



**West Galt Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation Review**  
**Minutes of Public Meeting #2**  
**March 1, 2012**  
**Blair Road Public School – 7:00 p.m.**

The Second Public Meeting of the West Galt Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation Review was held at Blair Road Public School on Thursday, March 1, 2012.

Approximately 22 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 the meeting is to share information about the Elementary Schools Accommodation Review running in the West Galt area of Cambridge.

Mr. Cuomo made the following introductions:

- Lauren Manske, Senior Planner
- Nathan Hercanuck, Senior Planner
- Andrea Kean, Recording Secretary
- Jodie Hancox-Meyer Principal of Blair Road P.S. and our host for this evening.
- Karen Tomlin Principal of St. Andrew's P.S.
- Marcia Lubert Principal of Tait Street P.S.
- Barry Frame Principal of Dickson P.S. (sends his regrets)
- Wendy Bowker Principal of Highland P.S. (sends her regrets)
- Lila Read, Superintendent of Education (sends her regrets)

Mr. Cuomo noted that the West Galt Accommodation Review was initiated on February 14, 2011 and since that time the Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) was established and is comprised of the Principals of the review area schools, City of Cambridge representative, Trevor McWilliams, as well as two parent representatives from each of the 5 review area schools and Board staff.

Since its inception the ARC has met 7 times and held its first Public Meeting in October 2011; during this time the ARC has looked in detail at the issues in the area and established some draft goals and objectives to assist in their work, which was handed out to members of the public in attendance.

Mr. Cuomo noted that the display boards at the rear of the gym outline several of the scenarios that the ARC has considered so far as accommodation options for the area and noted that so far nothing has been decided. He noted that the ARC is looking at a wide range of options and discussing them in detail; those options with merit may be further modified and others may be rejected and new options may be developed.

The ARC will use the Goals and Objectives they have developed to assist in selecting a scenario and making their final recommendation(s) to the Board.

Mr. Cuomo explained that the purpose of this second public meeting is to give an update on what the ARC has been discussing and the issues that have influenced their discussions. He noted that the scenarios were not going to be formally presented at this meeting but Planning staff would be happy to discuss them individually during the Open House portion of the meeting.

Mr. Cuomo advised that the Ministry of Education, which provides the funding for new schools, additions and major renovations, has changed the way in which it funds school board capital projects and the Board must now submit a solid business case to support each request it makes in order to secure funding from the Ministry; the results of an ARC will factor into the Board's business case and request for funding.

Mr. Cuomo pointed out that an important part of the Public Meeting process is to gather feedback from the community and requested that those in attendance complete and submit the Comment Sheets provided and noted that this sheet can be faxed to the Planning Department at (519)570-2172 or feedback can be sent via email at [boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca](mailto:boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca)

Mr. Cuomo introduced Lauren Manske, Senior Planner for the Board who led the audience through a presentation which is available online at: <http://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/accommodation-reviews/west-galt-elementary-schools>)

## **2. What is a Pupil Accommodation Review?**

Ms. Manske did a quick recap for those who were unable to attend Public Meeting #1:

An accommodation review is a review of a group of schools in an area of the Board's jurisdiction, to determine the future of student accommodation. This formal process is based on a broad range of criteria (such as school organization, facility condition, program opportunities, etc.) regarding the quality of the learning experience for students.

### **Review Area (slide 4)**

The 5 elementary schools in the West Galt area of Cambridge involved in this review are:

- Blair Road (JK-6)
- Dickson (JK-5)
- Highland (JK-5)
- St. Andrew's (6-8)
- Tait Street (JK-6)

An Accommodation Review can ultimately result in recommendations to:

- close one or more schools,
- consolidate schools (*having students from two or more schools at one location*),
- changes in attendance boundaries,
- changes in program (*a JK- 6 school becoming a JK-8 school*),
- recommending new construction (*additions, major upgrades or brand new schools*).

### **West Galt Enrolment and Capacity (Slide 5)**

The Board is conducting an accommodation review in West Galt because of:

- Small school organizations (*Board policy suggests an ideal size JK-6 school is 350 – 400 students, Highland P.S. is the only school in the review meeting that criteria*).
- Capacity issues (*Highland and St. Andrew's are over capacity and all other schools under capacity*).
- New development – there are a few remaining undeveloped pockets in the review area and we have involved planning staff from the City on our ARC to bring this information forward.
- New direction in curriculum/school organization with respect to grade configurations – the board has a policy that states its program preference is JK-8.
- Implications of Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) on the facilities – all schools will have FDK by September 2014.

