

MINUTES OF ACCOMMODATION REVIEW COMMITTEE (ARC) Central Whitby

3rd PUBLIC MEETING at Captain Michael VandenBos P.S.

Wednesday, December 10, 2008 (7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.)

In Attendance:

Joe Hircock (ARC Chair)
David Visser (ARC Secretary)

ARC Central Whitby Members (alphabetical by school):

Monique deVillers (Principal, Capt. M. VandenBos)
Debra Hayes (Non-teaching Rep, Capt. M. VandenBos)
Linda Lyons (Parent Rep, Capt. M. VandenBos)
Carole McLeod (Teacher Rep, Capt. M. VandenBos)
Judy Wityszyn (Parent Rep, Capt. M. VandenBos)
Alana Browne (Teacher Rep, Florence M. Heard)
Chris Montgomery (Parent Rep, Florence M. Heard)
Sharon Murdoch (Parent Rep, Florence M. Heard)
Brigitte Sopher (Principal, Florence M. Heard)
Carol Bell (Teacher Rep, Jack Miner)
Trudy Collins (Principal, Jack Miner)
Gail Dyson (Non-teaching Rep, Jack Miner)
Cathy Wade (Parent Rep, Jack Miner)
Jacquie Weber (Parent Rep, Jack Miner)
Lynda Darling (Teacher Rep, Leslie McFarlane)
Scott Irwin (Parent Rep, Leslie McFarlane)
Jim Olson (Principal, Leslie McFarlane)
Kirsty Sinclair (Parent Rep, Leslie McFarlane)
Judy Whiteman (Non-teaching Rep, Leslie McFarlane)
Marion Fulcher (Non-teaching Rep, Palmerston)
Sylvia Land (Parent Rep, Palmerston)
Leilah McBride (Teacher Rep, Palmerston)
Tim Ralph (Principal, Palmerston)
Angie Weiss (Parent Rep, Palmerston)
Joe Hamilton (Non-teaching Rep, Pringle Creek)
Sue Lunn (Principal, Pringle Creek)
Jill MacCharles-Crain (Teacher Rep, Pringle Creek)
Steve Misner (Parent Rep, Pringle Creek)

Facilitator: Lygia Dallip
Daniel Del Bianco (Consultant)

ARC Resource Staff: Carey Trombino, Senior Planner
Anne Dobos, Senior Planner
Danielle Pépin, Administrative Assistant
Janet Edwards, Administrative Officer – Whitby/Oshawa (absent)

Absent: Monica Porteous (Non-teaching Rep, Florence M. Heard)
Lynda Darling (Teacher Rep, Leslie McFarlane)
Steven Misner (Parent Rep, Pringle Creek)

Substitute: Lorelei Downes (V.P. Florence M. Heard for Monica Porteous)

Public Members: 113 public participants signed in. Refer to Appendix A attached.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, welcomed everyone to the 3rd Public Meeting of the ARC Central Whitby. He thanked Monique DeVillers for making Captain Michael VandenBos P.S. available to hold this ARC's 3rd Public Meeting. He then introduced himself as well as the ARC members and ARC resource staff.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, described the various steps in the ARC process as it began in June, 2008, and the various stages since that time. He then introduced David Visser, ARC Secretary.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, described his position as Superintendent of Facilities Services with the Durham District School Board. He walked the audience through the slides describing the ARC process and stated that there are currently two options available for feedback.

It was said that community input had been sought at both previous public meetings and that the purpose of the third meeting was specifically to seek feedback on the scenarios being presented. He indicated that the ARC's mandate was to assess the six schools under review as part of a school valuation, develop options on how to best address the accommodation issues in the schools under review and then make recommendations to the Board on how best to address the accommodation needs of the students in Central Whitby.

David Visser then went on to describe the Timelines of the ARC including the initial meeting of the Committee in June, 2008, with a number of regular working meetings held since that time, including two previous Public Meetings and this third Public Meeting. Following feedback from the 4th Public Meeting, the ARC will prepare a report making recommendations and submit it to the Director of Education. Staff will prepare a separate report that considers the ARC's report to the Director and both reports would be presented to the Board of Trustees in March 2009. Sixty days later, in May, the Trustees will vote on the recommendations. In summary, this time-line allows for a great deal of community consultation.

