



## **West Galt Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation Review**

### **Minutes of Public Meeting # 1**

**October 5, 2011**

**St. Andrew's Public School – 7:00 p.m.**

The first Public Meeting of the West Galt Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation Review was held at St. Andrew's Public School on Wednesday, October 5, 2011.

Approximately 40 members of the public were also in attendance.

#### **1. Welcome/Introductions:**

Lauren Manske, 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 with you about the Elementary Schools Accommodation Review running in the West Galt area of Cambridge, and give you a better understanding of:

- What an Accommodation Review is
- How you can keep informed
- How you can participate
- When you can expect to hear the results

Ms. Manske also noted that she will not have any proposed solutions to share at this meeting because they have not been developed yet.

Ms. Manske made the following introductions:

**School Principals** involved in this review are:

- Jodie Hancox-Meyer – Blair Road P.S. (sends her regrets)
- Barry Frame – Dickson P.S. (sends his regrets)
- Wendy Bowker – Highland P.S.
- Karen Tomlin – St. Andrew's P.S. (sends her regrets)
- Marcia Lubert – Tait Street P.S. (sends her regrets)

The **Superintendent of Education for the review area:**

- Lila Read (who sends her regrets)

From **Planning:**

- Nathan Hercanuck, Senior Planner
- Andrea Kean, Recording Secretary

**Trustee** Cindy Watson was also in attendance but arrived after the introductions.

Ms. Manske advised the audience that comment sheets are available at the entrance of the gym, as well as a sign in sheet.

Ms. Manske led the group through tonight's presentation (available at: <http://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/accommodation-reviews/west-galt-elementary-schools>)

## **2. Explanation of the Accommodation Review Process:**

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

- A formal public process that ensures a decision taken by a school board regarding the future of a school (closure or consolidation) has the full involvement of an informed local community.
- A process based on a broad range of criteria regarding the quality of the learning experience for students.

In simple terms, it is the review of the schools in an area of the Board's jurisdiction, to determine the future of a school, or group of schools – in this case the 5 elementary schools in the West Galt area of Cambridge:

- Blair Road
- Dickson
- Highland
- St. Andrew's
- Tait Street

It can result in recommendations to close one or more schools, consolidate schools – which mean having students from two or more schools at one location, changes in attendance boundaries and changes in programs such as a JK-6 school becoming a JK-8 school, as well as recommending new construction such as additions, major upgrades or a brand new school.

The process is based on a broad range of criteria regarding the quality of the learning experience for students, the physical assets, development and enrolment projections, put together by the Ministry of Education to ensure the full involvement of an informed local community – a transparent process.

### **Why an Accommodation Review?**

Ms. Manske noted that as staff of the Board, we identify areas to conduct an Accommodation Review based on a number of different criteria. These criteria 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;
- Normal staffing allocations result in split classes or 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. (*Ms. Manske noted that this was not the case here.*)

### **Ministry Guideline/Board Policy:**

Ms. Manske noted that in 2006, the Ministry of Education developed a guideline for boards to follow when considering school closure or consolidation. The intention of the guideline was to create a transparent public consultation process. This guideline was reviewed and revised in 2009 and so we are following the Ministry's 2009 guideline for the review, along with our Board's Policy 4000 adopted in November 2009. (Please note links to the policies are included in tonight's presentation which is available online at: <http://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/accommodation-reviews/west-galt-elementary-schools>)

### **Why an Accommodation Review in West Galt?**

Ms. Manske advised that the Board is conducting an accommodation review in West Galt for the following reasons:

- Small school organizations (*the Board has a policy that suggests the ideal size of a JK-6 school is between 350-400 students - only one school in the review area meets that criteria*)
- Facility condition – (*there are several aging facilities with building components that may be reaching, or have already reached their valuable lifespan*).
- Enrolment changes/shifts – (*we are dealing with static facilities and mobile populations*).
- New development – (*there are a few remaining pockets in this area within the Blair Road and Highland boundaries*).
- New direction in curriculum/school organization (grade configurations) – (*the Board has a policy that states its program preference is JK-8*).
- Implications of Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) – (*Dickson PS has FDK, Highland PS will have next year and all schools will have FDK by September 2014 – we will need to find space as this will double space required for Kindergarten*).