Ms. Manske referring to slide 6 noted that over the past 10 years, enrolment in the review area has declined by 12% overall, in contrast to elementary enrolment Board-wide, which has increased by 3% overall in the same time period.

### **3. Accommodation Review Committee (ARC)**

Ms. Manske noted that the review is led by an Accommodation Review Committee, or ARC which is responsible for:

- Discussing issues
- Preparing and reviewing School Information Profiles
- Developing Review Objectives
- Developing and evaluating Accommodation Options (Scenarios)
- Preparing an Accommodation Report and Recommendations; as well as:
- Public Information and Access
- Community Consultation and Public Meetings

### **The Accommodation Review Process**

Referring to Slide 8 of the online presentation Ms. Manske noted that there are several steps to the overall accommodation review process and pointed out that the ARC is at the third stage of the process which is – developing and evaluating scenarios.

She also noted that tonight is the second of a minimum of four public meetings which are required and noted that there is still work to be done to complete the process.

### **ARC Mission and Vision (slide 9)**

Ms. Manske noted that the Mission is the overall purpose of the ARC/Accommodation Review and the Vision is the overall aspiration.

The *ARC's Mission* is to advise and provide recommendations that will inform the final decision by the Board of Trustees about the future of student accommodation in the West Galt community with the *Vision* of strengthening the quality of the learning experience for students.

### **ARC Goals (slide 10)**

Ms. Manske noted that the ARC has also developed some goals (general statements) of what the ARC intends to achieve in this process; as following:

- To establish grade configurations that provide the best learning opportunities for students and staff.
- To establish sustainable/long-term enrolments that provide equitable learning opportunities for students and staff.
- To increase equity of facilities necessary to deliver curriculum and support student achievement.
- To establish/maintain facilities and boundaries that are long-term (approx. 10 years), and consider:
  - *Walking distances (community/neighbourhood-level schools)*
  - *Efficiency of transportation*
  - *Capacity of schools*
  - *Current and future population density and demographics*
  - *Proximity to other schools*
  - *Impact on feeder and surrounding schools*
- To minimize the impact on students where changes are proposed (consideration for grandparenting, phasing, transitions, etc.).
- To improve the long-term opportunity for the Board to make a solid business case for additional capacity funding as residential development plans progress in Cambridge West.

#### **4. Draft Review Objectives:**

Ms. Manske noted that the Draft Review Objectives are more precise and detailed statements of the goals and are more specific and measurable.

##### Draft Review Objectives:

- To eliminate the JK-5 school organizations in favour of JK-6 or JK-8.
- To reduce the number of students currently attending Highland P.S. to better match the enrolment to the schools' built capacity.
- To reduce the potential for combined grades at schools by moving towards the following criteria (*from Board Policy 3002*):
  - *JK-6 facilities between 350 and 400 students (approx. 2 classes/grade)*
  - *JK-8 facilities between 500 and 650 students (approx. 2 classes/grade JK-6, 2+ classes/grade 7-8)*

- To increase the number of students within walking distance to their assigned school (*Board transportation policy is 0.8 km for JK/SK and 1.6 km for Gr. 1-8*).
- To increase the number of students housed in permanent accommodation.
- To reduce unused (surplus) capacity by organizing schools and boundaries to achieve utilization rates (calculated as enrolment divided by capacity) that exceed 80% over the long-term (approx. 10 years).
- To maintain those school buildings that can provide appropriate, purpose-built facilities (for example kindergarten rooms, gyms, libraries, etc.) and achieve legislated accessibility requirements at the lowest per pupil cost.

Ms. Manske noted that these goals and objectives are still draft, and the ARC is looking for public feedback on them. These objectives will be used to narrow down and rate the ability of the scenarios to meet these objectives.

## 5. School Information Profiles

Each school has a completed Profile which is really a comprehensive inventory of the facility.

Although four of the sections of the profiles are titled “value to the student, board, community and local economy”, the ARC has taken the stance that all of our schools are of equal value to the student, board, community and local economy, therefore, we are not using these profiles to rank one school over another. We are using them as a tool to look at all the schools in the area objectively and fairly and to identify any issues that may be resolved through this process. It is also the way we can ensure that everyone involved in this process has all the relevant information about each of the schools.

