



Elmira Elementary Schools Boundary Study
Minutes of Public Meeting #1
June 11, 2013
Park Manor Public School 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

The first Public Meeting of the Elmira Elementary Schools Boundary Study was held at Park Manor Public School on Tuesday, June 11, 2013.

Approximately 30 members of the community were in attendance.

1. Welcome/Introductions

Nathan Hercanuck, Senior Planner for the Waterloo Region District School Board welcomed those in attendance and gave the following introductions:

Board Planning Staff:

Lauren Manske, Senior Planner

Andrea Kean, Recording Secretary

Principals and Vice Principals:

James Bond, Principal, Park Manor PS

Brent Hatcher, Principal, Riverside PS

Tracy Tait, Principal, John Mahood PS

Trustees

Harold Paisley, Vice Chairperson of the Board and Trustee for Wellesley/Woolwich

In coming Superintendent of Education:

Elaine Ranney

Mr. Hercanuck led the audience through tonight's presentation available online at:

<http://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/boundary-studies/elmira-boundary-study/>

Why are we here?

Elmira has grown over the past number of years resulting in an increase in elementary student enrolment. This increase in enrolment has placed pressure on our facilities, such that portables have been necessary to accommodate the students.

As well, there have been a number of provincial initiatives that have reduced the number of students our schools can hold. In 2006, the Primary Class Size initiative placed caps on our kindergarten and primary classes so each Riverside and John Mahood schools could hold fewer students. As well, the Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) program being implemented at John Mahood PS and Riverside PS for September 2013, will also put pressure on our facilities.

Further, we anticipate that enrolment will continue to increase in Elmira with the construction of approved subdivisions in the northwest corner of the study area (referred to as Lunor), off Church Street in Riverside Public School's current boundary; and a smaller subdivision

development in the south end of town (referred to as Birdland), in John Mahood Public School's boundary. We do not believe that the increased enrolment from this north subdivision can be handled effectively by the current Riverside PS facility and its relatively small site.

As an alternative the Board has secured the purchase of a 6.83 acre site next to a municipal park in the larger Lunor subdivision, and our plan is to reconstruct Riverside PS there.

We also want to look at the issues regarding enrolment and capacity at our other schools as well.

We will have the opportunity to look at the existing school boundaries, and possibly changes to school organizations; and once an option has been settled on we would want to look at a transition plan to get us to the new situation.

Those were the reasons the Board's Trustees authorized the Elmira Boundary Study in [May 2012](#).

Purpose of Meeting:

The purpose of tonight's meeting is to share with you some boundary scenarios that have been developed and to get your comments and suggestions on those, or others you might think could assist.

Key Items:

- We are looking at possible boundary changes; but no changes are proposed for this coming September.
- We are not looking at any school closures (only a relocation of the existing Riverside).

2. Explanation of the Boundary Study Process

What is a Boundary Study?

A boundary study is a public process. It ensures that a decision made by the Board regarding attendance boundaries has the involvement of an informed local community.

Reasons for a Boundary Study:

There are several different reasons to conduct a boundary study:

- Opening of new school and establishing the new boundary and adjusting the boundaries of the existing schools in the area;
- Changing the grade structure of an elementary school – *this could include changing an elementary school from a Junior Kindergarten (JK) to Grade 6 format to a composite school with JK to Grade 8 format;*
- Balancing enrolment and facilities – *one school may have too many students for its capacity and another may have too few*

The main reason for the Elmira Boundary Study is to establish a boundary for the new Riverside PS and use this opportunity to look at other elements as well.

Study Area: (slide 5 of the [online presentation](#))

The Elmira Boundary Study area includes 3 schools:

1. John Mahood Public School (JK-5) attendance boundary represented in blue
2. Riverside Public School (JK-5) attendance boundary represented in purple
3. Park Manor Public School (5-8) services the entire town - represented by red hatched line

School Size (Enrolment and Capacity):

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the table on slide 6 of the [online presentation](#) illustrates the current enrolment and capacity situation in Elmira.

Currently in 2012 the Ministry-rated capacity of the permanent portions (not portables) of the schools in Elmira totals 654 pupil places.

This capacity accommodates 876.5 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) students. The FTE number counts the Kindergarten students as half a student, because they are only in the building half the time. Using the FTE number the schools in Elmira are at 134% Capacity; thus the need for 14 portables to accommodate the enrolment.

