an enrolment rebound for the area and we will not continue to decline. Due to stronger numbers in our lower grades as well as anticipated residential development in the Town of St. Jacobs we are expecting modest growth from this point.

However it is expected there may still be the issue of surplus spaces in our schools.

The Green and Blue lines on this chart represent the total capacity of all of the area schools together. The difference then between the purple line (which is the enrolment) and the green and blue lines is the amount of surplus capacity, or empty spaces in our schools.

The reason for the two lines is the impact of the Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) program. Currently the Board is undertaking additions and renovations to our facilities to accommodate the full day kindergarten program. Once complete the overall capacity of the schools in the review area will have increased to the blue line.

Moving forward, we still expect to have some surplus spaces in the review area.

- Facility Challenges:

The Schools in the Review area represent a wide range of ages, from pretty much brand new in the case of Floradale built in 2010, to the oldest school, Three Bridges which was originally constructed in 1872.

There is not a great deal of maintenance costs with a brand new facility but as a building ages, it becomes more and more expensive to maintain.

The ARC looked at the projected 5 year maintenance costs of each facility as a portion of what it would cost to build new. This is what we call the Facility Condition Index or FCI.

Referring to Slide 12 of the online presentation, Mr. Hercanuck noted that Floradale, being new, is projected to have no real costs for the next five years but Linwood, St. Jacobs, and Three Bridges have been identified as requiring some work based on the theoretical useful life of the building components that make up the structures. He noted that the Board would not spend \$2.3 million at Linwood over the next five years, for example, but it does provide a useful comparison as to the relative need at each school and how we expect the costs to maintain a facility will increase as the school ages.

- Facility Amenities: (slide 13)
Because of school building ages there are differences with respect to the educational amenities each school has to offer their students such as:
 - Library size and layout: in comparison to school size and the number of students it serves.
 - Gym size: whether it is appropriately sized and able to meet the daily physical activity needs of the students
 - Site size: whether it can accommodate future additions or has enough playground spaces
 - Accessibility of the school: [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA) legislation mandates that all public buildings be 100% accessible by the year 2025 (only 13 years away)

- Boundaries/Community: (slides 14 and 15)
Current school boundaries and how they relate to the communities they serve.

Mr. Hercanuck referred to the review area map on slide 15 of the online presentation which illustrates the review area with the different colours representing the different school boundaries as they now exist as follows:

- Floradale P.S. – Purple
- Linwood P.S. – Green
- St. Jacobs P.S. – Tan
- Three Bridges P.S. which does not technically have a defined boundary,

In some cases portions of attendance areas are actually closer to a school other than their current home school. This could in theory result in longer transportation time, and attending a school outside the community you feel you identify with.

St. Jacobs and Three Bridges actually share the same boundary; this is the only situation that exists like this in the Board.

When the current Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) was formed by amalgamating the smaller local area boards it inherited Three Bridges P.S. and the program it was running which was a program for members of the Mennonite culture, and it has continued to operate as such.

Three Bridges Public School is not exclusive; anyone within the boundary can attend but the curriculum/program delivered at the school is different than the program offered at other WRDSB schools. Anyone within this area wanting the standard WRDSB curriculum and program would be directed to attend St. Jacobs Public School.

This has been considered by some to divide a community, in that students wishing to attend their neighborhood school (the school they are closest to) cannot if they wish to

have certain elements of the curriculum and program. For example, to attend Kindergarten, you would have to go to St. Jacobs Public School because Three Bridges Public School offers a Grade 1-8 school program only.

- **Student Transitions:** (slide 16)
Often the result of an accommodation review results in the changing of school boundaries or programs which results in some students having to change schools. The ARC felt it important to consider these transitions and have regard for the impact of change on the students. This could mean in the implementation of the ARC recommendation we grandfather some students, that is to say phase the change in for the younger grades while allowing some of the older grades to finish out.
- **Recognition of Cultural Differences:** (slide 17)
The review area services a conservative rural population who has historically not been as comfortable with public education as other cultures in the Board's jurisdiction. The ARC felt it important that it acknowledges these differences in the community.
- **Objectives:** (slides 18 and 19)
With these issues in mind the ARC crafted the Draft Objectives for the Review, or what the ARC wishes the solution to address. Part of the reason we are here at Public meeting number two is to hear your feedback on these Draft Objectives.

Draft Objectives for the Review:

- 1. Ensure equitable student access to a community school by having defined attendance area boundaries that relate geographically to the community it is located in.**

The ARC would like to ensure students in the area have equal access to educational resources at their community schools and have the boundaries of those schools be logically organized about the community they are in

- 2. Where possible organize school attendance boundaries to minimize distance to school.**

This objective again speaks to trying to organize boundaries so that students are attending the closest school.

- 3. Address student transitions where changes proposed.**

With any changes proposed, try to implement them so as to minimize disruptions for students.