Referring to the boundary map on slide 7 of the presentation, Ms. Manske noted that everything inside the solid black boundary is the focus of this review and is the St. Andrew's Senior Elementary School boundary.

### **West Galt Projected and Historic Enrolment 2001-2021**

Ms. Manske, referring to slide 9 of the presentation, noted that over the past 10 years, enrolment in the review area has declined by 12 percent overall, compared to elementary enrolment Board-wide, which has increased by 3 percent overall in the same time period. In the last 2-3 years the area has seen some increases and the enrolment is projected to increase slightly overall throughout the next 10 years.

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

#### **Role of the ARC:**

Ms. Manske noted that in order to steer this review, we have an Accommodation Review Committee, which we shorten to ARC, and the ARC is a key part of this process. The committee is a structured working group which looks at the current situation, the available information and will help to develop scenarios which will lead to possible recommendations.

The ARC is responsible for:

- Review Objectives
- School Information Profiles
- Accommodation Options (Scenarios)
- Accommodation Report and Recommendations to give to the Board Trustees
- Public Information and Access
- Community Consultation and Public Meetings

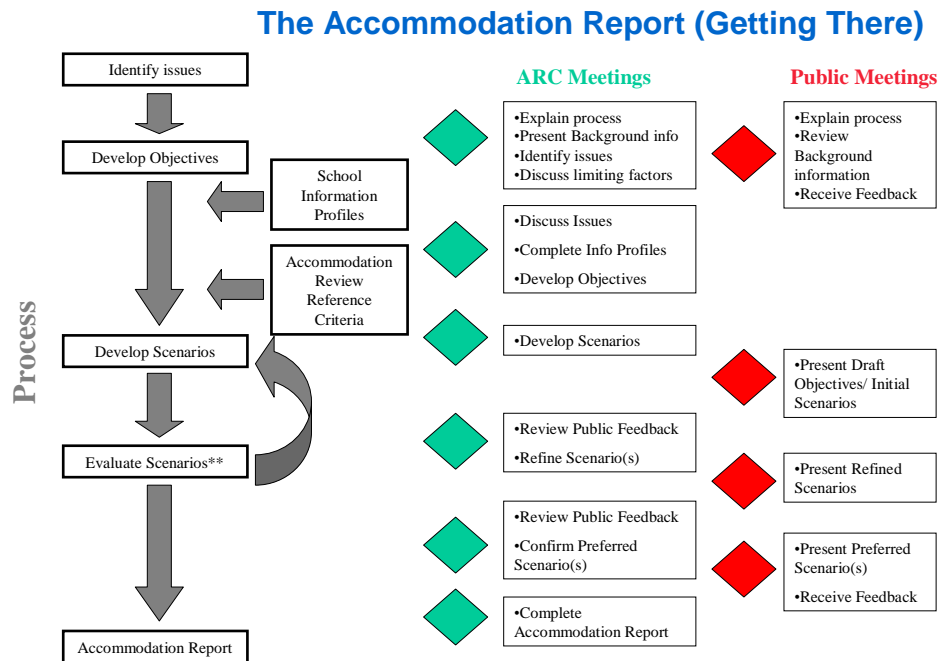
#### **ARC Membership:**

The ARC Consists of:

- 2 parents from each school involved
- The Principal from each school involved
- The Area Superintendent of Education
- Area Municipal Representative
- 2 Community Representatives (Vacant)
- WRDSB Planning and Facility Services Staff

Ms. Manske went through the membership of the ARC noting that the membership includes 2 parent representatives from each school as well as 2 community representatives and Board Staff. Ms. Manske also noted that the Manager of Planning position is in the process of being filled and once a new manager is hired, he/she will also sit on the ARC. The ARC can have up to 2 representatives from the broader community and at present these positions are vacant and asked if anyone was aware of someone who would be interested and a good fit to represent the community to please see her after the presentation this evening.

## 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 the chart above Ms. Manske 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 and what “historically” has happened at past meetings along the way.

Ms. Manske explained how the process will work stating that the ARC will address issues and develop objectives. Objectives will be developed using the set of Ministry Reference Criteria. The report will be the last stage of the process. In between there will be a series of ARC meetings and 4 Public Meetings.

Ms. Manske noted that tonight’s meeting is the first formal Public Meeting of at least 4 that we will hold throughout the review process.

