

MINUTES OF ACCOMMODATION REVIEW COMMITTEE (ARC) Central Whitby
4th PUBLIC MEETING at Pringle Creek P.S.

Wednesday, January 28, 2009 (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)
Carole McLeod (Teacher Rep, Capt. M. VandenBos)
Judy Wityszyn (Parent Rep, Capt. M. VandenBos)
Alana Browne (Teacher Rep, Florence M. Heard)
Sharon Murdoch (Parent Rep, Florence M. Heard)
Carol Bell (Teacher Rep, Jack Miner)
Trudy Collins (Principal, 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)
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
Janet Edwards, Administrative Officer – Whitby/Oshawa
Danielle Pépin, Administrative Assistant

Regrets: Gail Dyson (Non-teaching Rep, Jack Miner)
Sylvia Land (Parent Rep, Palmerston)
Linda Lyons (Parent Rep, Capt. M. VandenBos)
Chris Montgomery (Parent Rep, Florence M. Heard)
Brigitte Sopher (Principal, Florence M. Heard)

Absent: Debra Hayes (Non-teaching Rep, Capt. M. VandenBos)
Monica Porteous (Non-teaching Rep, Florence M. Heard)
Cathy Wade (Parent Rep, Jack Miner)

Substitute: Lorelei Downes (V.P. Florence M. Heard for Brigitte Sopher)

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Public Members: 44 public participants signed in. Refer to Appendix A attached.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, welcomed everyone to the 4th Public Meeting of the ARC Central Whitby. He requested that everyone sign in and write their name clearly for recording purposes. He also requested, from the audience, that when making comments during the evening, that they provide the spelling of their name and identify their school affiliation. Mr. Hircock then introduced the ARC, the Facilitators and the ARC Resource Staff.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, then directed the audience to the agenda in the package of handouts, made available for all attendees. Mr. Hircock then requested that David Visser, ARC Secretary, address the community and walk them through the evening's PowerPoint presentation.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, introduced himself and his role as Superintendent of Facilities Services. He provided a history of the establishment of the ARC, based on Ministry of Education Guidelines resulting in the creation of the Board's Policy and Procedure 7113.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, then guided the attendees through the evening's PowerPoint presentation and addressed each slide as presented. He gave a brief summary of the events that unfolded at the first three Public Meetings and the ARC's consideration of the feedback as received from the community. David Visser went on to explain that the purpose of the 4th Public Meeting was intended to provide the community with information and receive input on the ARC's draft Report to the Director. This report reflects the ARC's work from September 2008 to present time and addresses what it believes to be in the best interests of the students.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, spoke on the timeline of an ARC and the number of Public Meetings and ARC Working Meetings that have taken place. He encouraged everyone to remain informed through the many means available such as the website, email, voicemail, as well as feedback forms.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, went on to describe the progress to date and the 23 scenarios considered by the ARC and their proposal to move forward with a single scenario. He then referred the group to the 27-page Draft Report to the Director of Education should they wish to familiarize themselves more thoroughly with the specifics of the Report.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, spoke on the criteria involved in order to meet Ministry of Education requirements. He identified the considerations involved including the three schools deemed to be PTR, site size, transportation of students, and, the fiscal responsibility. Considerations regarding community feedback were also addressed and include the reduction of portables, accessibility to specialized programs, consideration of building a replacement school and of not closing neighbourhood schools, the use of existing schools to their potential and, to improve the condition of schools for students through a rebuild.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, continued with the details involved in the ARC's decision-making process and the narrowing-down to a single scenario. This scenario would call for the construction of a 10-classroom addition at Pringle Creek PS, This would result in the closure of Leslie McFarlane PS and the relocation of a portion of Jack Miner PS Gifted students to Pringle Creek PS.

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Joe Hircock, ARC Chair spoke on the ARC's decision-making process. He stated that in his role as ARC Chair and David Visser as ARC Secretary, it was imperative that they remain neutral to the process. Voting was based on 50% + 1 of eligible members. The ARC Chair and ARC Secretary are not voting members. He stated that all scenarios, including the Board's scenarios, were evaluated based on the ARC criteria developed prior to the 3rd Public Meeting then presented at the 3rd Public Meeting and then again tonight. The ARC had an opportunity to bring two scenarios forward, however, the group decided to bring only one scenario forward to the public. The ARC did consider information provided by the community throughout the process.

