



**Woolwich & Wellesley Townships Elementary Schools
Pupil Accommodation Review
Minutes of Accommodation Review Committee Meeting #6
December 7, 2011, 6:30 – 8:00 PM
Three Bridges Public School Library**

The sixth meeting of the Woolwich & Wellesley Townships Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) was held at Three Bridges Public School on Wednesday, December 7th, 2011.

Committee Members Present:

Paul Milne, Principal St. Jacobs PS, Vlad Kovac, Principal Floradale PS, Geoff Suderman-Gladwell, Principal Linwood PS, Elmer Horst, Parent Representative Three Bridges PS, Susan Marchiori, Vice Principal Linwood PS, Christine Shantz, Parent Representative Floradale PS, , John Krupicz, Parent Representative St. Jacobs PS, Cindy Weber, Parent Representative Linwood PS, Susan Martin Community Representative, Steve Snyder, Parent Representative Three Bridges PS, Dennis Cuomo, Manager of Planning, Andrea Kean, Recording Secretary, Lauren Manske, Senior Planner and Nathan Hercanuck, Senior Planner for the Waterloo Region District School Board.

Additional WRDSB staff present:

Lynsey Meikle, Communications Assistant.

Regrets:

Diane DeCoene, Superintendent of Education, Ron Dallan, Manager of Capital Projects, Facility Services, Nick Landry, Manager of Enrolment, John Scarfone, Manager of Planning, Township of Woolwich, Don Harloff, Community Representative, Sheila Bauman, Parent Representative St. Jacobs PS, Sarah Peck, Planner, Township of Wellesley, Krista Edwards, Parent Representative Linwood PS, Brenda Martin, Parent Representative Floradale PS, Andrew Horst, Alternate Parent Representative Three Bridges PS, Wayne Dunham, Principal Three Bridges PS.

1. Welcome

Mr. Hercanuck, Senior Planner for the Waterloo Region District School Board opened the meeting at 6:30 pm and welcomed members noting that this would be the last meeting of the year.

Mr. Hercanuck also noted that he had attended a 'coffee hour' at Three Bridges Public School on Friday, December 2nd to give a modified version of the public meeting presentation to members of the parent community. Mr. Hercanuck noted that there is a standing offer if any of the other area schools would like him to come out to speak to the school community about the Accommodation Review.

2. ARC Meeting #5 – Draft Minutes Approval

Mr. Hercanuck asked the ARC if there were any corrections/concerns with the minutes from the November 23rd ARC meeting. None were brought forward.

Minutes from the November 23rd meeting were approved without changes.

Moved by: Christine Shantz
Seconded by: John Krupicz

Mr. Hercanuck led the ARC through tonight's presentation, available online at:
<http://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/accommodation-reviews/woolwich-and-wellesley-townships-elementary-schools>

3. Draft Issues/Objectives

Mr. Hercanuck noted that at the last meeting the ARC broke out into small groups to discuss the issues raised to date. Discussion was based on a worksheet that had been handed out and had some good discussion resulting from the small groups. Mr. Hercanuck used the discussion from last meeting to come up with some Draft Objectives and sticking with the same format as the worksheets tried to combine all the comments into tonight's presentation.

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One of the groups from the last meeting commented that the lack of cultural diversity at Linwood PS presented challenges with respect to student interaction; Mr. Hercanuck noted that he struggled with this one as to how far does one go to promote diversity, the makeup of the community is the makeup of your community.

There was also another comment that asked: does Three Bridges PS not having a boundary divide the community? Mr. Hercanuck found this to be an interesting question; does it depend on ones definition of community? Community might mean to the Three Bridges population 'a collection of individuals with similar cultural beliefs' while to others it might mean 'a group of people in a similar geographic location'.

Mr. Hercanuck came up with the following as a Draft Objective trying to include all the comments:

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

Mr. Hercanuck noted that he is not sure about the promoting a diverse population piece, specifically paired with the boundaries that relate to the community the school is located in; and asked to hear the ARC's thoughts.

Q: John Krupicz asked, in the sake of clarity, that Linwood PS is looking for diversity while Three Bridges PS is not looking to diversify any further and questioned how this could be incorporated into the same objective.