The 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 – Minimum Timeframe:

Ms. Manske, referring to slide 14 of the presentation noted that we have put together the process timeframe, pointing out that the final dates are not fixed, as they will depend on the time we take to come up with the appropriate solutions and do the review properly. Ms. Manske noted that we would like to report to the Board and have a decision before the end of the 2011-2012 school year.

Ms. Manske noted that the process has minimum timelines that must be met. The first 30 day timeline (between the time the Board announces the review and the date of the first public meeting) has been met. The next timeline starts today. We have a minimum of 90 days from the date of the first public meeting until the completion of our fourth public meeting, which is referred to as the public consultation period. Ms. Manske noted that in past experience, this is very much a minimum and we have always gone beyond the 90 days for public consultation.

The final timeline (60 days) is between the time the ARC submits its report to the trustees and when the trustees can vote on the recommendations. Ms. Manske gave the earliest date the review could be completed as April 4<sup>th</sup> 2012 and noted that these timeframes cannot include any major school holidays such as Winter Break or Spring Break.

Ms. Manske also noted that if we do have a solution in place by the end of this school year, the earliest that any changes would happen would be September 2013. If we are looking at major construction, we typically need 2 years from the time of engaging an architect to the time we can open a new school, so there would likely not be any completed built solutions until September 2015.

#### **4. Review Objectives**

- One of the most important processes when conducting a review is the setting of objectives. The objectives tell us what we want to accomplish, without predetermining an outcome.
- We also need objectives in order to develop and evaluate scenarios.
- We do not place any weighting on the objectives or rank one higher than the other.

#### **5. School Information Profiles:**

Ms. Manske noted that School Information Profiles are another facet of the formal accommodation review process. Each school will have the School Information Profile Template filled in. The template is really a comprehensive inventory of the facilities. School Information Profiles.

- The profiles have four sections:
  1. Value to the Student
  2. Value to the Board
  3. Value to the Community
  4. Value to the Local Economy
- The goal of the profiles is to ensure that each member of the ARC and the general public has all the relevant and same information about each school.

Ms. Manske also noted that members of the ARC and Board staff have been asked to assist in filling out the templates but members of the public are also invited to submit information.

Once the templates are completed for each school they will be posted on the website and hard copies will be provided to each of the schools in the review area to be kept in the school binder and will be continually updated as additional information is received.

### **Next Steps:**

Ms. Manske outlined the next steps in the process:

- The ARC will determine the issues as seen by the school communities.
- Out of these issues the ARC will develop review objectives to respond to the issues and then work on scenarios to meet those objectives.
- We will hold a minimum of 3 additional public meetings to consult with the broader public.
- ARC prepares draft Accommodation Report and Recommendations.
- ARC submits Report and Recommendations to the Board of Trustees.
- Staff also submits a report and recommendations (typically same recommendations).
- Trustees vote on recommendations of Staff Report and ARC Report.
- Trustees make any decisions having regard for the work of the ARC.

### **Public Information and Access:**

- All relevant information is available on the Board's website: [www.wrdsb.ca](http://www.wrdsb.ca)
  - Please note that minutes will not be posted until they are approved and thus, will be at least one meeting behind.
- School binders with hard copies of all the information are available at each of the schools in the review area.
- You can participate in this review by sending in comments to our email address: [boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca](mailto: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.
- Webpage address for the review:  
<http://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/accommodation-reviews/west-galt-elementary-schools>

## **6. Questions/Other**

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 would also be accessible to the trustees. Ms. Manske then opened the floor up for any questions/comments.

- Q: You mentioned earlier that there will be two reports: an ARC Report and a Staff Report that are submitted to the Board of Trustees; who specifically are the staff that write the Staff Report?
- R: Ms. Manske explained that Staff refers to the Board's Capital Plan Committee which includes Planning, Facilities, and Finance Staff. The Staff Report does not include any ARC members other than Planning and Facility Services Board Staff. Learning Services staff and the Executive Committee are also involved.

Q: What are the 3 main reasons why this review is being done?

