



**Woolwich & Wellesley Townships Elementary Schools
Pupil Accommodation Review
Minutes of Accommodation Review Committee Meeting #5
November 23, 2011, 6:30 – 8:00 PM
St. Jacobs Public School Library**

The fifth meeting of the Woolwich & Wellesley Townships Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) was held at Floradale Public School on Wednesday, November 23rd, 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, Krista Edwards, Parent Representative Linwood PS, John Krupicz, Parent Representative St. Jacobs PS, Cindy Weber, Parent Representative Linwood PS, Brenda Martin, Parent Representative Floradale PS, Andrew Horst, Alternate Parent Representative Three Bridges PS, Susan Martin Community Representative, Don Harloff, Community Representative, Sheila Bauman, Parent Representative St. Jacobs PS, Dennis Cuomo, Manager of Planning, Andrea Kean, Recording Secretary 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, Wayne Dunham, Principal Three Bridges PS., Sarah Peck, Planner, Township of Wellesley, Steve Snyder, Parent Representative Three Bridges PS, and Lauren Manske, Senior Planner.

1. Welcome/Introductions

Mr. Hercanuck, Senior Planner for the Waterloo Region District School Board opened the meeting at 6:35 pm and welcomed members and introduced Mr. Don Harloff, Director of Woolwich Community Services and newly appointed Community Representative on the ARC. The members did a round of introductions.

2. ARC Meeting #4 – Draft Minutes Approval

Mr. Hercanuck asked the ARC if there were any corrections/concerns with the minutes from the November 10th ARC meeting. It was noted that Brenda Martin should be listed in the attendees. Minutes from the November 10th meeting were approved with noted change.

Moved by: Cindy Weber

Seconded by: Christine Shantz

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. ARC Membership – Community Representatives

Mr. Hercanuck noted that both Community Representative positions have been filled:

- Susan Martin
- Don Harloff

4. Draft Issues/Objectives

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the ARC had previously had some discussion about the setting of the study objectives which are the stated goals of the Review which are developed by the ARC using the Issues raised by the community, ARC members, Board and the Accommodation Review Reference Criteria. These Objectives will then be used to evaluate whatever options or scenarios the ARC develops.

Draft Issues Raised by the ARC (to date)

- Current school boundaries 'divide communities'
- Bus ride length (*some students have longer bus rides than others*)
- Student transitions where changes are proposed (*if changes are made, how will we handle moving students and families from one school to another*)

Draft Issues Raised by the Board

- Small school organizations ([Board Policy 3002](#))
- Facility condition/equity

Facility Condition

Mr. Hercanuck noted that as the ARC members who went on the November 5th school tour are aware, there are differences in the condition of the 4 facilities in this review as they were all built at different times and some may need upgrades in the future.

Equity

What each facility has to offer in terms of specialized space for students (i.e., gym, library, special programs)

Reference Criteria

The issues the Board likes to see addressed when undergoing a review. Mr. Hercanuck noted that not all will be applicable here in the rural area. Mr. Hercanuck noted that because of the decline in enrolment due to lower number of school-aged population in the area the Review could look at the following Reference Criteria that would be applicable to this review:

- Minimize students in temporary accommodations (portables)
- Maximize the use of existing capacity (empty classrooms)

Q: Is accessibility a consideration under facility condition?

R: Yes. We can look at bundling with any other recommendations for renovations or additions to get a better price.

Mr. Hercanuck informed the ARC that tonight they will breakout into small groups to further discuss the issues identified to date. Mr. Hercanuck gave each member a work sheet listing the issues identified so far with space for comments for further detailing in hopes the small groups can expand on the issues and try to come up with some goals for the Review that can be used as a guide and evaluation tool for the options/scenarios the ARC will develop and did an overview of the handouts (see Slides 7, 8 and 9 of [tonight's presentation](#)).

Mr. Hercanuck asked the ARC to identify:

- What they would consider to be objectives to address these issues
- Any problems with these issues

Q: Do to the limited time available this evening, do you want us to touch on each Draft Issue or focus on the ones we consider most important?

R: Start with the ones that interest you the most and move out from there.

Mr. Hercanuck welcomed the ARC to come up with more questions and further flesh out the issues, or the need for more information. He asked the groups to nominate a recorder and a speaker to present their thoughts and ideas.