R: Steve Snyder responded that it is true for Three Bridges PS as the community is happy with the way things are currently.

R: Elmer Horst advised the ARC that at he had asked some of the Old Colony Mennonites what they would do if Three Bridges PS were closed and they responded that they are happy with Three Bridges but should it close they may look around at the parochial schools for acceptance. Mr. Horst noted that the parochial schools may accept them but

they would be the first to be pushed out of the school in order to make room for their own sect.

C: Steve Snyder commented that the Three Bridges PS community is a close knit community who are scared that they are going to lose something that is important to them.

Q: Paul Milne asked if the ARC is looking to have attendance controlled by the diversity of the population or to use diversity as a controlling factor for boundaries.

R: Mr. Hercanuck noted that in past reviews, economic diversity has been raised as an issue. Drawing primarily from a low socio-economic area can create a lot of needs for schools. However, the Board is not in the business of social engineering and the makeup of a community school will reflect the makeup of the community itself. He also commented that he is not sure how the ARC would accomplish diversity with boundaries which stay in place for long periods while the people move around.

Q: Can you have multiple objectives that conflict?

R: Yes, but we like to have the same objectives for all to create a level playing field for the schools.

C: John Krupicz commented that an objective should not promote or limit diversity.

R: Geoff Suderman-Gladwell commented that ‘promoting’ is okay but ‘ensuring’ is not okay. i.e., it’s there if we can get it but it’s not mandated.

Q: How would we accomplish the diversity?

C: Christine Shantz noted that ‘diversity’ would need to be explained if it were to be included at a Public Meeting.

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that it would be explained in the context for how we came up with it and asked the ARC to give some more thought to ‘diversity’ over the holidays and consider if we want to include it as an objective.

Action Item: ARC to consider ‘diversity’ and if should be an objective.

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Mr. Hercanuck noted that bus ride length is an issue that is for the most part, tied to the attendance area boundary. The larger and farther away the edges of a boundary are from the school the longer the bus ride will be for those students at the fringes.

Comments from the last meeting stated “where possible busses should be dedicated to a particular school” and “try to maximize the number of students with a 15-30 minute bus ride length.”

Mr. Hercanuck noted that transportation is a tricky objective as the Board has very little control over the details of transportation. Transportation was externalized from the Board a few years ago to an outside organization, Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region (STSWR)

which handles the transportation needs of both the Public and Catholic Boards. The Board develops the transportation policy and STSWR implements it.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that one bus may be used to bring students to a few different schools, both Catholic and Public, and we are able to do this because of staggered bell times. It is more cost efficient this way. He also noted that the Board only receives a certain amount of money for transportation from the Ministry of Education, and currently the Board spends more money on transportation than it has been given by the Ministry.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that because the students transported in an area change from year to year as do the bus routes it is difficult to come up with bus ride lengths this year that will be the exact same next year.

Mr. Hercanuck reiterated that bus ride length is primarily a function of boundary size and noted the following draft objective to address the issue:

- ***Where possible organize school attendance boundaries to minimize distance to school (time on bus).***

Mr. Hercanuck commented that seeing as this objective relates to boundaries once again, it is perhaps redundant and would be covered with the previous Objective. He also noted that the goal here might be to shrink boundaries for Floradale PS and Linwood PS but noted that some areas are difficult to scale down.

Q: Geoff Suderman-Gladwell questioned how boundaries can be drawn with respect to bus ride length.

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that it is difficult to measure the times for bus ride length as it is a function of distance from fringe of boundary to the school as it is also depended on the density of the population.

Q: Does STSWR change boundaries?

R: No. The Board has that authority which can also be done through an administrative boundary change. The Board does not have to approve the bus route, the Board only controls the boundaries distance policy and ride time, and the STSWR arranges and implements the bus routes.

Slide 5 of online presentation

Mr. Hercanuck noted that student transitions have always been a concern in any boundary study or accommodation review we have done.

Comment from the last meeting: “Maintain current school if close to graduation”.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that this is something the Board has historically been sensitive to and when implementing change, has often allowed for some grandparenting provisions. When implementing a boundary change the Board will often allow the highest grade (or in some cases two grades) the option of finishing out at their current school, so they do not have to change schools for Grade 8 then have to transition again to high school. He also noted that sometimes the Board offers a “grandchilding” provision where it allows the JK students to

register to their new school 1 year before the changes are to take place – if the change is a couple of years out.