The scenario, as decided upon by the ARC, calls for a rebuild of a new 605 pupil place FI elementary school on the Leslie McFarlane site. This would mean a closure of Florence M. Heard PS and a relocation of FI students.

A 4-classroom addition at Captain Michael VandenBos PS would take place resulting in the closure of Palmerston Avenue PS with the relocation of students to Captain Michael VandenBos PS. Jack Miner PS would continue to operate as a dual track (English & Gifted) but with a smaller Gifted program.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, described in detail, how Scenario 1 compared with the ARC criteria and provided a conclusion based on that very criteria.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK:

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 clearly and to provide their school affiliation.

Gord Burrows (Palmerston Avenue) asked if Palmerston Avenue PS students were relocated to Captain Michael VandenBos PS, would these students have access to the FI program at Captain Michael VandenBos PS under the proposed Scenario 1, or, would they need to be bussed to the proposed new school? Also, he questioned why only one scenario had been selected rather than two scenarios and, if there would only be one proposal from the Staff as well.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, stated that if the Palmerston Avenue PS students were relocated to Captain Michael VandenBos PS, they would be able to attend the FI program there. He further added that the ARC recommendations would still have to be considered by the Trustees along with the staff's response to the ARC report therefore no final decision has been made at this time. Chair Hircock indicated that the ARC decided on one recommendation after considering all the scenarios developed and comparing them to the criteria developed by the ARC.

Mr. Hircock stated that the report to be developed by staff would be in response to the information and recommendations contained within the ARC's Report to the Director. Once the Director is in possession of the ARC's Report and the Staff Report, the Director will then present both the ARC report and Staff report to the Board of Trustees. In March, 2009, the report will go before a Board Meeting where the public will have the opportunity to provide input. The Trustees will make final decisions based on the ARC Report and the Staff Report in May 2009.

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Gord Burrows also wondered about the impact of development on the south-west corner of Brock St. and Rossland Rd. on the available accommodation at Captain Michael VandenBos PS.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, indicated that proposed development was taken into account in the Board's enrolment projections.

Norm Harkness (Leslie McFarlane) sought clarification as to whether or not students currently attending Leslie McFarlane PS, but residing south of Leslie McFarlane would be bussed to the proposed new location.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, stated that the transportation policy is 1.6 kilometers by road. However in this situation, the Transportation Department will be required to make a determination for students residing south of the designated area.

David Harrison (Jack Miner) - recognized the work involved in this ARC process. He suspected that the Gifted program was the puzzle piece that made this all work. He requested more information regarding the efficiency of splitting the Gifted program in half. He questioned the number of students per Gifted class and whether or not this would result in split grades.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, indicated that the Jack Miner PS Gifted program was included in the ARC review due to accommodation pressures at the school which is resulting in an increased number of portables and a lack of green space. Should the Gifted program evolve into two smaller separate Gifted programs, there would not be a negative impact on the team teaching and collaboration between teachers. The number of students in a class remains the same regardless of the program type. Mr. Hircock also indicated that there is always a possibility of split grades when a specialized program, such as the Gifted program, is first established.

Kathleen Butt (Palmerston Avenue) asked if it would have been possible to bring Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 closer together in order to find a different solution. She asked if the Report would show the two scenarios and include the dollar amounts.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, replied that a revision had been looked at for Scenario 2 but still resulted in a differential cost of approximately \$5M (\$3.5M to \$4.2M). Both scenarios appear in the ARC's Draft Report to the Director.

Kathleen Butt, also asked if a larger school on the Palmerston Avenue site would make sense by moving the Gifted program to Palmerston Avenue.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, indicated that the frontage at Palmerston Avenue PS is insufficient and does not allow for a larger school without significant architectural redesign on the site.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, stated that the Jack Miner split would be based on geography and that it would be a natural progression. Transportation and future growth will also have to be taken into consideration.

