



**Woolwich & Wellesley Townships
Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation Review
Minutes of Public Meeting # 1
October 18, 2011
Elmira District Secondary School – 7:30 p.m.**

The first Public Meeting of the Woolwich & Wellesley Townships Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation Review was held at Elmira District Secondary School on Tuesday, October 18, 2011.

Approximately 45 members of the public were also in attendance.

1. Welcome/Introductions:

Nathan Hercanuck, Senior Planner 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 and provide a better understanding of:

- What an Accommodation Review is
- Why we are undertaking the Accommodation Review
- The Accommodation Review Process
- The Accommodation Review Committee roles and responsibilities
- The School Information Profiles and how information can be accessed.
- Next Steps.

Mr. Hercanuck made the following introductions:

Planning Department staff:

Lauren Manske, Senior Planner
Andrea Kean, Recording Secretary.

The Superintendent of Education for the review area:

Diane DeCoene

Principals:

Wayne Dunham – Three Bridges Public School
Vlad Kovac – Floradale Public School (sends his regrets)
Paul Milne – St. Jacobs Public School (sends his regrets)
Geoff Suderman-Gladwell – Linwood Public School (sends his regrets)

Trustees:

Kathleen Woodcock, Chairperson
Harold Paisley, Woolwich & Wellesley Townships

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

Mr. Hercanuck explained the difference between Boundary Study and Accommodation Review processes as follows:

Boundary Study:

- Led by Board Planning Staff
- Involves group of related schools
- May result in changes to school boundaries and/or programs
- May result in the building of a new school or new additions or renovation to an existing school

Accommodation Review:

- More formal process with set minimum timelines and structure
- Led by an Accommodation Review Committee (ARC)
- May result in boundary or program changes
- May result in the construction of a new school
- May result in the closure or consolidation of schools

2. 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.

Mr. Hercanuck also pointed out that an Accommodation Review does not have to result in school closure or consolidation, but it is a possibility.

3. Issues (why are we here?)

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 of 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.

Why an Accommodation Review in Woolwich and Wellesley Townships?

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the Board is conducting an accommodation review in Woolwich & Wellesley Townships, involving Floradale, Linwood, St. Jacobs and Three Bridges Public Schools, for the following reasons:

- Declining enrolment
- Small school organizations
- Facility challenges (accessibility and quality of buildings)

Referring to Slide 7 of the online presentation, Mr. Hercanuck stated that over the past twelve years this area has seen an overall decline in enrolment of 18 percent from 1270 student in 2000 to 1041 in 2011. This is contrasted with the Board-wide increase in elementary enrolment of 2.7 percent over the same time period.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the decline in enrolment has led to some small organizations, (see Slide 8 of the online presentation), smaller than the Board considers ideal for the delivery of curriculum and equitable learning opportunities for students. The Board likes to see schools of a size that allows for 2 full classes per grade level in grades JK through 6 and 3 full classes for grades 7 through 8. This allows for teachers to work together on successful teaching styles. However, it is also recognized that school size guidelines will present a challenge in the rural area boundaries because the areas are not as heavily populated as more urban areas and we have to take into account such considerations as the length of bus rides.

Mr. Hercanuck pointed out that because of the declining enrolment, some of the schools may have underutilized capacity and this may allow for the opportunity to consolidate schools so that we have an increased school organization operating more efficiently in fewer school facilities.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that some of the schools in the review are aging. Three Bridges (original building) was built in 1872, St. Jacobs in 1929 and Linwood in 1966. Floradale was built brand new in 2010 through special funding from the Ministry of Education. Equity of facility and access to resources will be something to look at especially as the Board moves forward with required provincial initiatives such as Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) which will be fully implemented by September 2014, and the Accessibility for Ontarian with Disabilities Act (AODA) that legislates that all public buildings must be made fully accessible by 2025. These issues along with current school operation and maintenance costs, as well as other issues that will be raised by the ARC and community will be used to come up with student accommodation options.

4. Accommodation Review Committee (ARC):

Role of the ARC:

According to Ministry of Education guidelines and Board policy, the Accommodation Review process is to be led by an Accommodation Review Committee or ARC. The ARC is responsible for developing the Accommodation Report that will be submitted to the Board of Trustees. The Trustees will make the final decision on the accommodation solution for the Woolwich & Wellesley Townships Accommodation Review.

ARC Membership:

The ARC Consists of:

- 2 parents from each school involved
- The Principal from each school involved:
 - Floradale P.S.
 - Linwood P.S.
 - St. Jacobs P.S.
 - Three Bridges P.S.
- The Area Superintendent of Education
 - Diane DeCoene
- Area Municipal Representative (2)
 - Township of Woolwich (1)
 - Township of Wellesley (1)
- 2 Community Representatives (Vacant)
- WRDSB Planning and Facility Services Staff
 - Acting as a resource for the committee

Mr. Hercanuck advised that it is important to note that while Board staff are members of the ARC they are not voting members.