Ms. Manske noted that the school profiles are now available on the West Galt Review web page and copies have been provided here tonight and outlined the key points contained in the profiles.

### School Information Profiles – Key Points (see slides 12-14)

#### Key points related to Program:

- School size:
  - Blair Road, Dickson and Tait all below board’s desired size.
  - Highland and St. Andrew’s are good size but overcapacity.
- French Immersion program offered at Highland and St. Andrew’s contributes to out-of-boundary enrolment and pressure on the facility.
- Due to Highland’s current enrolment, and the fact that it only has 1 gym, classes do not have access to the gym daily for physical activity. Dickson does not have a purpose-built gymnasium.
- Due to school grade organizations, there are students feed St. Andrew’s for the sr. program at different grade levels – Dickson and Highland for 6-8 and Blair Road and Tait Street for 7-8.
- Special education classes housed at Blair Road – Autism Spectrum Disorder and Learning Disabilities area classes.

- Full-day kindergarten program is at Dickson, but not in purpose-built spaces. Program is going to be offered at Highland and Blair Road next year, and Tait Street in 2014.

#### **Key Points related to Facility and Site:**

- all schools in the review area are below the board's average for site size (average is 7 acres); however, the maximum site size we can request today for a school under 400 students is 4 acres and for a school between 401-500 pupil place capacity is 5 acres. So really the only schools that do not meet these criteria are St. Andrews (4.03 acres for 423 capacity) and Dickson which is the smallest site in our system – 0.96 acres for 161 capacity.
- Highland has reached its limit for facility expansion after the FDK addition that will be complete for this fall – at least affordable expansions
- All other schools have limited capacity to expand due to site and other restrictions.
- Accessibility issues at Dickson (not accessible), St. Andrew's and Tait Street that will need to be addressed by 2025 as mandated by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
- Transportation is an issue at Tait Street because the site has no street frontage making bus loading /unloading challenging.

#### **Scenarios:**

Ms. Manske noted that the ARC has been working on developing some scenarios, or accommodation options to respond to the issues as identified in the review area and to meet the objectives that were set out. The scenarios contain some of the following situations:

- Boundary changes
- Grade changes – which may lead to additions
- School closures
- New school construction or additions

She advised that while the scenarios will not be formally presented they are available on the display boards located at the rear of the gym and noted that they include 5 scenarios in total (starting with Scenario 5), as well as a board for Status Quo, which is what we are projecting for the area if no changes are made. Ms. Manske noted that after the presentation and question and answer period, Planning staff would circulate around the display boards to answer questions about these scenarios.

Ms. Manske advised that it is important to keep in mind that even though you may not see a proposal here tonight that affects you; there is always the potential that the ARC has not considered every option yet. She urged the community to continue to follow the progress of the review.

She noted that the ARC is always open to receiving suggestions for alternative scenarios that are not displayed here tonight and asked those in attendance or those of you reading from home to please send in any suggestions to [boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca](mailto:boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca)

**Next Steps (slide 16)**

- ARC meets to refine scenarios
- Public Meeting #3: Costing and more detailed information for the front-runner scenarios –tentatively scheduled for Tuesday March 27, 2012
- ARC prepares draft Accommodation Report and Recommendations
- Public Meeting #4: Presentation of the Draft ARC Accommodation Report
- ARC submits Accommodation Report and Recommendations
- Staff review ARC report and prepare their own report and recommendations
- Trustees vote on recommendations of ARC and Staff
- ❖ Please Note: Trustees make any decisions, having regard for the work of the ARC.

**Accommodation Review Process – Timeframe (slide 17)**

Referring to slide 17 of the online presentation Ms. Manske noted that this process has minimum timelines that must be met. The first 30 day timeline (between the time the Board announces the review to the date of the first public meeting) has been met.

The next timeline is a minimum of 90 days from the date of our first public meeting until the completion of our fourth public meeting – the public consultation period. We have already gone past this 90 day period.

The final timeline is between the period that the ARC submits its report to the trustees and when they can vote on the recommendations. This is a 60 wait period.