Mohamed Anwar (Pringle Creek) asked if bussing would be available for the students moving to the Unnamed Tormina PS. He also wanted to know if students in grade 7 at Pringle Creek would have to move to the new Unnamed Tormina PS for just one year.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, indicated that transportation would be provided for students to cross Highway 12. He also indicated that the Principal at Pringle Creek was doing a survey to see whether or not students in grade 7 preferred to remain at Pringle Creek PS or move to the new Unnamed Tormina PS.

Chris Eaton (Pringle Creek) thanked the ARC Committee for their work over the past several months. He questioned whether additional parking had been considered with the addition to Pringle Creek PS.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, remarked that the Board will work with the Town of Whitby regarding parking, as it typically does. There are currently 16 other additions across the Board where parking issues will be addressed and any problems will be corrected.

David Harrison (Jack Miner) referred to slide 20 of the PowerPoint presentation and continued to seek clarification on the point regarding the potential for split grades in the Gifted program.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, stated that the Jack Miner PS is experiencing increased accommodation pressures that require additional portables as a result of the growth at the Gifted program. He further stated that the Board does not want to limit the number of students in this Gifted program. As a result, a solution to split the program at two locations would make sense. He also indicated that some parents in the Brooklin community have expressed interest in having a Gifted program in their area instead of having their children bussed down to Jack Miner PS.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, added that the Gifted program is subject to entrance testing. It is a non-linear program where students can enter or exit the program at will and could have non-equal numbers per grade.

Mr. F. Sams (Palmerston Avenue) thanked the ARC for their work. He stated that parents had moved to the Palmerston area because of the proximity to the school. He sought clarification on the path that the ARC's report will take from this point onward. He also asked if it would be possible to communicate with the Trustees via email.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, said the Director will first view the ARC's Report. If satisfied with the Report, the Director will then pass it along to the Board of Trustees. The DDSB staff will prepare a staff report in response to the ARC's report. Both of these reports will go forward to the Trustees in March and be available for public input. The Trustees will then make final decisions in May. Mr. Hircock indicated that the public has the ability to share their concerns with their Trustees. He added that although there are only two Trustees that are responsible for the Whitby area, all eleven Trustees will be involved in the decisions.

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Joanne Wolf (Palmerston Avenue) wanted clarification on whether or not the proposed addition to Pringle Creek PS would also recognize the need for increased specialized spaces such as

the library, gym, etc, to accommodate an increase in the student size. She expressed concern with the 112% average utilization rate given that in specific years the utilization at a school is at 131%. She also questioned why Scenario #2 was not brought forward.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, explained that as the board plans the addition, it would review whether or not the existing ancillary spaces such as the gym and library would be able to accommodate the increased student population. He added that the addition of 10 classrooms also calls for more storage space to be included.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, indicated that the utilization projections is based on the best information available at this time and that temporary enrolment pressures are managed with portables on site. The Durham District School Board is currently in the process of building 300 classrooms, and that this size of construction undertaking has never been experienced in the history of the DDSB. These additions will help to alleviate the accommodation pressures across the board's jurisdiction.

David Visser then stated that the minutes of the December 10th ARC-Central Whitby 3rd Public Meeting were reviewed by the ARC on January 7, 2009. There was tweaking of Scenario 2 as well as Scenario 1. He added that there was a tremendous amount of feedback from both the Palmerston Avenue PS community surrounding the school as well as a tremendous amount of feedback to be fiscally responsible. The Committee has viewed all of the six facilities in question where the students are being educated. Although Scenario 2 had merit, it did not meet all the elements of the criteria. The ARC felt the necessity to place students in better facilities.

With respect to the consideration given to Scenario #2, David Visser, ARC Secretary, indicated that the ARC reviewed the suggestions made by the community to revised Scenario #2 and compared these revised scenarios to the criteria developed. The committee recognized the merit in Scenario #2; however, felt that Scenario #1 was a better fit within the criteria developed.

Joanne Wolf then cited a U.S. study indicating that larger schools were more expensive to operate and, that larger schools experience more bullying and vandalism.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, stated that there are still classes at Palmerston Avenue PS with less than full classrooms and added that vandalism does not only occur in larger schools.