- 4. Have regard for Board Policy 3002: Elementary School Size and Configuration, recognizing the challenges of rural areas.**

The school size and configuration guidelines the Board considers optimal is written into Board Policy 3002 and the ARC would like to recognize this policy but recognizing the challenges of meeting these guidelines in a rural area because

the lower population density in rural areas and, makes achieving this school population size difficult without creating an oversized boundary.

5. Support the efficient use of capital and operating resources through the consideration of facility condition, accessibility, and equitable access to educational amenities.

With any changes proposed recognize the issues and needs at the schools in the review area while being smart with the limited funds the Board has.

6. Maximize the number of students accommodated in permanent capacity.

If changes are to be made, the preference is to not increase the reliance on portable classrooms to house students

7. Maximize the use of existing capacity within facilities

To utilize the surplus capacity in the review area schools as best we can.

8. Recognize the unique needs of communities served by different schools through the reasonable accommodation of cultural differences.

Recognizing the Mennonite community in the area at all the schools but especially Three Bridges P.S., ensuring they are engaged in this process to find solutions that consider everyone. Through the discussions of the ARC we have talked a great deal about the scenarios you are about to see, and how they may affect specifically the Three Bridges Public School community. This is a community that to some degree has other educational options. Like the parochial school system.

The ARC has discussed a great deal the impact on the population should things change at Three Bridges P.S. and questioned if the WRDSB retain all the students? None? or somewhere in between? The answer is likely dependent on the degree and nature of any change.

The ARC felt it important to discuss with this community not only how many students we could expect to retain with any changes but also what could reasonably be done to accommodate the students within the WRDSB with any proposed changes.

4. Scenarios (slides 20-23)

With consideration to the objectives to date the ARC has developed the following scenarios (options) to meet the objectives as follows:

Status Quo:

- No change from the existing situation.
- Three Bridges P.S. continues to operate without a defined boundary, as a small school organization.

- Floradale P.S. remains underutilized with a school capacity of 322 but an enrolment between 240-260.
- St. Jacobs P.S., remains underutilized, although in the longer term, additional residential development in the town improves their numbers to 350-370 enrolment in 403 capacity school.
- The enrolment at Linwood P.S. increases within its existing boundary to 500 students in a 519 capacity school.

Status Quo is an option (scenario) at this point; however as it is the situation that initiated the Accommodation Review, it may not do so well with respect to the objectives, but that being said the ARC has not decided to remove it from consideration at this point.

Scenario 1

- Defined attendance area boundary for all schools in the review area, including Three Bridges P.S.
- The existing St. Jacobs P.S./Three Bridges P.S. boundary would be divided so that a portion of each goes to each school. So in this Scenario some existing Three Bridges students would be directed to St. Jacobs and some existing St. Jacobs students would be directed to Three Bridges.
- This boundary attempts to establish a rural/urban divide assuming the rural area would be the most comfortable with attending Three Bridges P.S.
- St. Jacobs P.S. would retain the town of St. Jacobs and Heidelberg as well as the southern portion of the existing boundary.
- With a defined boundary, Three Bridges P.S. would need some upgrades in terms of being able to offer equitable program opportunities. For example, it would need an addition to be able to offer the Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) program.
- Floradale P.S. and St. Jacobs P.S. would be a little underutilized
- Three Bridges P.S. would continue to be a small school organization. With under 100 students.

Scenario 2

- Three bridges P.S. is closed and its population directed to St. Jacobs P.S.
- These numbers assume that the entire population of Three Bridges P.S. would attend St. Jacobs P.S.
- Floradale P.S. continues to be a little underutilized at 260 students in a building built for 322.
- St. Jacobs P.S. would be over capacity at 458 students in a capacity of 403, and would likely require an addition besides the FDK addition.

Scenario 6

- Three Bridges P.S. is closed (similar to Scenario 2) with its population directed to Floradale P.S. and Linwood P.S.
- Floradale P.S. would be better utilized with respect to its enrolment and capacity.
- Linwood P.S. would get a slight increase in enrolment.
- St. Jacobs would be close to its capacity.

5. Next Steps

Mr. Hercanuck advised those in attendance that the ARC would like community feedback on the Scenarios and the Draft Objectives for the Review.

The ARC will take the feedback received, refine and perhaps add to objectives and scenarios and pull together costs for any work required to implement scenarios, and start narrowing them down by using the objectives so that by Public Meeting #3 we will have one or two scenarios fleshed out in terms of the details and costs for you.

Next Steps – Timelines

In terms of timeline an Accommodation Review is divided up into three phases with a minimum required amount of time for each. One phase cannot be begun before the other is completed.

Phase 1

From the time the intention to conduct an accommodation review is announced there must be no less than 30 days until the first public meeting is held. The Board announced its intent to conduct the accommodation review on Feb 14 2011 - therefore we are out of the first phase.

Phase 2

(Public Consultation Phase) From the date of the first Public Meeting (October 18, 2011) there can be no less than 90 days before the ARC submits its Accommodation Report to Trustees. As well we are required to hold a minimum of four public meetings. Right now we believe that the public consultation phase will extend beyond the end of the school year and into next.