David Visser then went on to describe the many ways people can remain informed throughout this process i.e., attendance at meetings, website, email and voicemail.

The ARC Secretary then went on to describe the progress to date including a tour of the six schools under review. He stated that the ARC had developed and/or considered 12 accommodation scenarios and determined that two scenarios should go forward for community feedback. The analysis completed by the ARC that led to the decision to present the 2 scenarios to the public was possible through the assistance of the ARC staff and consultants from Watson and Associates.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, indicated that the ARC members assessed the 12 scenarios against Criteria developed by the ARC. This included a Ministry of Education standard for approximately 10% of students in portables to address the issue of not overbuilding schools, enrolment – both the decline at some schools or programs and the growth at others, that new facilities be operating at 80% of the available space or greater, the need to ensure that there are program enhancements available at updated facilities and the availability of green space on the school sites.

He indicated that the declining enrolment issue was not unique to the Durham District School Board but was an issue prevalent across all Ontario schools. If Boards do not consider solutions to the declining enrolment problem, there could be an increase in the number of split grades in elementary schools.

The Ministry of Education has deemed 3 schools in Central Whitby to be Prohibitive-To-Repair (PTR): Florence M. Heard PS, Leslie McFarlane PS, and, Palmerston Avenue PS. To add to this, there is a lack of enhanced program spaces and issues of accessibility. The bussing of students was closely examined as was the need to be fiscally responsible.

The ARC has given consideration to a number of community concerns such as number of portables, specialized programs for students, building a replacement school, keeping neighbourhood schools open, and, improving school condition through a rebuild. They narrowed the 12 scenarios developed down to 2 scenarios, always keeping in mind what best suits the needs of the students. The ARC will once again, weigh the input from this 3rd Public Meeting and share their draft recommendations to the Director of Education at the last Public Meeting on Wednesday, January 28, 2009 for community input.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, then provided details of the DDSB business case as laid out on slide 9 of the PowerPoint presentation. He compared this business case to the criteria which gave a clear picture as to why the ARC did not agree with this scenario and felt that it could not be a scenario they put forward for community feedback.

At this point, David Visser introduced Linda Lyons, ARC member, as the first presenter.

Linda Lyons stated that she was the parent of three children attending Captain Michael VandenBos PS and that it was important for the audience to recognize that the ARC members also have children involved in this process. She described the proposed Scenario 1.

Scenario 1

Build a 10-classroom addition at Pringle Creek PS. This would call for the closure of Leslie McFarlane PS with the students being relocated to Pringle Creek PS. A portion of the Jack Miner PS Gifted program would also be transferred to Pringle Creek PS.

This scenario would call for a rebuild of a 605 pupil place school on the existing Leslie McFarlane site. As a result, Florence M. Heard would close and move the French Immersion (FI) program to the new school. Also, the FI students from Captain Michael VandenBos PS

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living south of Taunton Road and outside the existing VandenBos walking distance would be relocated to the new school on the Leslie McFarlane site.

As well, a 4-classroom addition at Captain Michael VandenBos PS would call for the closure of Palmerston Avenue PS with those students moving to Captain Michael VandenBos. The FI program would be retained there for students within walking distance along with the English track program.

Jack Miner PS would continue to operate as a dual track school with a smaller Gifted program.

Scenario 1:

- ⇒ *Meets the Ministry acceptability of 10% of students in portables*
- ⇒ *Addresses enrolment trends with a high possibility of straight grades versus split grades*
- ⇒ *Meets Ministry utilization for newly-constructed schools - 109% over 10 years*
- ⇒ *Addresses enhanced programs*
- ⇒ *Addresses ratio of green space*
- ⇒ *Fiscally responsible with an approximate cost of \$17.1M*

The ARC supports this scenario for community input.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, then introduced Chris Montgomery to present Scenario #2.

Chris Montgomery thanked everyone for attending the 3rd Public Meeting and informed them that he too, was the parent of three children affected by this ARC Central Whitby process.

Scenario 2

Build a 4-classroom addition at Pringle Creek PS. This would mean the closure of Leslie McFarlane PS and moving the students at Manning and South of Manning to Pringle Creek PS.

This scenario would call for a rebuild of a 605 pupil place elementary school on the Leslie McFarlane site. As a result, Florence M. Heard would close and move the FI program to the new school. The FI students from Captain Michael VandenBos, outside the walking distance would be relocated to the Leslie McFarlane site.

