

WEST WATERLOO ELEMENTARY BOUNDARY STUDY PHASE 2



1

The third Working Group meeting of the West Waterloo Boundary Study, involving Abraham Erb, Laurelwood and Vista Hills Public Schools was held at Abraham Erb Public School on Tuesday, January 29, 2019 from 4:30 to 6:30 PM.

ATTENDEES:

Heather Schumann, Principal, Abraham Erb PS; Peter Berndt, Principal, Laurelwood PS; Don Oberle, Principal, Vista Hills PS; Shemira Sheriff, Vice-Principal, Vista Hills PS (substitute); Deb Bergey, Parent Representative, Abraham Erb PS; Jennifer Kennedy, Parent Representative, Abraham Erb PS; Ryan Barnett-Cowan, Parent Representative, Laurelwood PS; Nicole Shaughnessy, Parent Representative, Laurelwood PS; Bhaleka Persaud, Parent Representative, Vista Hills PS; Greg James, Parent Representative, Vista Hills PS; Elaine Ranney, Superintendent of Student Achievement & Well-Being; Nathan Hercanuck, Manager of Planning; Sarah Galliher, Senior Planner; Emily Bumbaco, Senior Planner

Regrets:

Matthew Gerard, Superintendent of Business Services & Treasurer of the Board; Shelby Selig, Recording Secretary

1. WELCOME AND AGENDA REVIEW

Ms. Bumbaco, Senior Planner, welcomed the Working Group at 4:39 pm and led the group in a roundtable introduction.

2. REVIEW OF MINUTES (MEETING #2 – JANUARY 15, 2019)

Ms. Bumbaco asked if there were any errors or omissions in the minutes from Working Group meeting #2. Two grammatical errors were noted, as well as page number errors.

The minutes from Working Group meeting #2 were approved, as amended.

Moved by: Heather Schumann

Seconded by: Deb Bergey

Ms. Bumbaco led the group through the presentation (available online at

<https://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/westwaterloophase2/>)

3. SCHOOL COUNCIL/COMMUNITY UPDATES

Vista Hills PS

Parent representatives Bhaleka Persaud and Greg James shared feedback from the most recent Parent Council meeting. There was overall concern regarding the Columbia Forest neighbourhood scenarios as they were redirected in the initial boundary study to establish the boundary for Vista Hills PS. Parents were surprised that the scope of the study was being broadened to include options other than redirecting Abraham Erb 7-8 students. With a decision required by March, they are worried that this is more of an abbreviated process. Parents are also concerned about the enrolment pressure at Vista Hills PS and would like to look beyond considering only redirecting the Abraham Erb PS 7-8 students, such as identifying additional Development Areas. The parent representatives have encouraged parents to submit their feedback and attend the Public Meeting.

There was some discussion about the lag in posting minutes to the website. Minutes are typically not posted publicly until they are approved by the Working Group. There was a large gap of time between the first two meetings. Some parents feel that they don't have enough time to review the content of the Working Group meetings. Mr. Hercanuck proposed that we could share and approve the minutes electronically, prior to the Public Meeting, so the public is able to have the most up-to-date information when coming into the Public Meeting.

Abraham Erb PS

Parent representatives Deb Bergey and Jennifer Kennedy shared feedback from the Parent Council meeting. Overall there was not much concern regarding redirecting 7-8 students to Laurelwood PS, however there was some concern regarding loss of transportation for some of the students. They did not share scenario options because they weren't sure what the Working Group was going to ultimately land on as a recommendation. They have publicized the Public Meeting date.

Laurelwood PS

Parent representative Ryan Barnett-Cowan notified the group that Laurelwood PS Parent Council has not met yet, however she is planning on sending out communication after this meeting when there is a more definitive idea of which scenarios will be considered.

Q: When are we able to share the information that we discuss in these meetings?

R: Ms. Galliher responded that the Working Group minutes are shared publicly after they are approved by the Working Group at the next meeting which generally takes around 2 weeks, but we can have them approved electronically and posted to the website prior to the public meeting.

Q: Are we truly looking for a long term solution if we are not including all of the schools that were a part of the initial phase of this boundary study?

R: Ms. Bumbaco responded that we are limited to the schools that are involved in the current boundary study at this point in time. That would require a new study.

Q: Are all of the scenarios still on the table, including Scenario 1?

R: Yes, Ms. Bumbaco responded that the Working Group has not decided to remove any scenarios from consideration at this point, so Scenario 1 (redirect just the Abraham Erb PS 7-8s to Laurelwood PS), is still an option.

4. REVISED ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

On slide 4 of the online presentation Ms. Bumbaco reviewed the updated draft objectives. The Working Group discussed the idea of balanced enrolment between the study area schools and agreed that this point should be tied to the enrolment/capacity numbers at each individual school, not balanced enrolment throughout the schools. The main objective is reduced enrolment at Vista Hills PS.