Ms. Manske advised that because of these minimum timelines, the ARC may not have enough time to have a final decision by the Board of Trustees this school year, but would certainly like to have the ARC's report and recommendations to the Board this spring. The ARC would need to have the Accommodation Report submitted by Mid-April to meet the 60 day requirement before the end of the school year.

The earliest that any changes could happen would be September 2013. If any major construction is required it would typically require 2 years from the time of engaging an architect to the time we can open a school, so likely no built solutions until September 2015 at the earliest.

**Webpage:**

Ms. Manske noted that all relevant information about this review is available on the Board's website and advised those interested to continue to check back on a regular basis as we will continue to update the information as it becomes available. She also noted that for those who prefer, this information is also available in hard copy in binders at each of the schools in the review area.

**Contact Information:**

Ms. Manske advised that for those who would like to participate in this review they can do so by sending in comments to our email address ([boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca](mailto:boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca)), by calling us, or through your school reps. on the ARC and school council. You can also continue to come out to the Public Meetings.

Ms. Manske noted that for those who would like to get in touch with her directly – she would be happy to chat on the phone or via email if there are any questions or concerns. Ms. Manske thanked everyone for coming out and reminded those in attendance to leave comments in the comment box at the entrance of the gym or email us at [boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca](mailto:boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca) and noted that any comments sent to boundary feedback will also be accessible to the trustees.

## **6. Questions/Other**

Mr. Cuomo opened the floor up for any questions/comments:

Q: What Criteria does the Board use to determine walking distances?

R: Ms. Manske responded that the Board uses the following criteria for walking distances and students are transported for distances beyond the following:

JK-SK walking distance = 800m

Grades 1-8 walking distance = 1.6km

Grades 9-12 walking distance = 3.2km

Q: Does the Board have any sites available in West Galt where it can build a new school?

R: Ms. Manske responded that the Board owns 5 acre site on Beechwood Road which is currently being used as a practice field for Southwood Secondary School.

Q: Has the Board considered adding French Immersion (FI) programs at any other schools in South Cambridge?

R: Ms. Manske responded that the Board's policy for FI requires at least 20 home school Senior Kindergarten students wishing to take the program before it can be considered for offering a Grade 1 class of partial FI. In her discussions with FI staff it was noted that there has not been enough interest in past years in the West Galt area to start a new program; but this could change on a yearly basis. Ms. Manske noted that the ARC is exploring the possibility of adding another FI program to help reduce the enrolment pressure at Highland P.S. but cautioned that the program requires specific supports and is not easily moved.

C: Several years ago when I tried to enroll my child in FI, seventeen parents (myself included) living in the West Galt area where given an alternate school for our children to attend which was located in Waterloo.

R: Ms. Manske responded that the Board added two more FI programs in Cambridge in the past few years with FI programs now offered at Elgin Street and Ryerson Public Schools.



- Q: Earlier you mentioned that Dickson P.S. does not have purpose built rooms; does the Board have any information available that would specify what the requirements are for purpose built rooms?
- R: Ms. Manske responded that the Board does not a specific list of criteria but uses averages from across the Board and the classroom sizes the Ministry of Education funds for new construction. For instances a normal Kindergarten room is 1,000 square feet but the new purpose built FDK rooms this Board is building are 1,200-1,300 square feet and include a washroom in the room. A purpose built gym would have appropriate ceiling heights and floor space.
- Q: Have you asked the students if they need a purpose built gym? They can always go outside for physical activity.
- R: Mr. Manske responded that it is not always possible to go outside for physical activity and that gyms can be used for other purposes too (concerts, etc.).
- Q: I noticed that scenarios 1, 4 and 7 are not presented at the back of the room; why did you decide not to display them here this evening?
- R: Ms. Manske responded that all scenarios are available on the Board's website but the ARC decided not to display the scenarios that we are no longer considering because they were either JK-8 (may not be easily accommodated at the review area sites) or the projected enrolment numbers did not work (Scenario 7).
- Q: What is the rationale behind the Board's decision to support JK-8 facilities?
- R: Ms. Manske responded that the Board favours the JK-8 program because it is supportive of the continuum of the curriculum from JK-8. This also includes the EQAO testing in grades 3 and 6 which is easier to track progress when the kids are in the same school, and also because fewer transitions (less changing schools) is better for student development and achievement.
- Q: Who has decided that JK-8 is better; was it determined from a parent level or from higher up?
- R: Ms. Manske responded that the Board passed a policy which indicates that going forward it prefers the JK-8 but recognizes its other models (JK-5, JK-6, 7-8) and will continue to support all its models. Ms. Manske noted that while the Board prefers the JK-8 model it is also recognized that it cannot be achieved at every school and that there are merits to each program model.
- Q: Earlier you mentioned that school sites have to be a specific size; when did that come into effect and what does that mean for Dickson P.S. with less than an acre site?