Next year, without doing anything else enrolment will change, as Full Day Kindergarten will be implemented at Riverside and John Mahood Public Schools starting in September.

Both schools are being modified to accommodate the FDK program (an addition at John Mahood PS and renovations at Riverside PS) which will alter the capacities of the facilities. Using the new capacities, the total is now 747 and the total number of students is 1,001. Although overall we are increasing the capacity of Elmira's schools, enrolment will still be about 134% of the capacity of the buildings because now the previously half-time Kindergarten students will be there full time.

Elmira Area Enrolment Projections:

Elementary school enrolment in Elmira is expected to increase with the approved development within the town.

The graph and chart on slide 7 of the [online presentation](#) illustrates what we expect in terms of elementary enrolment in Elmira out ten years to 2023. By the end of the projection period (2023) we expect to have to accommodate approximately 1350 elementary students JK-8.

With the current boundaries and grade configurations we expect all the schools to be over capacity, but Riverside PS especially so with 480 students at a facility with a permanent capacity of 95 and located on a 3.65 acre site.

Elmira Development Outlook:

Referring to slide 8 of the [online presentation](#), Mr. Hercanuck noted that this increase in enrolment is anticipated to come as a result of residential development within the town. Woolwich Township planning staff has provided us with the locations and amounts of residential development expected within the town; highlighted in red on the map on slide 8.

The development in the North (Lunor) is the larger of the two and represents approximately 1,400 residential units, and contains the site for the New Riverside PS. The development in the South (Birdland) represents approximately 350 units and is currently in the John Mahood PS boundary.

[The Boundary Study Process:](#)**How does the process work?**

Referring to slide 9 of the [online presentation](#), which outlines the Boundary Study Process, Mr. Hercanuck noted that once the Board has identified a boundary study area, the Board's Planning Department asks the Principals at each of the schools involved to seek out up to 2 parent/guardian representatives to sit with them and us on a Working Group.

3. Working Group

The Working Group represents the larger community and:

- Confirms the issues identified in the area;
- Develops objectives for the study (*these are important because we go back to them to determine the “fit” of each scenario*);
- Assists with developing scenarios (*i.e., possible solutions*).

The Working Group has had 5 meetings to get to where we are this evening.

Tonight we are at the step of our first Public Meeting and the key here is to get your collective input on our scenarios.

Mr. Hercanuck noted the importance of public feedback and collective input on scenarios; and requested that the community [let the Working Group know:](#)

- what you like,
- what you don't like,
- your ideas for improving scenarios,
- other considerations that should be addressed.

Once a preferred scenario is chosen the working group will develop an implementation or transition plan on how to best implement changes while being mindful of transitions, for students, staff and parents.

The feedback gathered from comments received from the community will be shared with the Working Group and used to help evaluate the scenarios.

The Working Group will:

- Develop a recommended option/scenario,
- Share/seek feedback on a recommended scenario with community at Public Meeting #2,
- May revise recommendation based on feedback,
- Staff on the Working Group will take a recommendation to the Board of Trustees,
- The Board of Trustees will make the final decision.

4. Study Objectives

Draft Study Objectives:

The Working Group has discussed the issues within the study area and developed a set of draft objectives for things we hope to achieve through this study in order to address the issues.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the following draft objectives are not weighted in any way; therefore, the order of the objectives is unimportant.

Draft Objectives:

- *To determine the size and program configuration of the replacement Riverside PS, having regard for [Board Policy 3002: Elementary School Size and Configuration.](#)*

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the rebuilt Riverside PS is important but how big do we build it and for what elementary organization (that is to say for which grades).

This objective refers to Board Policy 3002 which is a guideline that outlines the preferred size and configuration for Elementary schools of the Board and is always taken into account when contemplating new schools or large additions.

The policy recommends sizes based on a minimum number of classes per grade (at least 2 each in grades JK-6) and 2 or more in the intermediate grades (7-8). This ends up being approximately 350-450 pupil places for a JK-6 and 500 – 650 for a JK-8 school. Research shows that student achievement benefits from teachers being able to team teach and collaborate with another teacher who teaches the same grade in the same facility.

Also JK-6 and JK-8 organizations are preferred as it lines up better with the curriculum and the manner in which it is delivered.

