

# WEST WATERLOO ELEMENTARY BOUNDARY STUDY PHASE 2



The first Public Meeting of the West Waterloo Elementary Boundary Study Phase 2, involving, Abraham Erb, Laurelwood and Vista Hills Public Schools, was held at Vista Hills Public School on Wednesday, February 13, 2019.

Approximately 70 people attended including members of the community, Board staff, members of the Working Group and Board Trustees.

## 1. INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Hercanuck, Manager of Planning for the Waterloo Region District School Board, welcomed those in attendance at 7:05 pm and made the following introductions:

- Waterloo Region District School Board Representatives
  - Joanne Weston, Vice Chair, Kitchener
  - Scott Piatkowski, Trustee, Waterloo/Wilmot
  - Kathleen Woodcock, Trustee, Waterloo/Wilmot
  - Peter Berndt, Principal, Laurelwood PS
  - Don Oberle, Principal, Vista Hills PS
  - Shemira Sheriff, Vice-Principal, Vista Hills PS
  - Matthew Gerard, Coordinating Superintendent of Business Services and Treasurer of the Board
  - Emily Bumbaco, Senior Planner
  - Sarah Galliher, Senior Planner
  - Shelby Selig, Recording Secretary

Mr. Hercanuck also made note of the following regrets:

- Waterloo Region District School Board Representatives
  - Carol Millar, Trustee, Carol Millar, Waterloo/Wilmot
  - Heather Schumann, Principal, Abraham Erb PS
  - Elaine Ranney, Superintendent of Achievement and Well-being

Ms. Bumbaco led the group through the presentation and indicated that it will be available online at <https://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/westwaterloophase2/> the following day. There will be multiple ways to share feedback at the meeting including a Town Hall style question and answer period after the presentation, one-on-one discussion with staff during the open house portion of the night, as well as comment cards. Feedback will continue to be collected through the [boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca](mailto:boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca) email address.

## 2. PRESENTATION

### Boundary Study Process

The purpose of the boundary study is to alleviate the enrolment pressure that Vista Hills PS is currently experiencing and better balance the enrolment utilization throughout the elementary schools involved in this study area. See slides for Working Group composition. Ms. Bumbaco explained that the Working Group is working towards an implementation date of September 2019. The Working Group provides their recommendation to the Board of Trustees. It is the Board of Trustees who make the final decision on the Boundary study.

### Background – Boundary Study Phase 1

Phase 1 of the West Waterloo Boundary Study was undertaken in 2015 and included Abraham Erb, Laurelwood Edna Staebeler, Mary Johnston, Cedarbrae, and Centennial Public Schools. This study set the boundary for the new Vista Hills PS, which opened in September 2016. A second phase was recommended to consider redirecting Abraham Erb PS to Laurelwood PS for grades 7 and 8, the implementation timeline was to be based on the enrolment pressure at Vista Hills PS.

### Review of Scenarios

On slide 7 of the online presentation, Ms. Bumbaco shared the Status Quo (no change) enrolment projections. Capacity numbers do not generally include temporary accommodation such as portables, however Laurelwood's 6-room portapack has been included in its capacity as it is considered a semi-permanent structure.

On slide 8 Ms. Bumbaco showed the study area map, noting that Abraham Erb PS boundary is shown in yellow, Laurelwood PS is shown in green, Vista Hills PS is shown in pink, and the grades 7 and 8 boundaries are identified by the black and white hatched border around the map. Abraham Erb PS grade 7 and 8's currently attend Vista Hills PS.

Draft objectives for this boundary study were shared on slide 9 of the online presentation. After receiving feedback from this meeting, the objectives will be finalized.

Ms. Bumbaco explained that the Working Group has come to a preferred scenario (Scenario 5), however they wished to share three scenarios to show the work of the Group and show how Scenario 5 came to be the preferred scenario.

**Scenario 1** - Abraham Erb PS to Laurelwood PS for grades 7 and 8 (slide 10). Ms. Bumbaco shared enrolment projections and scenario implications on slides 11 and 12 of the online presentation.

**Scenario 3** - Abraham Erb PS to Laurelwood PS for grades 7 and 8, and Columbia Forest neighbourhood redirected to Laurelwood PS (slide 13). Ms. Bumbaco shared enrolment projections and scenario implications on slides 14 and 15 of the online presentation.

**Scenario 5 (preferred)** - Abraham Erb PS to Laurelwood PS for grades 7 and 8, and create 2 new Development Areas (shown in grey hatching on the map within the existing Vista Hills PS boundary) and direct them to schools outside of the study area (slide 16).

### Next Steps

On slide 19 and 20 of the online presentation Ms. Bumbaco shared the schedule moving forward for the boundary study, as well as communication avenues where individuals can view information regarding the boundary study and share feedback.

### 3. QUESTIONS

Ms. Bumbaco invited individuals to the microphone to ask questions in a Town Hall style Q&A and welcomed back Mr. Hercanuck to help respond to questions.

*Q: What are your enrolment projections based on?*

*R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that enrolment projections are primarily based on current student numbers; Planning staff use historical data along with enrolment projection software which incorporates numerous factors such as new subdivision development and the yield of students from houses, and pace of development.*

*Q: Is cost one of the driving factors in this boundary study?*

*R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that cost is always a consideration when completing a boundary study, however the main driver of this boundary study is addressing the enrolment pressure at Vista Hills PS.*

*Q: Given the growth in the area and the addition of the new Trustees, what is the risk that we will be back here in a short period of time if the people in the Development Areas are not happy with their children not being able to attend their neighbourhood school?*

*R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that he believes this boundary study will be a long term solution. He cannot speak for the Trustees, however they are the final decision makers in the boundary study process. When we are speaking about boundary changes, we like to provide a stable environment for the long-term, the Board generally views a 'long term solution' in terms of one generation through elementary school, which is 10 years. Although there can't be any promises*

that we won't be back here within that time frame, the Working Group believes that they have come up with a 'long term' solution.