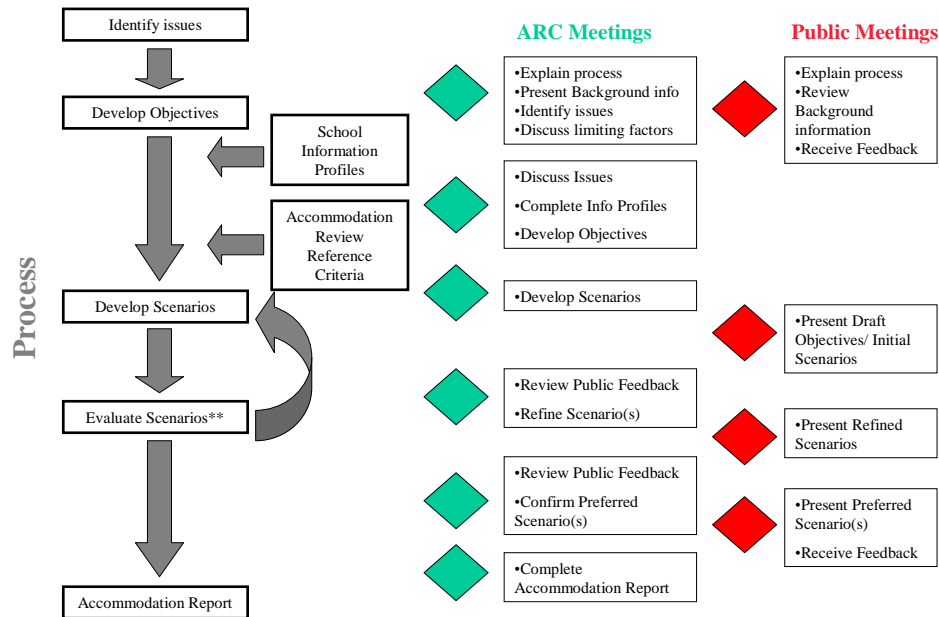
The voting members of the ARC are:

- school parent representatives
- community representatives
- municipal representatives

The ARC is responsible for:

- Identifying issues within the review area and developing review objectives to address those issues. The review objectives describe what we want the eventual solution to address, and will be referred to for evaluating the accommodation options that are developed.
- Completing the School Information Profiles which will give a snap shot of various aspects of each of the schools. The same information will be provided for each of the schools.
- Develop accommodation options or scenarios, which meet the objectives of the review.
- Develop the Accommodation Report and Recommendations to be submitted to the Board of Trustees.
- The ARC will ensure that the general public has access to all the information and can readily access the information. All minutes and presentations of the ARC meetings will be published on the Board's website at: <http://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/accommodation-reviews/woolwich-and-wellesley-townships-elementary-schools>) and be made available in hardcopy at each of the schools in the review area for those who do not have access to the internet.
- Community consultation which includes public meetings of which there will be at least 4 over the course of the review.

The Accommodation Review Process:



**Scenario development and evaluation may go through multiple iterations as scenarios are evaluated, and new ideas result from the evaluation.

Referring to chart above Mr. Hercanuck explained that the left side outlines the process progression and the right side outlines where the ARC meetings and Public meetings fall along the process.

Mr. Hercanuck explained how the process will work stating that the ARC will identify issues and develop objectives. Scenarios will be developed to meet the objectives. The report will be the last stage of the process. In between there will be a series of ARC meetings and at least 3 more Public Meetings which will be used to present and seek feedback on the draft objectives and initial scenarios, the refined scenarios and the preferred scenarios and finally the Accommodation Report before it is presented to the Board of Trustees.

Public Meetings will be used as follows:

- Public Meeting 1 to explain the process and request feedback,
- Public Meeting 2 to present draft objectives and scenarios and request feedback,
- Public Meeting 3 to present final summary and costing and request feedback,
- Public Meeting 4 to present the draft report and request feedback.

Accommodation Review Process

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the process is organized into 3 phases with a minimum timeline for each that cannot include any of the major school breaks (summer, winter, spring).

Phase 1:

From the time the Board announces its intention to conduct an accommodation review (February 14, 2011) there must be no less than 30 days until the first public meeting. This condition has been met.

Phase 2 (Public Consultation):

From the date of the first public meeting (October 18, 2011) there can be no less than 90 days and 4 public meetings before the ARC submits its accommodation report to the Board of Trustees. That would bring us to February 1, 2012.

Phase 3:

From the date the ARC report is submitted to the Trustees, there must be no less than 60 days until the trustees may vote on the recommendations. This allows time for the public to voice their concerns or support to the trustees before a decision is made. The earliest we could have a decision is by April 16th.

Mr. Hercanuck pointed out that this is a very aggressive timeline and in his past experience has never had an accommodation review wrap up within the minimum timeframe and in all likelihood this review will extend beyond April 16, 2012.