The ARC broke out into four small groups for to discuss the draft issues/objectives work sheet. Mr. Hercanuck and Mr. Cuomo circulated to answer any questions the groups might have.

The ARC reconvened at 7:45 p.m. to discuss their outcomes.

Group No. 1 – Issues Discussion outcomes

Draft Issue	Draft Objective
Current school boundaries divide communities	To define attendance area boundaries for all schools.
Bus Ride Length:	Where possible buses should be dedicated to a particular school.
Student Transitions:	Maintain current school if close to graduation
Small school organizations:	Support sufficiently sized schools with 2 classes per grade when possible.
Facility condition/equity	Schools need to be fully accessible and support full program (i.e., gym library) Schools need to include space for Full Day Kindergarten (equitable access to resources)
Students in temporary accommodation (portables)	Where possible accommodation options should maximize the number of students in permanent capacity.
Surplus space	No comment

Group No. 2 – Issues Discussion outcomes

Draft Issue	Draft Objective
Current school boundaries divide communities	How do we address boundaries to make all school communities more diverse? (i.e., better balance of both Mennonite and non-Mennonite pupils) For better student socialization opportunities.
Bus Ride Length:	Maximize the number of students in 15-30 minute bus ride.
Student Transitions:	No comment
Small school organizations:	No comment
Facility condition/equity	<p>When changes are proposed to school buildings, keep in mind needs of greater community. (Hard to assess value to community and loss of revenue to Board if schools close)</p> <p>Keep Schools in communities</p> <p>Evaluate & propose a scenario(s) which will promote Board’s ability to bring schools up to specifications (value short-term & long-term of making facility changes)</p>
Students in temporary accommodation (portables)	No comment
Surplus space	No comment

Group No. 3 – Issues Discussion outcomes

Draft Issue	Draft Objective/Question
Current school boundaries divide communities	No comment
Bus Ride Length:	No comment
Student Transitions:	What could the Board do to accommodate families in unique communities if there was a consolidation of schools? (could survey the community with this question)
Small school organizations:	<p>Some communities may prefer small school organizations</p> <p>Rural communities attract people who prefer small school organizations.</p>
Facility condition/equity	No comment
Students in temporary accommodation (portables)	No comment
Surplus space	No comment
<p>Recognize unique needs of communities served by different schools</p> <p>Three Bridges serves a unique community that may choose to go to parochial schools if the school does not continue.</p>	<p>To retain/increase as many of the Three Bridges current Board students as possible.</p> <p>Geoff: To consider reasonable accommodations of cultural differences.</p>

Group No. 4 – Issues Discussion outcomes

Draft Issue	Comments/Questions
Current school boundaries divide communities	Attendance boundaries around some settlement areas have not kept up with growth of the settlement area leading in some cases to some students attending a different school than their neighbours. (Where?) Does not having a boundary create inequitable access? How is it determined who will attend? (Does it divide community?)
Bus Ride Length:	No comment
Student Transitions:	No comment
Small school organizations:	Challenge to meet guidelines in rural areas where student density is lower. (Do we need a new set of guidelines for rural schools?)
Facility condition/equity	No comment
Students in temporary accommodation (portables)	No comment
Surplus space	No comment

Mr. Hercanuck noted that staff will be bringing forward some metrics describing the specialized spaces of the schools in the review and how they compare to other facilities and benchmarks in the system, but it is important to keep in mind that while many schools may need to be brought up to a standard, we may not be able to bring them all up to meet a Floradale PS standard as there may be challenges with funding. He also noted that we can use the list of facility upgrade recommendations when the Board is doing other work and see if we can bundle with the deficiencies list and get a better deal from the contractors.

Q: Don Harloff, Community Representative inquired at what point the Board considers recommendations from educational studies/reports that have been done?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that the Board does not adopt the policy until it is instructed by Ministry of Education policy.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the Board has a [Facility Partnerships](#) Policy (Board Policy 1011), and actively seeks appropriate community partnerships (i.e., day care providers, libraries) when building new facilities or constructing additions.

Q: Mr. Suderman-Gladwell inquired if the Board leases surplus school spaces? And noted that isn't that part of the reason we are here today because we have some surplus space available?

R: Mr. Cuomo responded that at his previous Board they would identify any space that would be surplus for a period of two years or more and consider sharing this space with partners but he is not sure as to how the policy works here at the WRDSB.