Q: Currently it sounds like Scenario 1 and 3 off of the table. What is the likelihood that we will end up back at Scenario 3? If Scenario 3 is still being considered, what are the chances that the Columbia Forest neighbourhood could be allocated buses for transportation to Laurelwood PS due to the safety of crossing Columbia Street?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that the Working Group has selected Scenario 5 to be brought forward to the Board of Trustees, however that will not be finalized until we have completed the Public Consultation process. In regards to Scenario 3, the belief is that the Columbia Forest neighbourhood could walk safely to Laurelwood PS. However, that is not the scenario the Working Group is considering recommending to the Board.

S: This individual from the Columbia Forest neighbourhood shared a personal impact statement in support of Scenario 5.

Q: Why aren't we looking at expanding Abraham Erb PS to include grades 7 and 8?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that while not impossible, intermediate programs require infrastructure such as art rooms, science rooms and music rooms which Abraham Erb PS cannot currently accommodate. The Ministry of Education does not currently have a capital program available to apply for an addition to accommodate that infrastructure.

Q: Will the students that are in the Development Areas stay within the schools in the study area?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that Board staff will look for nearby schools that can accommodate students from the Development Areas. They are not included in the projections for Scenario 5 as it is assumed they will attend a school outside of the study area.

Q: At what point do the enrolment numbers constitute a requirement for a new school?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that on average a house in a new residential development will reach its maximum elementary school yield at 10 or 11 years old. This is a challenge with new schools as there tends to be a peak in enrolment within that 10 year range and then it will begin to taper off. This is why there are often portables at new schools as we do not want to build schools that will be partially empty after the subdivision has matured. We build schools based on the long term, sustainable enrolment from the neighbourhood.

Q: When is your expected deadline for this to go to the Trustees? What happens if they don't approve Scenario 5?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that we anticipate the final report to go to the Board of Trustees in late March or early April and a decision likely by the end of April. If Scenario 5 is approved, it will be implemented in September 2019. If the Trustees do not approve the recommendation, they can suggest tweaking a scenario or going with an alternative scenario altogether. However, Trustees historically have respected the work of the Working Group and feedback received through Public Consultation and for the most part have moved forward with the recommendation of the Working Group.

Q: Are there other Development Areas in Kitchener/Waterloo? Are Development Area families happy with being transported to a school outside of their neighbourhood?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that we have several Development Areas within Southwest Kitchener to deal with the rapidly growing population. Parents and stakeholders who live in Development Areas are sometimes concerned that their children do not qualify to go to the neighbourhood school. Planning staff share all Development Area information with real estate agents as well as developers to communicate with home buyer. Clauses are added to purchase agreements as well, notifying buyers of the Development Area status. Sometimes, however, the information does not make it to the home buyers.

S: This parent from the Columbia Forest neighbourhood shared their support of Scenario 5.

Q: This parent from the Columbia Forest neighbourhood shared their support of Scenario 5 and asked why this boundary study does not include the schools from the initial boundary study?

- R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that the recommendation for phase 2 of this boundary study only included Abraham Erb PS, Laurelwood PS and Vista Hills PS. In order to include additional schools, we would need to start the boundary study process over again and obtain Board approval to do so.
- Q: Could Trustees take the fact that there is no one to defend the Development Areas into consideration and use this to decline the recommendation of Scenario 5? Could we add in a conditional request for a broad spectrum boundary study if they were to decline the recommended Scenario 5?
- R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that he cannot speculate as to what the Trustees may or may not approve, however it is within their scope to request a boundary study with a broader spectrum of schools in the area.
- Q: Was there any thought in bringing grade 7 and 8 to the high schools?
- R: No, Mr. Hercanuck responded that this is not a model that we currently use in this Board.
- Q: This parent from Columbia Forest shared their personal impact and support of Scenario 5. What is the best avenue to provide our feedback to the Trustees?
- R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that all the Trustees have access to [boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca](mailto:boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca) and can see the feedback that is sent through that email. You may also speak to the Trustees in attendance tonight during the open house portion.
- Q: Could there be a recommendation to review this decision in a few years when the Development Areas begin to have families and children in them?
- R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that Development Areas do not need a boundary study process to repatriate the students to their neighbourhood schools. They are a temporary measure and are constantly monitored. When the enrolment allows it, we repatriate them.
- Q: Can the Working Group recommend a back up scenario in case the Trustees do not approve Scenario 5?
- R: Yes, Mr. Hercanuck responded that it is a possibility.
- Q: This Columbia Forest parent shared their support of Scenario 5. Is there a policy that allows a neighbourhood to not be involved in any more boundary studies if they have been involved in a number already?
- R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that no such policy exists. This could potentially be something that Trustees could consider.
- S: This parent from the Columbia Forest neighbourhood shared their support for Scenario 5.
- Q: This Columbia Forest parent shared their support of Scenario 5. Would the Board consider building a middle school in this neighbourhood?
- R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that we believe that we have built appropriately sized schools to support the long term enrolment.
- S: This Columbia Forest parent shared their support for Scenario 5 and urged that Scenario 3 not be considered as the traffic and congestion poses a safety concern for students that would be walking from Columbia Forest to Laurelwood PS.
- S: This family from the Columbia Forest neighbourhood shared an impact statement and their support for Scenario 5.

Mr. Hercanuck thanked everyone for attending and concluded the formal presentation at 8:15pm. He invited those in attendance to the open house portion of the evening and advised that Planning staff would be available to answer questions one-on-one.

#### **FUTURE MEETINGS:**

**Working Group #4 – February 26, 2019**