This scenario calls for a rebuild of Palmerston Avenue PS with the relocation of the Gifted program from Jack Miner PS to the new Palmerston Avenue PS. Also, the Leslie McFarlane students residing from Rossland to Manning would be transferred to the newly rebuilt school.

The FI program (walking distance) at Captain Michael VandenBos and the regular English track program would remain there. Jack Miner would operate as a regular English-track school.

Scenario 2:

- ⇒ *Meets the Ministry acceptability of 10% of students in portables*
 - ⇒ *Avg. Scenario utilization at 100% over ten years*
 - ⇒ *Increased risk of split classes over time, average classes per grade 1.15*
 - ⇒ *Average utilization for both, new Leslie McFarlane and new Palmerston is 109%*
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- ⇒ *New Leslie McFarlane school to open with no portables (5 projected in 10 years) and new Palmerston to open with 2 portables required over next 10 years.*
 - ⇒ *Addresses enhanced program through new/updated facilities*
 - ⇒ *Addresses ratio of green space*

⇒ *Approximate cost is \$23.1M*

Chris Montgomery ended his presentation by stating that the Ministry likes to see 110% utilization. The students would be housed in nicer schools and the bussing of students, although lower than the first scenario, would be significant nonetheless.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, then invited the community to approach the microphone with any comments or questions they may have. He asked each person to state and spell their name and provide their school affiliation.

Highlighted areas reflect feedback on the scenarios presented at the 3rd Public Meeting.

Dorothia McLellan (Leslie McFarlane PS) stated that while she didn't have an aversion to the FI program, she would prefer to see FI and English-track programs working together as they did years ago.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, responded that all of the scenarios the ARC considered are posted on the website. Leslie McFarlane enrolments are on the decline and the Committee determined that the number of classes per grade were not sufficient to ensure straight grades over time. With other schools also in decline there was a need to establish a balance of class sizes.

Wayne Turner (Florence M Heard) asked why the Leslie McFarlane site was considered for a rebuild when the site is so difficult to access? He felt that the F.M. Heard site had better access to the site. He also expressed a concern regarding safety due to the railway tracks close by.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, responded that the ARC was aware of the traffic concerns as noted in the minutes of a previous ARC meeting and will be looking into finding a solution. He stated that the safety of the children is of greatest priority.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, added that a survey has been conducted recently to bring the site up to date so that a better assessment of traffic flow, safety of children, as well as bussing issues will be further investigated. He also indicated that Mr. Turner's feedback would be considered by the ARC.

Paula Larocque (Captain Michael VandenBos) asked where the Students currently walking to Captain Michael VandenBos PS would be moved to?

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, responded that they would remain at Captain Michael VandenBos.

Denise Chow (Captain Michael VandenBos) thanked the ARC for all their work. She asked what the next steps would be and what would happen should the Trustees or the Ministry reject the reports.

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Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, stated that the ARC is in the process of looking at scenarios. Three schools have been deemed to be PTR which are costly to operate. He added that if the reports were rejected, it would cause delay and may necessitate starting over again with a different ARC group.

Lyle Clarke (Florence M. Heard) said that the Leslie McFarlane site was a brilliant location for a school and was in favour of a single track FI program there but was wondering if the new school would go up to grade 8?

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, stated that the funding formula works from grades one to eight. The school would continue to offer a grades 1 to 8 program, but because it would be a transition year for the grade 8 students, the Board would look at grandfathering this grade at their current locations.

B. MacFarlane (Captain Michael VandenBos) asked how many children were currently being bussed.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, replied that there are presently 1,043 students being bussed, however depending on the scenario, this would decrease to 925 with Scenario 1 or 798 with Scenario 2.

Kathleen Butt (Palmerston Avenue) commented that when comparing the 2 scenarios, she was more in favour of Scenario #2 because it has a better utilization of the schools. She felt there were too many portables at Captain Michael VandenBos and that it would make more sense in the long term to build rather than make additions to old schools. She added that less than 100% of students would allow for growth. Also, the cost savings in reduced bussing costs could be put to better use.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, reiterated that the ARC is looking for comments and what is the best information to work with. Utilization is based over 10 years and not just two or three years, and the average applies for all the schools and not just one.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, interjected with an update to the spreadsheet that addressed a correction relating to Scenario 2 which did not portray the split of the Leslie McFarlane community. Photocopies reflecting the corrected version were distributed to the audience. He apologized for any confusion this might have caused and stressed that the presentation made by Mr. Chris Montgomery of F. M. Heard earlier and the slide presentation did reflect the Scenario proposed by the ARC.