R: Ms. Manske responded that the full report outlining why this review is being undertaken by the Board is available to the public on-line [February 14, 2011 Board Report](#). The main reasons the Board is undertaking this review are:

- The Dickson Public School facility does not have a purpose-built gym and is situated on a very tight site and does not meet Board benchmarks to provide equitable learning opportunities to students. The Board has hired a consultant to study all 5 facilities and identify any other facility issues that may develop within the next 10-20 years.
- There are program issues in regard to school grade configuration; we have 2 JK-5 schools in this area and a 6-8. The Board has approved a policy that states, where possible it would like to have JK-8 facilities as there is research to support that fewer transitions are beneficial to students and the JK-8 model cuts out the transition to middle school. We will look at JK-8 and whether or not it will work in this area.
- Mr. Hercanuck added that the area has experienced declining enrolment and the total enrolment at 3 of the schools is below the Board's recommended size.
- Also the affect that Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) will have on school capacity as all junior elementary schools will have FDK implemented by September 2014.
- Mr. Hercanuck also noted that Highland P.S. is over populated in regards to what it was built to handle and may require a boundary change to offset.

Q: How are the school boundaries set out?

R: Ms. Manske explained that there are many different criteria we look at they can include new development areas which can be assigned to a particular school because that school has the capacity to accept the students. We look at walking distances as board policy sets out a maximum of 1.6km walking distance to school for grades 1-8. We look at what makes sense from the local perspective. Major geographical barriers may also influence boundaries.

Q: Does the Board have any available sites in this area for a new school?

R: Ms. Manske stated that the Board owns a site near Southwood Secondary School that is being used as a practice field; and is looking to designate a site in the development proposal that is in early stages, located west of Blair Road Public School, should the subdivision be developed.

Q: Doesn't the Board have a property on St. Andrew's Street that is up for sale?

R: Ms. Manske noted that she could not confirm that at this time because she is not aware of the details.



- Q: Will there be any changes made to the boundaries of Southwood Secondary and Galt Collegiate? Because there's currently a division of feeds from St. Andrew's to the secondary schools.
- R: Ms. Manske stated that an objective could be included to consider secondary boundaries when forming any new boundaries but we won't be changing the secondary boundaries in this review.
- Q: Are there any Board Trustees that are members of the ARC?
- R: Ms. Manske responded that no trustees sit on the ARC as the Board as agreed to keep the process non-political and consulted the advice of legal counsel on the matter. However, there are some boards that do include Trustees as members of the ARC.
- Q: Will parents have access to the Final Report before the Trustees vote?
- R: Ms. Manske stated that absolutely, yes, the Report will be posted on the Board's website before it is presented to the Board. Prior to being presented to the Board, the draft report will be presented to the public at a public meeting to ask for public feedback. If there are a lot of changes, we may opt to hold another public meeting before submitting the final report. The final report will be posted on the website on the Friday before the Board meeting (held on Monday) of which it will be presented to the Board. After which there is a required 60 day waiting period before the Trustees can vote; this 60 day period is for the Trustees and the public to review the report and for the public to express their opinions. If you wish you can also register as a delegation to appear before the Board at any of the Board meetings before the vote.
- Q: How accurate have enrolment projections been in the past? Somewhere I've seen Dickson PS's enrolment projected at 65 students for this year; and this is not the case?
- R: Ms. Manske stated that difficult to say – political things have happened that have an effect on enrolment numbers. Usually projections that are 2-3 years out are very accurate beyond that it can be difficult to say. There could be new development or a business that closes, things that we can't be aware of or take into consideration.

Mr. Hercanuck commented that percentage wise we have been in the neighbourhood of .03 percent accurate on the elementary projections Board wide. The projections for Dickson PS referred to were done 6 years ago before Full Day Kindergarten was legislated and FDK has certainly proven to be a popular program and may have increased the enrolment at the school.

Ms. Manske noted that we use historical data and generally get the trend right but as we move forward with the review and new data comes available; the projections will be modified to reflect the new data.

Q: In regards to Dickson Public School, how much weight will parent input have on the outcome?

R: Ms. Manske responded that it is hard to say and it will depend on the issues and if there are other ways to address the issues. It is always about what is best for the students.

Q: What happens if the Board doesn't approve the ARC's recommendations?

R: Ms. Manske responded that if the Board doesn't approve the recommendations they could send the ARC back to work to come up with an alternate solution. However if they come up with their own solution without full public consultation, there is an Administrative Review of the Accommodation Review Process that can be requested by filing an appeal to the Ministry of Education, if you feel that the process did not follow the correct procedures.