- ***To develop a transitional accommodation plan for elementary school enrolment in the Town of Elmira while awaiting the completion of the replacement Riverside PS.***

Mr. Hercanuck noted that because the current Riverside PS is pressured, and will be more so next year when full day kindergarten is implemented and; from the time we get approval and funding from the Ministry of Education to build a new facility to that facility opening, it takes about 2 years. (No funding has been granted at this point)

This means that current Riverside PS will face further pressure until the new facility is built. So once we have determined what our plan is for the area the Working Group felt it important to also develop a strategy on how we are going to support the current Riverside PS in the meantime.

- ***To establish boundaries that are long-term (approx. 10 years) that 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.).***

Mr. Hercanuck asked for feedback on the objectives. Advising that should there be something we have missed, or that does not make sense, please let us know by leaving a comment or sending us an [email](#).

5. Scenarios:

After discussing the issues and identifying draft objectives the Working Group set about developing scenarios to address the issues and meet the objectives; they have selected three (scenarios 1, 8 and 9) of the nine scenarios developed to bring to you this evening to request your [feedback](#).

Mr. Hercanuck advised that all nine Scenarios that have been developed can be viewed on the [Board's website](#) and are located in the presentations and minutes of the Working Group meetings.

Scenario 1 (slides 12 and 13 of the [online presentation](#))

Least amount of change of all the Scenarios we have for you this evening.

- Boundaries remain the same;
- School organizations change to:
 - New Riverside PS - JK-6
 - John Mahood PS - JK-6
 - Park Manor PS - 7-8
- New Riverside PS constructed in Lunor subdivision;
- Development in South end (Birdland) and addition of Grade 6 increases enrolment at John Mahood PS;
- Removal of Grade 6 at Park Manor PS reduces enrolment at facility, better matching its capacity.

Scenario 1 – Enrolment by School:

- Would likely require the new Riverside PS to be constructed at approximately 550 pupil places.
- The addition of Grade 6 plus enrolment from the Birdland development would increase John Mahood PS enrolment to over 500 students in the long term necessitating 4-5 portables or an addition.
- Removing Grade 6 from Park Manor PS would put enrolment better in line with the capacity of the building while still maintaining at least 4-6 classes per grade in line with Board Policy 3002.

Scenario 8 (slides 14 and 15 of the [online presentation](#))

- New Riverside PS constructed in the Lunor subdivision
- School organizations change to:
 - New Riverside PS - JK-6
 - John Mahood PS - JK-6
 - Park Manor PS - 7-8
- Boundaries change with the new school location which is north and west of John Mahood PS, it opens up the opportunity for a more southwest to northeast boundary orientation.
- Projection Area F which currently attends Riverside PS would now be closer to John Mahood PS, Areas G1 and I on the West side could then attend the new Riverside PS.

Scenario 8 – Enrolment by School:

- New Riverside PS likely constructed at approximately 575 pupil places.
- The addition of Grade 6 plus enrolment from the Birdland development would increase John Mahood PS enrolment to 500 students in the long term necessitating 4-5 portables or addition.
- Removing Grade 6 from Park Manor PS has enrolment better in line with the capacity of the building while still maintaining at least 4-6 classes per grade in line with Board Policy 3002.

Scenario 9 (slides 16 and 17 of the [online presentation](#))

Mr. Hercanuck noted that Scenario 9 would see the largest amount of change of the scenarios; not only do the boundaries change significantly it also represents a fundamental change to the elementary grade configurations of the schools in Elmira.

- New Riverside PS is constructed in the Lunor subdivision; keeping portions of the west side of its current boundary.
- School organizations change to:
 - New Riverside PS - JK-8
 - John Mahood PS - JK-6
 - Park Manor PS - **JK-8**
- John Mahood PS boundary would be modified and would continue to feed its graduates to Park Manor PS (which is now a JK-8 school) for the 7-8 program.

Scenario 9 Enrolment by School:

- New Riverside PS now JK-8 and constructed at approximately 550 to pupil places.
- John Mahood PS would gain Grade 6s as it changes to a JK-6 organization, however it would not need any further additions other than the in progress FDK addition as some of its JK-6 boundary would move to Park Manor PS.
- Park Manor PS becomes a JK-8 organization and would require an approximately 130 pupil place addition to accommodate the Kindergarten and primary grades, which have not previously attended the facility.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that Scenario 9:

- Creates an elementary school organization that has not existed in Elmira previously.
- The community would lose its senior elementary organization but would gain neighbourhood-level schools. It would create a junior elementary program at all the schools, so there would be a presence in the north, south and middle of the town.
- This would improve transportation efficiency, as both the junior and senior elementary programs are distributed closer to more students; however at 400 students Park Manor PS is a bit small for a JK-8 organization according to Board Policy 3002.