Joanne Wolf (Palmerston Avenue) stated that while she is struggling with both scenarios, she had a preference to Scenario #2 due in large part to the reduction of bussing, and capacity. She would prefer to have her child in a school with fewer students, ideally with an optimum of 500 students. Also, the second scenario preserves Palmerston Avenue PS which she stated is valued by the community, and is one of the top schools for after hour activities within the community. She went on to say that she viewed additions to Captain Michael VandenBos and Pringle Creek as forcing two schools into one. She had concerns that the addition of classrooms at these schools to increase the student population would create challenges in the use of the program spaces such as the Library and the Gym.

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She proposed a third option be considered – rebuild Palmerston with all of the Leslie McFarlane students and all of the Gifted Program as well as the existing Palmerston student body. The rest of the original Scenario 2 would remain the same.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, thanked her for her comments.

Carol Gregoris (Jack Miner & F.M. Heard) sought clarification as to how the Gifted program in Scenario 1 would be split to ensure that the students continued to have access to teachers trained to deliver the program. Secondly, she asked what kind of emergency procedures were in place for kids venturing out onto the railway tracks if the proposed F.I. school was rebuilt on the Leslie McFarlane site.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, responded that while kids have been seen on the tracks, he clearly stated that at no time were elementary students ever allowed on the tracks. He spoke about his involvement on behalf of the school board in the safety assessment solution to address the increasing traffic problems along Garden Street. He also indicated that CN Rail did put in safety features along the train tracks by the overpass close to the Leslie McFarlane site. He also indicated that the students currently attending Leslie McFarlane are not in any danger as there are safety protocols in place.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, said that the Durham Region has an Emergency Measures Office and that the Board actively participates in emergency safety for students. He went on to say that some of the DDSB schools are identified as holding areas in the event of a variety of emergencies and that plans are in place.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair indicated that if the Gifted Program were split into two locations, the staff would also be relocated accordingly.

Dayna Morrison (Captain Michael VandenBos) stated that he loved Scenario 2 due to smaller class sizes, however he would be concerned about presenting it to the Ministry because of the price tag attached. He saw that if the board is striving for 110% utilization at its schools, then this scenario would fall short of that milestone. He also acknowledged that the scenario was \$6 million more than Scenario 1 and \$10 million more than the Business Case originally submitted to the Ministry by the Board. He added that as declining enrolment is a concern for us in Durham as well as a concern provincially, then Scenario 1 would be the best fit. If the Ministry was not in agreement with Scenario 1, it would certainly not be in agreement with Scenario 2.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, acknowledged that Scenario 2 would require some revision. These revisions may be something the ARC considers prior to submission to the Director. He stated that while 12 scenarios were initially looked at, the ARC managed to narrow it down to 3, however it was still a tight vote as to whether or not to bring Scenario 2 forward for consideration. The ARC is here to seek ideas from the community and will continue to consider information. The Committee will analyze and prepare solid recommendations to ensure that the scenario presented to the Ministry by the Board will be a strong one.

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Sandra Armstrong (Jack Miner) expressed concerns that there were social and emotional considerations that come into play when splitting a program.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, recognized that social and emotional concerns were important aspects. He went on to say that kids are resilient to teachers and surroundings. The demographics of the Gifted programs and boundaries were certainly looked at. It is understood that people purchased homes in the Jack Miner area so their kids could walk to school. It may be necessary to change the boundaries.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, stated that the ARC heard in the previous Public Meetings that people had moved to neighbourhoods due to the specialized programs such as the Gifted Program at Jack Miner and the FI Program at Captain Michael VandenBos. As the ARC considered options, these concerns were also considered. He stated that we must keep in mind that Jack Miner sits on a sloped site which will affect the number of portables and limit the grass area. The ARC was well aware of these issues.

Gord Burrows (Palmerston Avenue) commented that he would prefer Scenario #2 with the rebuild of Palmerston. He asked if, at the next meeting, there would be one or two scenarios brought forward?