Comment: from the last meeting: “What could be done to accommodate unique communities (cultural), perhaps a survey could be done to find out what community would accept.”

This comment refers to the Three Bridges school community. If changes were made to the status quo, and Three Bridges PS was consolidated with another school, the students retained will likely depend on what options the ARC develops to accommodate that group of students. It is a valid point and likely something the ARC should consider once we start developing some scenarios as it is a transition and perhaps we can incorporate this comment a little later if needed.

Draft Objective:

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

C: Paul Milne commented that this is not just about Three Bridges PS as he has heard comments from his school community stating that if they are not happy with the changes that they would transfer their children to the Catholic system.

R: Mr. Hercanuck noted that he has heard that statement quite often in past boundary studies and accommodation reviews and some families may choose that option but in our experience not many do.

Q: Why only 1 grade for the transitioning option?

R: It is difficult administratively to track who takes the option over the years. We’ve done some for Grades 7 and 8 and longer.

Q: How many years in the future are we looking at for implementation of any changes?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that it would depend on the options that the ARC comes up with. If the options don’t require any capital money then it could be implemented in 2 years or less, if it requires capital funding it could be a few more years down the road.

Q: Is it measurable as an objective?

R: Ms. Manske responded that it has been used in the past as a reminder for the ARC to consider the implementation of changes and can also be used to measure how many kids are being affected by an option and used for the comparison of scenarios in that regard.

Ms. Manske also noted that the objective only has to be looked at once the scenarios are developed and noted that in this review all students will be transitioning to the same high school so that will not be an issue.

C: Can we add another part to say ‘come up with a solution that minimizes change’?

Q: Why did parents make comment about moving their kids to the Catholic system?

R: John Krupicz responded that he could only speak for himself as he has made that statement because he lives in Heidelberg and if his kids were to be switched to Linwood PS, he doesn't have reason to go that way and it is not considered part of his community and would be 15 minutes further from his work. His children have friends that attend the Catholic school and Separate versus Public is not an issue as it is not a detriment to teach religion in school, it's a positive.

Q: Can you combine with bus travel time objective?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that combining objectives may cause conflict when meeting one and not meeting the other; best to have them as separate.

Slide 6 of the online presentation

Mr. Hercanuck noted that one of the reasons for the accommodation review in the area was the small school organizations at some of the schools. Part of the Reference Criteria the Board says the ARC should take into consideration [Board Policy 3002](#) which provides guidelines as to the size of elementary schools it would like to realize.

Comments from last meeting: refer to "supporting the policy when/where possible" and that "different guidelines are needed for rural schools".

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the ARC has talked a bit about this and noted that these are only guidelines and that it is difficult to meet these guidelines in a rural setting while maintaining a suitable bus ride length and community schools.

As well comments were made that perhaps some "rural communities prefer smaller schools". Mr. Hercanuck noted that, that may very well be the case, and it may be important for the ARC to consider, similar to the comments about the last issue regarding accommodating unique communities.

Draft Objective

- ***Have regard for Board Policy 3002; Elementary School size and Configuration.***

Q: Has the Policy been around for long?

R: Ms. Manske responded that it has been in effect for over a year (June 2010) and originated from the Good Schools Standing Committee Report, May 17, 2007.

C: Geoff Suderman-Gladwell commented that all aspects of the policy will be a challenge in rural areas.

R: Ms. Manske responded that the Board does not want to empty out one school to feed another. It's about achieving balance and maybe the number of classes per grade is what we should be looking at.

R: Mr. Hercanuck noted that the Board has had other reviews where schools that are close together are consolidated in one larger school and noted that it likely will not make sense to consolidate to one super school in this review but look to achieve a better balance of enrolment.

Q: Should we state 2 classes per grade as an objective?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that they go hand-in-hand as that is how we arrived at the school size numbers in Board Policy 3002.

C: Ms. Manske commented that the Board considers built capacity and not enrolment when looking at new schools; we don't build new schools for 200 kids, but we do still have schools that were built for 200 kids.