Kathleen Butt (Palmerston Avenue) asked if the funding for the project was solely through the Ministry of Education or if the municipality would also provide funding?

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, replied that funds are available from the Ministry of Education where 72 public school boards, if eligible, could receive funding. He added that school boards no longer have direct access to the property tax base. This is controlled through the Province.

Athena Hatzes (Palmerston Avenue) stated that the decline in enrolment at Palmerston Avenue PS was due to the previous change in the attendance boundary for Palmerston when the board

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opened the Jack Miner PS. She stated that the smaller geographic attendance area has not helped in increasing the enrolment at the school. She wanted to know why students could not be bussed into the Palmerston area.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, replied that it would be very expensive to maintain Palmerston Avenue PS as well as require a great deal of bussing. He added that the Palmerston Avenue site was very narrow and could not accommodate the turnaround of busses. Laneways and additional parking would also need to be considered. Mr. Hircock informed the group that there were approximately 370 students at the opening of the Jack Miner PS.

Athena Hatzes remarked that there was a crossing guard employed to walk 7 students across a street and that this would be an increased cost to all of the community. She expressed concern regarding the bussing of her children.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, clarified that the municipality funds the crossing guard and while this is a cost to the community as a whole, it is not a direct cost to the Board. He asked her to consider why she felt it was acceptable to bus other children and not her own. He added that a rebuild on the Palmerston Avenue site had indeed been considered by the ARC; however, the ARC, as a group, elected to put forward Scenario #1 with only one new school being proposed.

Joe Mahoney (Palmerston Avenue) expressed recognition of the difficult task the ARC members have undertaken and wanted to register continued support for a scenario that would accommodate the students of Palmerston Avenue. He added that the closure of the school would mean an unfortunate loss of green space, small classes and teacher-to-student ratios. He added that he can appreciate the challenge of bussing students, and added that, on an emotional level, there was a preference to retain Palmerston Avenue PS. He also wanted to know if the cost of each scenario impacted on the ARC's proposed recommendation. He added that at the earlier public meetings the community was told that cost was not a consideration in trying to develop the best solution for the accommodation needs for the students.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, replied that the ARC pursued 23 scenarios in order to select a scenario that met the criteria and was fiscally responsible.

Michelle Wall (Florence M. Heard) has a child about to start school in September and was concerned about whether or not her child will be bussed.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, indicated that the Transportation Department was currently doing an analysis of the number of students and the areas that would need bussing. He confirmed that based on the proposed recommendation, her child would need to be bussed, however, it would not be for another two years as that is how long it would take to demolish and rebuild a new school on the Leslie McFarlane site.

David Harrison, (Jack Miner) stated that he had not heard about the Brooklin community wanting a Gifted Program and he felt that the program should stay together instead of being split.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, clarified that a few parents in the Brooklin area had approached him to raise the issue of a Gifted program in Brooklin.

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Nancy Brucas (Jack Miner) remarked on a previous transfer where the Gifted students moved from E.A. Fairman to Jack Miner and were then placed in portables. She hoped that students would, under the proposal, be placed in classrooms. She wanted to know how many Gifted students are within walking distance to Jack Miner PS. She expressed concern regarding split grades within the Gifted program.

An ARC member from Jack Miner indicated that approximately 25 students are within walking distance.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, added that not all Gifted students at Jack Miner were in portables. Generally, the older students, grades 7 and 8, would be placed in portables to allow for the younger students to remain within the school building. The population of the Town of Whitby continues to grow with the Gifted program growing alongside. Jack Miner PS cannot accommodate the number of Gifted program requests. There are currently 11 classes over 5 grades that are split.

Kim LeRoux (Palmerston Avenue) asked if the Director of Education would see Scenario #2 and also asked if the ARC had considered the cost of bussing students to Captain Michael VandenBos PS. She was concerned about bussing 3 ½ -year old children and the impact of the distance from their area of residence to the school on the provision of day care.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, replied that Scenario #2 along with the 22 other scenarios developed are in the Report to the Director for his information. He also indicated that across the DDSB's jurisdiction, 3 ½ -year old children were already being bussed. He reminded the audience that Palmerston Avenue PS was not a sustainable school.