6. Next Steps:

- Working Group reviews public meeting comments
- Working Group refines scenarios based on public feedback
- A minimum of 1 additional Public Meeting
- Working Group to develop recommendations
- Staff bring recommendations to Trustees
- Trustees vote on recommendations

Mr. Hercanuck reiterated that, while the Working Group is discussing changes, there are no changes proposed for this coming September; schools, boundaries and grade organizations will remain as is for next school year.

Mr. Hercanuck invited those in attendance to visit the [Elmira Boundary Study website](#), and advised that it has additional information for those that may be interested, including the presentations and minutes of the working group meetings and all of the Scenarios that have been developed including those not presented tonight. He also advised that hardcopies can be provided for those without access to the internet and can be requested through their school Principal.

7. Questions/Other

Mr. Hercanuck opened the floor to questions/comments at 7:30 pm.

C: I have concern with Scenario 9 which would have John Mahood PS (JK-6) feeding its Grade 7s into Park Manor PS which would now be JK-8; the Grade 6s from John Mahood would be going into an already established school community for Grades 7- 8.

R: Principal Bond advised that every year at Park Manor events are held to bring the cohorts coming from John Mahood and Riverside Public Schools together to help smooth the transition.

R: Principal Tait spoke about her personal experience having a child go through the same experience going from Abraham Erb PS (JK-6) to Laurelwood PS (JK-8) for the 7-8 program; she noted that the school did team building in the first weeks and although it seemed scary at the time, after the first week there were no problems.

Q: What is the purpose of the 7-8 Senior Elementary School model?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that the Waterloo Region District School Board has a hybrid of school models, including:

- JK-5 feeding a 6-8
- JK-6 feeding a JK-8 or 7-8
- JK-8

He noted that historically, the Senior Elementary (6-8 or 7-8) models offer a pre high school experience with rotary and can attract teachers with a desire to teach this age group and expertise in subjects such as Science and Music. He also advised that more recently the Board's Learning Services Department has tried to reduce the number of teacher contacts (number of teachers a student is taught by in the day/year) as the latest research suggests that fewer teacher contacts is better for student achievement. While the Board still supports the Senior Elementary model it has not build a new Senior Elementary School since 1977.

Q: How does a JK-8 school work? Does it still have rotary?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that under Board Policy 3002 ideally the 7-8 program works best when it has more than 2 classes per grade; which provides opportunities for teacher learning/collaboration and some rotary; that is why the Board would have a JK-6 feed into a JK-8 to achieve the critical mass of students required for that experience.

R: Principal Hatcher responded that Lester B. Pearson PS (JK-8) in Waterloo operates the JK-6 and 7-8 programs in separate wings of the same building.

Q: Do JK-8 schools' 7-8 programs offer the same specialized courses as a dedicated Senior Elementary school?

R: Yes. The same courses/curriculum is offered.

- Q: You are anticipating that the new Riverside PS will not be built before 2015 and there won't be any boundary changes taking place for the 2013-14 school year; is there the possibility for boundary changes prior to the new school opening, to deal with the expected enrolment increase from the new subdivision prior to the rebuild?
- R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that we could be expecting the Lunor subdivision to register and for building to begin in the Fall which will add more pressure to the current Riverside PS if we see a significant amount of enrolment come out of the new subdivision; there won't be any changes to boundaries for the upcoming year but we can't rule out the possibility of boundary changes for the 2014-15 school year in order to reduce pressure on the current Riverside PS.
- Q: What is the expected life cycle of a new school; and what happens to a school once it is closed?
- R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that the current Riverside PS is about 50 years old and suggested that schools being built today should be expected to have a life cycle of approximately 80 years or more.

Once a school has been deemed surplus to the needs of the Board, it goes through a disposition process which is governed by the Education Act, which states that all Ontario school boards must first offer surplus land, by proposal to sell to:

1. other school boards
 - Waterloo Catholic District School Board
 - Conseil scolaire Viamonde
 - Le Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud,
2. post-secondary institutions
 - The University of Waterloo
 - Wilfrid Laurier University
 - Conestoga College
 - Collège Boréal
3. local and regional municipalities
 - The City of Cambridge
 - The City of Kitchener
 - The City of Waterloo
 - The Township of North Dumfries
 - Township of Wellesley
 - The Corporation of the Township of Wilmot
 - Township of Woolwich
 - The Regional Municipality of Waterloo
4. the province of Ontario
 - Infrastructure Ontario
5. the federal government
 - Public Works and Government Services Canada

During this 90-day period, offers at fair market value may be submitted by the above parties. If after 90 days there are none, the board advises the Minister of Education to enable the sale of the property to any other public or private interest.