Q: Do any of the scenarios look at splitting any of the grade 6 feeds?

R: Ms. Bumbaco responded that none of the scenarios currently look at creating a split feed. A split feed, for example, would be if grade 6 students are directed to 2 different school for Grade 7-8. In all the scenario options, Abraham Erb PS students attend Laurelwood PS together for Grade 7-8. The Columbia Forest scenarios would entail redirecting all JK-8 students in a boundary change; therefore this would not be considered a split feed.

There was discussion on whether 'no split feeds' should be an objective. The Group agreed that this is an important objective. The Group discussed the possibility of adding a point regarding the fragmentation of communities, but decided that was covered within the split feeds and transitions objectives.

Q: Does the final recommendation have to meet all the criteria in terms of the boundary study objectives?

R: No, Ms. Galliher responded that we often are not able to accomplish all of the objectives when completing a boundary study.

Mr. Hercanuck advised that once the Working Group selects a recommendation, Planning staff prepare a report that is presented to the Trustees. This report includes context on the recommended scenario and how it meets the criteria of the draft objectives. This report would also have background information such as Columbia Forest's past involvement in boundary studies and being redirected as well as any relevant feedback received through public consultation.

Q: Are these the objectives that will be shared at the Public Meeting? Are these objectives used for decision criteria in selecting a scenario or are these the objectives of the boundary study?

R: Ms. Bumbaco replied yes, these objectives will be shared at the Public Meeting. Mr. Hercanuck added that these objectives could be viewed as both the decision making criteria in selecting a scenario as well as overall objectives we would like to accomplish in this boundary study.

The Working Group discussed that to be clear for the public consultation regarding the objective development. Perhaps the objective of this Boundary Study should be to reduce enrolment pressure at Vista Hills PS and the additional points should be guiding principles or criteria for scenario development.

5. NEW DEVELOPMENT AREA SCENARIO

Referring to slide 5 of the online presentation Ms. Bumbaco provided the Working Group with Scenario 5.

Scenario 5 establishes 2 new Development Areas (DAs) and redirects the Abraham Erb PS grade 7-8 students to Laurelwood PS. The DAs (shown in grey on the map) would be assigned to schools outside of the study area, where space is available.

Q: How long are Development Areas assigned?

R: Ms. Bumbaco responded that there isn't a set timeline for Development Areas. It is a temporary assignment and once there is an opportunity to repatriate the neighbourhoods to their home school, this would be done. Since these areas would be assigned Development Areas there would not need to be a boundary study process to move the students back. We try not to move DAs around too much.

On slide 6 of the online presentation Ms. Bumbaco shared the enrolment projections for Scenario 5 as well as projected portable numbers. Mr. Hercanuck added that since it has been announced that classroom capacity numbers are being reviewed by the government, these portable numbers may not be accurate depending on the outcome. It was also noted that these estimated portable numbers do not take into account individual school/classroom organization needs, such as classrooms needed for rotary programs.

6. SCENARIO IMPLICATIONS

On slide 7 of the online presentation Ms. Bumbaco shared the implications for Scenario 5.

On slides 8 to 18 of the online presentation Ms. Bumbaco reviewed Scenarios 1 to 4, including projected enrolment, projected portable numbers as well as implications. Ms. Bumbaco noted that the enrolment projection numbers for the current year were pulled in October 2018.

7. ROUNDTABLE

Q: How do we address impact of transitions for students in this boundary study?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that transitions to new schools such as grade 6 students moving to a senior elementary school are handled within the schools. Generally the Spring before the September implementation, administrators do a lot of work to make sure the new students are welcomed and are familiar with the new school.

The Working Group discussed the "Transitions" portion of the implications slides. They requested the addition of the Abraham Erb PS redirection to Laurelwood as a transition.

Q: Are we able to remove Scenario 2 (establish one DA) and just have Scenario 5 (establish two DAs) as an option since it includes the DA from Scenario 2?

R: Mr. Hercanuck suggested the Group try to narrow down scenarios prior to the Public Meeting.

Superintendent Ranney expressed concern regarding the DA scenarios as there are no voices to represent these communities since the students are not yet there.

Q: If current Vista Hills PS families move into the DAs, do they stay at Vista Hills PS?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that generally they would be allowed to finish out the year at their current school if they move mid-year, and then the next school year they would be expected to move to the school assigned to their DA. They would be solely responsible for transportation for their children while finishing out the year at Vista Hills.

Q: Do you have a sense as to how many students will come from the two DAs in Scenario 5? Where will these students be assigned?

R: Ms. Bumbaco responded that our projections anticipate approximately 200 students between the two DAs by the end of the projection period. Staff would determine through a separate process where students would attend. They could potentially be sent to two different schools.

The Working Group discussed the safety and walkability for Columbia Forest students to Laurelwood PS. Parents feel it is unsafe for students to be crossing Columbia Forest and Erbsville Road. The Working Group suggested a crossing guard would need to be considered for this route.