This means that the last phase (phase 3) will not likely occur until the fall or later.

Phase 3

The trustees must have 60 days to consider the ARC and staff recommendations to make a decision. This 60 day period cannot include any breaks (summer, winter or spring).

So this definitely means there will be no changes for next school year as the process will still be ongoing.

6. Rural Education Services Program

Diane DeCoene, Superintendent of Education for review area schools addressed the community and noted that the Board is currently undergoing two concurrent review processes in the area:

1. The Woolwich & Wellesley Townships Elementary Pupil Accommodation Review (ARC)

Process involving Floradale, Linwood, St. Jacobs and Three Bridges Public School students who are currently in the Board's system.

2. The Rural Education Services Program

Process being led by Phil Sauder to actively involve and engage members of the rural community in the Woolwich & Wellesley Townships, who do not currently attend Board schools, to identify educational programs that address the unique needs of the community's secondary aged youth (age 14 and up).

Superintendent DeCoene noted that there has been some confusion as both processes are running at the same time. To clarify the Board's intent, she advised that the Accommodation Review is a standalone Ministry of Education mandated process which operates outside of, and cannot be affected by, any other process including Mr. Sauder's review. The Waterloo Region District School Board is committed to work collaboratively to identify viable options to address the unique education needs of the rural community from JK-12 within the limits of the resources available to the system and according to legislated requirements. This rural community refers primarily to those in unique populations in Woolwich and Wellesley Townships, who have had limited or no involvement, in the past, with the Waterloo Region District School Board. Any decisions related to the Rural Education Services program that impact accommodations in any sites in the current ARC process, will occur after the completion of the ARC review.

Superintendent DeCoene advised that she would be available to answer any questions one-on-one after the formal presentation.

Public Information and Access

Mr. Hercanuck noted that all information, including minutes, presentations and scenarios will be made available on the Board's website and in hardcopy at each of the schools under review.

Board website for the review: <http://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/accommodation-reviews/woolwich-and-wellesley-townships-elementary-schools>

You can participate in this review by sending in comments to our email address: boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca, by calling us at 519-570-0003 ext. 4419, or by contacting your school representatives on the ARC through school council.

Mr. Hercanuck thanked everyone for coming out and reminded those in attendance to leave their comments in the comment box at the entrance of the gym. Mr. Hercanuck then opened up the floor for any question/comments from the audience.

7. Questions and Answers

Q: Could Board Policy 3002 be explained?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that [Board Policy 3002](#), Elementary School Size and Configuration is the policy the Board uses when building new elementary schools or additions to existing schools. Under this policy a JK-8 school will ideally be built for a capacity between 500 and 650 students; JK-6 facilities will ideally be built for a capacity between 350 to 400 students and designed to accommodate future expansion for JK-8 where practical. These guidelines are based on having at least two classes per grade in JK-6 to support professional learning communities and having more than two classes per grade in the Grades 7 and 8 program; with an average of 23 students per class.

Q: What is the benefit of having a defined boundary for Three Bridges Public School versus keep the status quo?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that currently Three Bridges Public School only has a transportation boundary and transportation is provided for students within that boundary; however, students outside this boundary can attend if parents provide their own transportation to the school. The benefit of a defined boundary is it provides a community school; students should be able to attend the school closest to where they live and this school should deliver the entire Board curriculum to provide equity of access and opportunity to students across the system. As well it makes it easier for the Board to do enrolment projections, helping us determine the number of students expected and staff required at our school sites.

Q: Would the curriculum offered at Three Bridges Public School change with a defined boundary?

R: Yes. A component of this scenario would be to have Three Bridges P.S. offer the standard curriculum for Board schools.

Q: Regarding the process; once the boundaries are defined, is that when changes to the facilities will be decided?

R: Yes. Our next steps are to assemble logical boundaries and look at what has to be done at the facilities to make them equitable and to be able to deliver the programs. This may involve renovations and may require us to look at transportation. We also need to have a conversation with the Three Bridges Public School community to see what can be done to accommodate their students if changes are made.

Q: What is the time frame for any decision on facilities?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that the ARC process does not have any maximum timeline. Once the ARC arrives at boundary and enrolment decisions, then we will look at what needs to be done with the facilities to accommodate. This will need to be figured out before a recommendation is made.

Mr. Hercanuck reminded those in attendance who might not feel comfortable to ask questions that they may ask staff questions one-on-one during the open house portion of the meeting.

Mr. Hercanuck thanked everyone for attending and gave the contact numbers and Board website information for the public to access with any questions or comments. The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m. and Mr. Cuomo, Mr. Hercanuck and Ms. Manske as well as, Trustee Johnston and Superintendent DeCoene made themselves available to those in attendance to answer questions one-on-one until 9:30 p.m.

Website:

<http://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/accommodation-reviews/woolwich-and-wellesley-townships-elementary-schools>

Email:

boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca

Phone:

519-570-0003 ext. 4419

Facsimile:

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