Ms. Manske stated that she has good faith in the Board and if they don't want to approve the recommendations they would send it back to the ARC to try again.

Q: Does the Board consider the use of portables a short-term or long-term solution?

R: Ms. Manske noted that portables are ideally a short-term temporary solution, but we have over 300 portables in our system and the Board is not happy about that. The Board does not collect our own capital funds and relies on the Province for funding. The Board has asked for funding from the Ministry of Education to build permanent spaces but to date has not been able to keep up with the Board's growth. Ms. Manske noted that we could add this as an objective for the review to look at reducing the number of portables and maximize the number of students in permanent accommodation.

Q: Does the Board have a policy on the use of portables that will have an effect on the ARC?

R: Ms. Manske noted that the Board does not have a policy on the use of portables.

Q: I've heard that there is already a plan in the works to do an addition on Highland PS?

R: Ms. Manske responded that it's true that Highland PS will be getting an addition but only for Full Day Kindergarten (FDK). The capital funding provided to the Board can only be used for the FDK program and will be completed for September 2012. The portapak will be demolished and replaced with permanent classrooms but it will likely not reduce the number of portables in use at Highland PS.

Q: Is it possible that we could have another addition, possibly a second story at Highland PS after this review?

- R: Ms. Manske stated that due to logistics and lack of funding from the Province, it isn't possible to build a second story on the building while it's occupied and there is no space to do any other construction on the site; there won't be another addition at Highland PS.
- Q: Is there the option to close Highland PS and build a new school?
- R: Ms. Manske stated that closing Highland PS is an option, but that would not make much sense.
- C: Ms. Manske stated that the review does not necessarily have to result in a closure; just because we are doing a review does not mean we will close a school.
- Q: Can you explain how you get the on-the-ground capacity numbers? Specifically the 161 capacity at Dickson PS?
- R: Ms. Manske noted that the Ministry of Education determines the loading of classrooms and this might not accurately represent how the school is being used (or the functional capacity). For example, the Ministry loads a Kindergarten classroom at 20 students, FDK will be up to 26 and others will be loaded at 23. Libraries and gymnasiums are not loaded and Special Education is loaded at 9.
- Q: When will you hold the next public meeting?
- R: The date for the next public meeting has not been set yet; we are likely looking at late November or early December (will not be in late December due to most people are busy with family commitments). May even be into January depending on how quickly we come up with scenarios and that takes time. We want to have something to present to you at the meeting.
- Q: You had asked us to bring issues to the public meeting; what types of issues should we bring?
- R: If you know of specific issues or opportunities; an example of an issue, we have lots of kids in portables; can we look at having an objective to eliminate portable classrooms. Or, an example of an opportunity might be; the City is building a new pool, would it be possible to partner with the City. The issues or opportunity could be any number of things. You can also discuss these further with your school's ARC members at a school council meeting.
- Q: Are ARC meetings held before Public Meetings?
- R: Yes. We will have ARC meetings between the Public Meetings.
- Q: Can ARC members go to School Council Meetings to discuss what happens at the ARC Meetings?

R: Yes, we are relying on the Parent Representatives to find out what the community feels and search out community feedback to bring back to the ARC meetings.

Q: Can Boundary changes happen in this review?

R: Yes, boundary changes can happen; program changes can happen any number of things can happen. We have another process called a Boundary Study but it is a more limited process. We are conducting the Accommodation Review Process as it allows us to use all the tools available to us to develop options.

Q: Is it ARC policy to show the maintenance costs to buildings?

R: Yes. This information will be available in the school information profiles.

Q: What is the distance from Dickson PS to Highland PS?

R: Someone in the audience indicated that it is less than 1km.

Q: When you refer to program changes, what exactly do you mean?

R: Changes to grades offered at the school. For Example, a JK-6 school could add grades 7 and 8 to become a JK-8 school.

Q: What happens to special programs if a school closes? Will they get cut?

R: If necessary, special programs would be moved to an alternate location and children would be accommodated. Special programs are being evaluated on a yearly basis to determine where the greatest need is. Special Programs in the review area would be taken into consideration as an objective when developing options/scenarios.

Ms. Manske 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 8:15 p.m. and Ms. Manske and Mr. Hercanuck made themselves available to answer questions one-on-one.

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