Q: To make the redirection more appealing, would the board be able to make an exception and provide transportation for the Columbia Forest neighbourhood if they were redirected to Laurelwood PS?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that providing transportation may be possible, however, staff would not recommend this as it is outside of our board policies regarding transportation. If we receive widespread feedback from the community regarding this, we would share this with the Trustees in the final report.

Q: Do students who are transported on buses to school, such as the students who would be in the DAs, have equal opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities?

R: Principal Oberle responded that, from his experience, there is no difference in students who can walk versus students who are bussed. Generally they are able to carpool or be picked up by a parent after their extracurriculars.

Q: Are there still students that were moved to Edna Staebler PS when it opened, then Vista Hills PS when it opened that could potentially be moved again in this boundary study?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that current elementary students could not predate the Edna Staebler PS opening as it opened in 2008. It is possible that current families of Vista Hills PS could have been involved in these moves, but not current elementary students.

Q: Are we able to consider grandfathering students who were redirected in the initial boundary study in the Columbia Forest neighbourhood?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that there are grandfathering options that can be examined however, considering Vista Hills is such a new school there would be a large number of grandfathered students, which would not have the impact on enrolment numbers at Vista Hills.

Q: If we selected Scenario 1, would this have enough of an impact on the enrolment at Vista Hills PS for us not to have to bring it back to the table in another 3 years and re-evaluate? Do any of these scenarios have a long term outcome where a boundary study will not need to be done again in 3 years? If none of these scenarios have a long term solution can the Working Group select Scenario 1 and suggest another boundary study with a broader number of schools involved?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that the enrolment numbers for Scenario 1 are not sustainable at Vista Hills PS in the long term. If Scenario 1 was selected in isolation by the Working Group as the recommendation, staff would likely not be

supportive of that option. The Board generally views a 'long term solution' in terms of one generation through elementary school, which is 10 years. Perhaps the Working Group would like to consider selecting Scenario 1 with recommendation to re-open this boundary study with a phase 3 and reassess the boundaries with a broader spectrum of schools.

Q: Is the expectation that by 2030-2035 enrolment at Vista Hills would be more manageable and the DA students could be repatriated to their neighbourhood schools?

R: Ms. Galliher responded yes, when enrolment numbers become manageable at Vista Hills PS the DAs would be directed back to their neighbourhood schools.

Q: Are we able to accommodate the DAs at Edna Staebler PS?

R: Mr. Hercanuck responded that it may be possible. Edna Staebler PS is currently slightly under capacity, so there could be an opportunity to assign some of the DAs to that school. If the Working Group is considering a scenario which includes establishing the DAs, then Planning may need to bring the DA establishment request to the Trustees prior to the final report to ensure that these are put in place before lots begin to sell.

The Working Group agreed that a report establishing the new DAs should be brought to the Trustees as soon as possible.

8. PUBLIC MEETING - FEBRUARY 12, 2019

The Group discussed the scenarios at length. Note: all scenarios include the redirection of Abraham Erb Grade 7-8 students from Vista Hills PS to Laurelwood PS.

The Group agreed that Scenarios 3 and 4 did not meet the objectives for the study area. Scenario 3 (*Columbia Forest redirected to Laurelwood PS*) adds more students to Laurelwood PS and Scenario 4 (*Columbia Forest redirected to Abraham Erb PS and Laurelwood PS*) contemplates an additional move for the Columbia Forest community (Abraham Erb + Laurelwood). The Group decided to remove Scenario 4 as a preferred option. While the Group agreed that Scenario 3 is not ideal, it was decided that it should be presented at the Public Meeting for discussion.

A concern was raised regarding the establishment of the DAs as their voices are not at the table.

The Working Group was generally not in favour of recommending Scenario 1 (*Redirect Abraham Erb PS grade 7-8 to Laurelwood*) with a Phase 3 option which would consider another Boundary Study with more schools involved. The Group expressed concern about returning for another boundary study in a few years.

It was decided that Scenario 5 will be shared at the Public Meeting as the Working Group's preferred option to be shared for consultation.

Scenarios 1,3 and 5 will be presented at the Public Meeting for discussion in order to explain the Group's work and how they came to the preferred scenario.

Ms. Bumbaco thanked the members of the Working Group and concluded the meeting at 7:16pm.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Planning staff to send out communications regarding the Public Meeting
- Planning staff to update presentation wording as discussed in meeting
- Planning staff to proceed with establishing the new Development Areas

FUTURE MEETINGS:

Public Meetings:

- **Public Meeting:** Tuesday, February 12, 2019 from 7:00-9:00 pm at Vista Hills PS

Working Group Meetings:

- **Working Group Meeting #4:** Tuesday, February 26, 2019 from 5:00-6:30 at Laurelwood PS