Mr. Hercanuck commented that the Board's partnerships have to be considered appropriate and cost neutral and often times those that are appropriate don't have the necessary capital to afford the renovations, heat, maintenance and parking costs involved.

Q: Does the Board solicit for partnerships?

R: The Board doesn't advertise specific space available but we do have a Policy 1011 – Facility Partnerships and sites which are available for opportunities are posted on the Board's website with instructions for parties interested in partnerships.

Mr. Hercanuck also noted that when schools have extra space they tend to use that space for other purposes (i.e., French Room or other purpose that might not be recognized as a legitimate use of space) and the school generally expands to whatever space they have.

C: Board [Policy 3002](#) – may be missing guidelines on how it would like the rural schools model to be sized - Small School Organizations

Q: The Board has to be accessible by 2025; will the Board be making changes in the next few years?

R: Mr. Hercanuck noted the Board does have a plan to have all schools accessible by 2025. Concentrating on the secondary schools first to reach the most students at once and proceeding down from there. When undertaking reviews and other work this is required, when can include the renovations for accessibility and do the work at the same time to make our money go further.

Q: When reviewing the boundaries is there a way to guarantee a better balance of both Mennonite and non-Mennonite population to develop better student socialization opportunities. Keeping in mind that once the Mennonite children reach a certain age they do not socialize with non-Mennonite children and often times there may only be 2 or 3 non-Mennonite children in a class (which is the case at Linwood PS).

R: This may be hard to achieve as generally Mennonite families tend to be larger as well there is a Catholic School in the area which further reduces the non-Mennonite population at Linwood PS.

Q: Can we add a new issue? “To retain as many of the families the Board serves as possible and to increase if possible by recognizing the unique need of the community.”

C: If the Board consolidates Three Bridge PS with another school how many families would choose to stay with the Board? This is an issue. We could survey the community once we have generated a few scenarios.

R: Depending on how they deviate from Status Quo would we lose any families and will this degree of loss or gain depend on options. We won't be able to get into that until we have options.

Q: Mr. Suderman-Gladwell enquired if the accommodation of cultural diversity requires a separate building?

R: The Board is mandated to accommodate for cultural diversity in our schools being mindful of all cultures but not at the exclusion of others (i.e., we can celebrate Christmas but we must also celebrate the religious celebrations of other cultures as well).

Q: Can we meet the objective another way or must they be separate?

R: Elmer Horst, Parent Representative for Three Bridges PS responded that from his perspective it would be good if they went to public school so they are not isolated and unaware of the outside world so it's not such a shock when they have to be with the outside world. Noting that to be separate from the world is a conservative Mennonite belief. He also noted that the track record for private Mennonite schools (and students staying with the church) was no better than for those who did not attend the private schools.

C: There should be more concern for the education they are getting or not getting; that is why we have the Public Education System.

Q: Will the 19 understandings have to be grandfathered? If so how will be deal with that going forward?

R: The understandings as presented, I believe, serve as a window to gain insight into the community and cultural group. Mr. Dunham has discussed with the community that some of the understandings cannot be held any longer (e.g. Mennonite only) and if someone in the community really wants to attend Three Bridges PS he cannot say no. He also consults with the community.

C: He also said if he did something they didn't like there could be less kids at the school the next day.

Mr. Suderman-Gladwell noted that an objective might be to: "Consider the culture and religious beliefs of the communities we are serving". Noting that under the Human Rights Legislations it states 'reasonable accommodation'.

Mr. Hercanuck thanked the ARC for their thoughtful discussion of the draft issues so far and asked that they hand in their completed worksheets which will be scanned and emailed to the ARC with the draft minutes of the meeting.

Mr. Hercanuck advised the ARC that we will pick up the discussion again at our next meeting as well as concentrate on draft objectives.

Q: John Krupicz asked if Planning could provide some objectives from past reviews that might apply to this review.

R: Yes. We can bring applicable objectives which we can discuss at the next meeting.

Q: Are the School Information Profiles ready?

R: No. We are still waiting on the facilities condition analysis, how much it would cost to upgrade each school. Will look into status of this information.

5. Future Meeting Dates/Times

Working Group Meeting #6

Wednesday, December 7, 2011 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at Three Bridges PS Library

Working Group Meeting #7

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

Mr. Hercanuck thanked the ARC for coming and Mr. Milne for hosting and adjourned the meeting at 8:30 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