C: Vlad Kovac noted that according to policy 3002 balancing could be achieved by moving to a model where the 7-8 program for 2 schools is consolidated at one location. (i.e., Linwood's Grade 6s go to Floradale for Grades 7 and 8). This would achieve the more than 2 classes per grade at the 7-8 level as the policy suggests.

R: Ms. Manske responded that the ARC could look at developing a rich 7-8 program and look at the bussed distance for a 7-8 program with JK-6 schools feeding JK-8 schools for the 7-8 program. This might be an option and it would be having regard for Policy 3002.

C: Cindy Weber commented that the 7-8 program might achieve the diversity component as the David Martin Mennonite students leave school at age 14 resulting in smaller class sizes so to have a consolidated 7-8 program would introduce more students for socializing opportunities.

C: Regarding the built capacity of schools, and the size the Board likes to see, this will not be achieved in the rural area.

R: Ms. Manske responded that the ARC should instead try to achieve a greater balance of enrolment between the schools, considering the number of classes per grade portion of the policy which would support better learning opportunities. Even if we can only achieve one class per grade, it minimizes the need for combined grade classes.

C: Can we add 'while recognizing the challenges of rural areas' to the draft objective.

Action Item:

Revise objective to 'add challenges of rural schools'.

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Mr. Hercanuck noted that the condition and equity of the facilities was also another Board concern going into this review and as you may have seen on the school tour and from our rotating meetings, there exists a wide difference in the conditions, orientation, and sizes of the spaces for learning in these facilities. While it would be nice to have all our buildings equal to Floradale PS which was built in 2010, this is not a fiscal reality.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the consultant's report on facility condition with respect to major building components such as roofing, boilers, window etc., should be available early in the new year.

Comments from the last meeting indicated that the ARC would like to, as much as possible, improve the access to facility amenities and resources at existing schools, as well as maintain our schools in good operating condition.

Draft Objective:

- *Support the efficient use of capital and operating resources through the consideration of facility condition and equitable access to educational amenities.*

Q: Paul Milne asked whether there would be a separate objective to address the accessibility issue as the Board has to have all its buildings accessible within 14 years; how does the Board look at that.

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that the Board has an Accessibility Committee and they have a plan to make all facilities accessibility by 2025, starting with the high schools first and working out from there. He also noted that if there are any recommendations for construction under this review, the accessibility piece can be added and this would move that school up the accessibility list.

C: Can we add 'accessibility' to the draft objective?

R: Dennis Cuomo responded that it could be inserted after facility condition.

Action Item:

Add 'accessibility' to the draft objective.

Slide 8 of the online presentation

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the next issue was from the reference criteria and tends to exist in every accommodation review the Board does. He noted that it refers to reducing the number of students in portables.

There weren't any comments on this issue at the last meeting, likely because it is self-explanatory. Mr. Hercanuck noted that Three Bridges PS has 3 portables and Linwood PS has 2 but are being used because of construction of Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) and are only there temporarily.

This objective would be to reduce the need for portables with any new scenarios and not introduce any more to the area.

Draft Objective:

- *Maximize the number of students accommodated in permanent capacity.*

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Mr. Hercanuck noted that another objective raised from the Reference Criteria is to make the best use of the existing space before we go out and build new. Some of the schools in the review area have some surplus space and should be considered in the development of scenarios and recommendations while keeping in mind the future needs of the FDK program.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that this is another self-explanatory Draft Objective, which is likely why there weren't many comments on it at the last meeting.

Draft Objective:

- *Maximize the use of existing capacity within facilities.*

Q: Can we modify this to read maximize the use of existing ‘functional’ capacity within facilities?

C: Mr. Hercanuck commented that the functional capacity is different than the Ministry rated capacity, and is the space that school needs but we are accommodating in various ways.

C: Ms. Manske commented that many schools use a classroom for a computer lab or French room which are not seen by the Ministry as valid functions. She also noted that older schools often do not have specialized spaces for Special Education (loaded at 9 per class) and assign a regular classroom (which should be loaded at 23).

Q: Is it the Ministry numbers we have?

R: Yes. The capacities you have seen are the Ministry’s rated on-the-ground capacity (OTG).