It is the Board's practice to offer surplus property in either of two formats. The property may be listed through one of the Board's realtors, or alternately, it may be offered through public tender.

Mr. Hercanuck noted that the current Riverside PS site is designated for Open Space Institutional Use and any purchaser would have to apply for an Official Plan Amendment and Zone Change Application which would have public process components providing notices and seeking feedback from neighbours.

Q: When the Board builds a new school, do they also take into consideration the possibility for future expansion needs to accommodate future growth?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that the Manager of Planning for the Township of Woolwich is a member of the Working Group and has shared the development plans for the Township to post 2043 with the Working Group; he advised that the minutes of that meeting are available on the website ([link to minutes](#)). If warranted, the Board can consider additional school sites in future development areas or additions to existing schools. He noted that new subdivision developments tend to yield the highest density of junior elementary students and that is why the Board seeks schools in new developments.

Q: Could the new Riverside PS have need for and be able to accommodate future additions?

R: Yes. Or the Board could also consider additional school sites in future development depending on where the highest yields are expected. Right now we are not looking beyond 2025; we can also adjust boundaries for future development areas and assign them to a school with space without having to go through the boundary study process.

Q: It seems that portables are a permanent phenomenon – is there a percentage of base student population that leads to construction of an addition?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that portables serve useful need because of staffing restrictions (class size caps). Sometimes the addition of one student can result in a reorganization of the entire school and a need for an additional portable. Portables are often used to handle these temporary fluctuations. There isn't a set amount of portables that would guarantee an addition, noting that as an example, to accommodate enrolment pressures at Lester B. Pearson PS the Board had to use 23 portables as the school's enrolment exceeded 1,000 elementary students. He advised that the Ministry of Education is the approval authority for new construction and the Ministry does not allow the Board to build on speculation; we have to have the actual students enrolled before we can make a case for funding. In many cases that requires the use of portables while waiting for funding for permanent spaces (addition or new school).

Q: The French Immersion (FI) program is currently offered at John Mahood PS – what will happen to that program in the future? Currently, John Mahood PS students get first dibs and Riverside PS students are on waiting list and can't get program so parents don't bother to fill out the request form.

- R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that the Scenarios brought forth tonight contemplate no changes to the FI program, it will still be offered at John Mahood PS but if future demand warrants an additional site could be considered; the new Riverside PS with its higher enrolment may be able to qualify to offer the program if enough interest is shown. The FI program is offered to home boundary students first then any additional space is backfilled by out-of-boundary students. He noted the importance of parents putting their names on the list to generate the demand for the program at their home school.
- C: Perhaps the transition plan can include instruction to the parents of students from the new subdivisions to indicate their interest in the FI program.

Mr. Hercanuck thanked everyone for coming out, and asked those in attendance to provide their feedback on the comment sheets provided. The contact numbers and Board website information were shared. The formal presentation concluded and Mr. Hercanuck invited those in attendance to take a look at the display boards outlining the draft scenarios. Mr. Hercanuck, Ms. Manske, Trustee Paisley, Superintendent Ranney and Principals Hatcher and Tait were available to answer questions one-on-one until 8:30 p.m.

Website:

Mr. Hercanuck invited the community to visit the [Board's website](#) and advised that there is additional information posted on the website for viewing.

Contact Information:

Website: <http://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/boundary-studies/elmira-boundary-study/>

Email: boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca *(please indicate Elmira in the subject line)*

Phone: 519-570-0003 ext. 4419

Fax: 519-570-2172

How to be a Delegation

Individuals, organizations and groups are welcome to speak to the Board as a [delegation](#). In accordance with Board Bylaws, at regular [Board meetings](#), delegations speak only to matters relevant to items listed on the agenda. All other presentations will be scheduled at Committee of the Whole Meetings.

You may register as a delegation by calling Jayne Herring, Manager of Corporate Services, at 519-570-0003, ext. 4336, during business hours. You should register by noon on the Thursday prior to the meeting.