6. Public Information and Access

Mr. Hercanuck noted that all information, including minutes, presentations and school information profiles will be made available on the Board's website and in hardcopy at each of the schools under review. The minutes will not be posted until they have been approved by the ARC so they will always be at least one meeting behind.

Minutes and presentations from the Public Meetings will also be posted on the Board's website and provided to each of the schools in the review area for public access.

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 reps on the ARC through school council.

7. Next Steps:

The next steps in the process:

- The ARC will discuss issues and develop objectives and what we want to accomplish.
- The ARC will review the School Information Profile template and modify if necessary and publish when finished.
- The ARC will discuss existing conditions, accommodation options & recommendations.
- The ARC will prepare Accommodation Report and Recommendations.

Mr. Hercanuck advised that we do not have a date set for the second public meeting and will not set one until the ARC has something to share with the public. All options are still on the table right now, there have only been 2 ARC meetings so far. Ample notice will be given for the next public meeting and flyers will be sent home through the schools and advertisements in the local papers.

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.

8. Questions/Other

- Q: The ultimate decision on the outcome of this process is decided by the Trustees?
- R: Yes. Trustees will be making the decision based on the Accommodation Report and Recommendations by the Accommodation Review Committee.
- Q: Do the Trustees have to accept the recommendations as they are presented?
- R: No. They can send it back to the ARC to come up with something different if they do not like the recommendations. They could also suggest something themselves, but this has never happened before at our Board.
- Q: You stated that the ARC can include 2 representatives from the community; have those positions been filled?
- R: No. The 2 community representative positions on the ARC are still vacant. The ARC is looking for 2 representatives that would represent the broader community with no ties to a specific school under review; they can be non-parents, municipal, business or community organizations or non-staff or non-Trustee members of Board committees. Mr. Hercanuck asked if anyone has a name to suggest please provide him with the suggestion after the meeting.
- Q: You mentioned that the timeline you outlined for the process is quite aggressive; what has been your experience with how long the review process will take?
- R: The public consultation phase usually takes the longest. We have had reviews that took 18 months. It will depend a lot on the issues and the options we come up with and the back and forth with the community to get feedback.
- Q: You said that there is a minimum timeline set out by the Ministry of Education for the process; is there also a maximum timeline?
- R: No, there is no maximum timeline.
- Q: Is there a list available provide a list of names of who is on the Accommodation Review Committee?
- R: Yes. You can go online to the Board's website and access the minutes from our ARC meeting and that will show the names of the ARC membership. (Located on page 4 of the [minutes of the September 22, 2011 meeting](#)) A hardcopy of the minutes is also available in the ARC binders located at each school in the review area.
- Q: If someone from the community has a suggestion, how would someone from the broader community give feedback and suggestions to the ARC?

R: You can speak with the Principal of your school, a member of the school council, an ARC parent representative for your school or you can contact the Planning Department via email at boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca or by phone at (519)570-0003 Ext 4419, by fax at (519)570-2172.

Mr. Hercanuck advised that the 2nd public meeting will provide some initial scenarios and will be a better opportunity for the public to provide feedback.

Q: Are there past reviews that are available to the public to review what has happened in the past?

R: Yes. Everything is available on the Board's Website, including minutes, presentations, reports, links to the Board meeting where the recommendations have been voted on. Just search 'Accommodation Reviews'. If you don't have access to the internet please call us and we would be happy to help out.

Q: What is the next step?

R: We have only had 2 ARC meetings and there maybe 3 or 4 more ARC meetings before we have something to present at the next public meeting. ARC meetings are generally on a bi-weekly basis.

Q: Will you present options at the next public meeting?

R: Yes. We will also present draft objectives and ask for the feedback from the broader public.

Q: Can you give us an example of an objective?

R: Yes. An objective is a generic statement that applies to all schools. An example might be "to minimize the number of students in temporary accommodation"; or, "to maximize the number of students within walking distance to school".

Q: Are the main issues in this review declining enrolment and aging facilities?

R: Yes. These are the issues that the Board initially identified. Enrolment, surplus accommodation, and accessibility are others. We will include any other issues as they are identified through this process.

Q: How far into the future do you look when you do your projections? This declining enrolment trend may be reduced in the very near future as the area develops? Kitchener and Waterloo will decline there is no more land left to develop.

R: The increases are in the urban areas and are generally the result of new developments. We do take into account the Official Plans that exist and the Elmira area is not included in this review as it has its own more urban issues. We generally look 10 years into the future as this is the student cycle from JK to Grade 8. We don't generally see growth unless there is a new development. We have planners from the Townships of Woolwich and Wellesley on the ARC to be able to access their knowledge of the area issues.

Mr. Hercanuck thanked everyone for attending, and noted that it was a really good turnout for a first public meeting and congratulated the attendees on their community involvement. Mr. Hercanuck 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. Hercanuck and Ms. Manske as well as Chairperson Woodcock, Trustee Paisley and Superintendent DeCoene made themselves available to those in attendance to answer questions one-on-one until 9:00 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:

519-570-2172