Q: Can we get the functional capacity numbers as well?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that those numbers are different for each school and based on the preferences of each administrator and would have to be provided by the administrators (principals). He agreed that this information would be useful to know and could be used to explain why a school might have 2 or 3 portables even though its enrolment matches its OTG.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that when allocating for portables the Board uses functional capacity, which may be less than the (OTG) capacity.

Action Items:

- Add functional capacity to the draft objective.
- Principals to add functional capacity in the comment section of the School Information Profile.

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Mr. Hercanuck noted that the last ARC meeting had some good discussion around the community that Three Bridges PS serves and what would happen if we somehow changed the current set up. He noted that most of the Mennonite community has options, i.e., parochial schools and if change were introduced how many students would the Board retain, and advised the ARC that the answer would likely be dependent on the options we develop. He noted that the Board would obviously like to retain all the students with whatever changes, if any are made.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that as part of this process it is important to specifically engage this community to answer these questions.

Comments from last meeting: Geoff Suderman-Gladwell suggested an additional objective to include reasonable accommodation of cultural differences.

Draft Objective:

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

C: Mr. Suderman-Gladwell noted that this does not only apply to Three Bridges PS, but to Floradale PS and Lindwood PS as well; all schools have cultural differences that may need some accommodation.

C: Would this objective be measurable? It's useful but how will it work as a measuring stick?

R: Ms. Manske responded that this could be an objective to have at the end to say it has been considered; could be measured by whether we met the needs or not.

C: Mr. Hercanuck noted that this is a discussion that is needed with the community.

C: Mr. Suderman-Gladwell commented that Linwood PS has a large portion of Old Colony Mennonite population which allowed for the creation of full class of ESL students which fulfilled a unique need. He found that the children flourished when put into this class. He noted that there would not be enough of these students at some of the other schools to justify a separate class.

C: Mr. Suderman-Gladwell commented that maybe we should create a separate public school for the Old Colony group as well as we are already accommodating a separate group at Three Bridges PS.

Q: How would you do that?

R: Mr. Suderman-Gladwell responded that he was not suggesting that create another school for a separate group and noted that we can't do that – we cannot separate students out for different reasons; but right now we do have that. Reasonable accommodation is part of our legal responsibility.

Q: Why can't we?

R: Because of equity and inclusion.

C: Steve Snyder commented that the Three Bridges community is aware that it's a Public School and others should be allowed to attend. He said he couldn't speak for everyone but the preference is to leave Three Bridges as it is, but if that is not possible, everyone will have to choose what they will do.

C: Elmer Horst commented that 2 families had requested to attend Three Bridges PS but because they were outside the transportation boundary they chose to home school instead.

R: Mr. Hercanuck noted that if we do make changes and if it's a big change for Three Bridges PS, we will need to have that conversation with the community on how many can we expect – it's important to talk to the folks and find out the reason they find this school attractive.

Q: How do you plan to do that?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that maybe through venues such as ‘Three Bridges PS Coffee Hour’; and he is open to other ideas as well.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the draft objectives can be modified in the future through comments and feedback from the next public meeting. They will remain draft until after Public Meeting #2.

Mr. Hercanuck commented that as the next ARC meeting is not until January 18th, the minutes will be sent out electronically for approval and will need a mover and seconder so they can be posted online to keep the community informed.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that we do not have time to go over the Review Objectives from previous Accommodation Reviews but they will be posted on the website in the presentation.

4. School Information Profiles

Mr. Hercanuck advised the ARC that the Draft School Profiles have also been posted on the website and hard copies will be sent out to the schools to add to the school binders. He noted that the profiles are still missing some information including the Section 1.5 EQAO disclaimer, Section 2.1 Condition of School (should have this in the new year), and Section 2.3 Cost to Operate the School (Annual) Facility Services to provide. He noted that the profiles otherwise are pretty much complete and asked the ARC to review them and decide if there is any other information that should be included.

5. Future Meeting Dates/Times

Working Group Meeting #7

Wednesday, January 18, 2012 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at Linwood PS Library

Mr. Hercanuck thanked the ARC and wished everyone a safe and happy holiday and a Merry Christmas and adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Future Meeting Dates:

ARC MEETINGS:

Wednesday, January 18, 2012 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at Linwood PS Library

PUBLIC MEETINGS:

TBD