- R: Mr. Cuomo responded that these sizes only apply when the Board purchases new sites for school construction because there are more requirements around how the space can be used today than was in affect when the Board inherited schools from the former Galt School Board. Small sites could be an issue if we have to meet set-back requirements for portables or additions, or in meeting parking and parent drop-off requirements.
- Q: Does a scenario have to meet all of its goals and objectives in order to be approved?
- R: Mr. Cuomo responded that there is no rule that a scenario has to meet all goals and objectives and noted that some objectives may be contrary to other objectives.
- Q: What does “current renewal cost” refer to in the School Information Profiles?
- R: Mr. Cuomo responded that the current renewal cost refers to an estimation of the 5-10 year maintenance cost for facility components based on their projected lifespan and replacement costs.
- Q: \$1.3 million seems like a lot of money for maintenance costs for Dickson P.S; how did you come up with that number?
- R: This number was determined by maintenance professionals determining what major components may need to be replaced in the next 5 years and in the case of Dickson P.S. which has a Heritage Designation. Costs for replacing components in a heritage building could actually be higher.
- Q: What happens with a school property when the Board closes a school?
- R: Mr. Cuomo responded that the students would be moved to another school, and then the Board would make a decision if it would like to keep the property or declare it surplus. If declared surplus it would then be circulated to a list of public agencies including other area school boards and government agencies for sale at fair market value. If no other public agencies are interested it can be listed for sale by a real estate agent or through public tenders or Request for Proposals (RFP) processes.
- Q: Does the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) accessibility requirement for 2025 include accessibility to all buildings?
- R: Mr. Cuomo responded that he believes the requirement is for all public buildings have to be accessible to accommodate any client or employee that may have a disability.
- Q: Is making the schools accessible given a high priority by the Board?
- R: The ARC will be looking at addressing the accessibility of the West Galt schools to be included if any other construction is required in the recommendations.

Q: If the ARC were to conclude in the minimum timeline, would the changes be put in place by September 2013?

R: Mr. Cuomo responded that only a minor change like a small boundary change would be able to be put in place in that amount of time. More complex changes would take a few years to implement.

Q: Has the ARC considered if building a new school on the Beechwood site would mean an increase in bussing?

R: Ms. Manske responded that bussing implications would depend on what the ARC would come up with for a boundary. The ARC would consider transportation and walking distances should it decide to further develop that scenario.

C: It would be important to keep as many kids walking to school as possible.

Q: If the Board were to make a decision on the West Galt area, could that be impacted should the West Galt area developments moving ahead?

R: Mr. Cuomo responded that Trevor McWilliams, City of Cambridge Planner and member of the ARC, has been keeping the ARC informed on the development issues in the West Galt area. Mr. McWilliams has informed the ARC that there is uncertainty to whether the West Galt development area will be developed as projected (between 700-900 units) this could yield approximately 300 plus students should it proceed. Mr. Cuomo noted that this number of students could not be housed at Blair Road P.S. as it currently exists and may require its own school in that development area.

Q: Will the ARC be taking the community's comments and feedback into consideration?

R: Yes. Please fill-out the comment sheets and send them in either via fax at (519)570-2172, by email at [boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca](mailto:boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca) or you can call us at (519)570-0003 ext 4419. You are also welcome to send us any scenarios that you might have to address the areas issues.

Mr. Cuomo thanked everyone for coming, and gave the contact numbers and Board website information for the public to access with any questions or comments. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m. and Mr. Cuomo, Ms. Manske and Mr. Hercanuck made themselves available to answer questions one-on-one until 8:40 p.m.

**Website:**

[West Galt Elementary Schools Accommodation Review | Waterloo Region District School Board](#)

Email:  
[boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca](mailto:boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca)

Phone:  
519-570-0003 ext. 4419

Fax:  
519-570-2172