Gord Burrows (Palmerston Avenue) addressed David Visser, ARC Secretary. He questioned what would happen to the Palmerston Avenue PS and Florence M. Heard PS sites if the land is sold to a developer who then decides to build residential developments.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, cited Regulation 444/98 regarding the Disposition of Surplus Real Property. He indicated that the Board must comply with the Regulation and offer the properties to the other school boards in the area as well as other public bodies. The properties could only be sold on the open market if there is no interest from any of the groups listed in the Regulation. The Board would certainly work closely with the Town of Whitby regarding the zoning of the properties to ensure that zoning is consistent with the area.

Kathleen Butt (Palmerston Avenue) referred to Section 4 (Conclusion of the ARC Report) and asked if the Board will be provided with the spreadsheets?

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, replied that all information contained in the report, including the spreadsheets, will be made available to the Director of Education and Trustees.

Joanne Wolf (Palmerston Avenue) remarked on other parents in the area who made the decision to have their children bussed while she moved to her neighbourhood specifically to be able to have her children walk to school. She felt that the loss of their school would mean the loss of a sense of belonging and the fact that the teachers know the students by name.

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Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, replied that the ARC is trying to make it better for Palmerston Avenue students; to provide all students with improved educational facilities. There are clearly advantages to housing students in new schools. He listed items such as the skill set of students, science labs, music rooms, gymnasiums, program choices available to students, and teachers collaborating together. Mr. Hircock added that other teachers at other schools also know their students by name and it was not unique to the students of Palmerston Avenue PS.

Laurie Carson (Captain Michael VandenBos) thanked the ARC members for their hard work. She expressed that the bussing of her young children has never been an issue and that they have always been well looked-after at this school board. She added that the education of her children has not been disadvantaged by them having been placed in portables. She went on to say that change is a fact of life and that everyone is required to make adjustments.

David Harrison (Jack Miner) stated that one of the advantages to the current Gifted program was the team teaching environment and he did not want to lose that through the splitting of the program into two locations.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, indicated that team teaching is found in all programs across the Board and that in schools with dual programs, the teachers collaborate across programs to ensure students have access to the best opportunities.

Heather Feikema (Jack Miner) referred to slide 17 of the PowerPoint presentation and asked what the potential timeline was for each of the schools involved in the ARC process, should the report be accepted.

David Visser, ARC Secretary, reported that if approved, construction of the addition would take place in the spring of 2010 and be ready for students in September, or, possible December of 2010. He emphasized that any timeline developed would be contingent on the Board approving the ARC-recommended scenario and the Ministry of Education providing funding.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, added that the Leslie McFarlane PS students would move to Pringle Creek PS in September of 2009. This will allow for demolition and the rebuild to take place at the Leslie McFarlane site over a two-year period. Palmerston Avenue PS students would move once space becomes available at Captain Michael VandenBos PS.

Norm Harkness (Leslie McFarlane) asked if the kindergarten program would become full-day for students being transported by bus.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, replied that the kindergarten classes would be full-day on alternate days if students are bussed. He added that, in future, it may not be an option should the government implement its full-day Kindergarten program.

David Harrison (Jack Miner) stated that his experience over the last 2 years has been that the Gifted teachers have been great and that he was concerned that Regular English track teachers would not include the Gifted students in outings.

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Trudy Collins (ARC member and Principal, Jack Miner) responded that when outings are planned, they include all the students of a particular grade and that students are not excluded based on specialized programs. She added that teachers are required to establish long-range plans and work collaboratively when planning school trips, based on grade and not based on program.

There were no further comments or questions forthcoming from the community.

Joe Hircock, ARC Chair, thanked everyone for attending, given the state of the unfavourable weather. He reminded the audience that any suggestions they may have would need to reach the ARC by no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday, January 30, 2009. Mr. Hircock then thanked the ARC for their dedication to such an enormous commitment of time, a testament to the quality of their Report to the Director. He thanked Sue Lunn, Principal at Pringle Creek PS for the use of the facility. He wished everyone a safe journey home.

The 4th Public Meeting of the ARC-Central Whitby was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

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DDSB