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, replied that it would be up to the ARC to make that decision. At the 4th Public Meeting the community will either be presented with two scenarios or, alternatively, with one solid scenario. Further input would be sought from the community at that time.

Mr. Burrows also inquired as to whether or not the public would be privy to the advanced viewing of the Staff report as well as the ARC report prior to presentation to the Board, and whether or not it would be made available on the web site.

David Visser, ARC Secretary stated that typically, the Staff report would only be available at the presentation to the Board as is the standard practice for all Board reports. Members of the public would be welcome to attend the Board meeting. The ARC report would be available on the website.

Chris Eaton (Florence M. Heard) Assuming the report is successful and goes to the Ministry, what can be expected in terms of response time from them and, when would the schools be affected.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, added that the Ministry's timeline is not set in stone. He indicated that when the Board had presented it with 5 business cases, it took less than 9 months for the Ministry to respond. The Board will work together to aggressively seek the necessary funding.

Kim Cannon (Leslie McFarlane) asked what would happen if her children were to lose their school? She expressed her support for Scenario 1 and did not feel that Scenario 2 adequately addressed the emotional well-being in splitting the population of the school.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, replied that there will always be emotional upheaval where change is

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concerned and assured everyone that the Board will continue to provide whatever support needed.

Ms. Vasallo (Palmerston Avenue) expressed concern that the health of the students would be as risk in portables. She inquired about the possibility of rebuilding on the Palmerston site.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, replied that the declining enrolment at Palmerston Avenue makes it very difficult to have straight grades and will result in not only split grades, but also the possibility of triple grades as well. Palmerston Avenue PS was recognized as Prohibitive-to-Repair by the Ministry of Education. This means that the repair costs are close to the cost to rebuild the school.

Wayne Turner (Florence M. Heard) referred to the resale value of the land and who would receive the funds if a school is sold.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, stated that Ontario Regulation 444/98 regarding the Disposition of Surplus Real Property, outlines the process regarding the disposition of property. The first step taken would be to offer the property to another school. The Ministry retains half the proceeds of the sale while the Board would receive the other half, however the Ministry would top off the necessary funds required to meet a successful scenario. He reminded the audience that the immediate concern is to consider the scenario that best suits the needs of the students.

Mr. Turner asked whether or not kindergarten enrolments were included in the proposed FI school.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, stated that there is a minimum number requirement in order to run a Kindergarten program. There are kindergarten students being bussed from outside the 1.6 kilometer area. He clarified that the enrolment projections considered did include Kindergarten.

Gord Ackroyd (Captain Michael VandenBos) inquired as to how the Board's business case was first developed and if it was based on dollars. He also expressed concern that Scenario 2 is too expensive to consider and asked where do we go from here should the scenarios be rejected.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, stated that the Board business case was the starting point since the Ministry information had assessed Leslie McFarlane, F.M. Heard and Palmerston as being Prohibitive-to-Repair. The business case was updated for the ARC using current enrolment projections. These projections suggest that there would be continued overcrowding at the schools and as a result, it was not supported by the ARC. It is the ARC that will decide how many scenarios they will bring forward to Director. He added that the ARC is an intelligent group and the Staff have many years of experience in the field of education. He remains confident that a solution will be found.

F. Sams (Palmerston Avenue) made the remark that Palmerston school is the focal point of the community and that not only should the bussing cost reduction, as indicated in Scenario #2, be looked at, but the environmental component must also be recognized.

End of Question & Answer period.

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Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, ended the meeting by reminding the community that the ARC must stay within the criteria as provided by the Ministry of Education. Three schools have been identified as PTR and we must be fair to the students attending those schools in providing them with sound facilities for education. Change will cause angst and anxiety. Two scenarios, at a cost of \$17.1M and \$23.1M were provided this evening for public feedback. We want and value community input. We've received some feedback from you that directly relates to the scenarios, we hope you'll take some time to provide additional feedback to the ARC on what you've heard tonight. How can schools with declining enrolment be sustained? There are real issues to be addressed and solutions must be found. There is a need to always keep in mind that our students need to be provided with the best learning environment possible.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and extended seasons greetings.

The meeting ended at 9:00 p.m.

The next Public Meeting will take place on Wednesday, January 28, 2009, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Pringle Creek PS.

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DDSB