

SW Milton #9 ps Boundary Review Committee (BRC)

Minutes

Thursday January 22nd 2015, 7:00-9:00 pm

MDHS

Present:

Rob Eatough (Superintendent), Gord Truffen (Superintendent), Kim Graves (Trustee), Dom Renzella (Manager of Planning), Michelle D'Aguiar (Senior Planner), Krista Benedetti (Tiger Jeet Singh Principal), Jane Chin (Tiger Jeet Singh Parent rep), Shalene Werynski (P.L. Robertson VP), Dorothy MacRae (P.L. Robertson Parent rep), Erin Kijewski (J.M. Denyes Parent rep), Blair Fleming (E.W. Foster Parent rep), Tony Cancellara (Irma Coulson Parent rep), Henry Janzen (Bruce Trail Parent rep), Kim Prangley (Anne J. MacArthur Parent Rep), Sarah Galliher (Planner)

Senior Staff welcomed committee members and apologized for the cancellation of last week's BRC meeting due to low turnout. Staff also offered thanks to BRC members for volunteering to participate in this boundary review.

Senior Staff stated that the Public Information Meeting on January 6th was attended by approximately 75 people.

Feedback was collected from parents who attended the meeting as well as from the online feedback form. In total 41 online feedback forms were submitted by the community.

Senior Staff shared the agenda for the meeting stating the importance of taking the opportunity to review and consider the feedback submitted by parents.

The Boundary Review Steering Committee (BRSC) has already reviewed the feedback and as a result has developed another scenario (Scenario 12c). Ultimately the goal of tonight's meeting is to take everything that is on the table and look at the strengths, look at the criteria and determine what is the best fit.

Senior Staff stated that ideally tonight, BRC members would reach a point of feeling comfortable identifying a shorter list of scenarios to put forward to the BRSC and ultimately the Director.

Senior Staff summarized the feedback;

41 total respondents, most from Anne J. MacArthur PS, a few families from Tiger Jeet Singh PS. Themes are important to consider when reviewing the input. The Tiger Jeet Singh PS 'puzzle piece' was not popular with respondents.

Planning Staff provided comments on the online feedback process.

Survey allowed respondents to rank the preferred scenarios, 36 of the 41 respondents provided a ranking of the scenarios, shown here –

2. Please review the criteria and recommended scenarios and indicate your support (Ranking of 1 is most preferred).
(36 Responses)

	1	2	3	Average Rating
Scenario 4a	15 (41.67%)	5 (13.89%)	13 (36.11%)	1.94
Scenario 12a	6 (16.67%)	6 (16.67%)	15 (41.67%)	2.33
Scenario 12b	4 (11.11%)	5 (13.89%)	14 (38.89%)	2.43
Scenario 14	15 (41.67%)	5 (13.89%)	8 (22.22%)	1.75

Planning Staff referred to the hand out that summarized the scenario feedback.

Scenario 4a and Scenario 14 were generally most preferred. Scenario 4a, 12a and 12b were the least preferred.

Given the number of families in the impacted scenarios, 36 responses is considered a low response rate. Nevertheless, the feedback suggests a preponderance of people wanting the new school to open as dual track however this is difficult to validate due to low response rate. The feedback would be a lot more dependable with a higher response rate.

Senior Staff stated that none of the scenarios was the clearly dominant.

Group time was offered to allow BRC members to review the feedback and summarize the themes.

Senior Staff invited members back to a large group discussion and themes of the feedback were discussed. These included;

- Multiple moves
- Perceived walking distance
- Preference for dual track (not so many transitions for kids)(community schools)
- Personal stories (examples of past moves or family experiences)

Trustee asked BRC members if they are hearing much from other parents in dual track schools relating to the viability of the English program.

Trustee has heard concerns about the FI program taking over in schools with declining English enrolments. For example, EW Foster PS and Martin Street PS have low English cohorts.

School Staff weighed in that there is about a 55/45 split for the past few years at that Tiger Jeet Singh PS. The balance of English and FI in dual track schools has a greater impact in schools with smaller populations.

Senior Staff stated that declining English enrolment in dual track schools is one of the most serious issues in our board and across the Province.

There are examples of schools that maintain some sort of balance but the issue is that about 2/3 of dual track schools, the grade 1 class has less than a class or even less than 10 English students in grade 1. These trends are troubling to Senior Staff at the Board.

A BRC parent explained that at some schools, such as EW Foster PS, there is a tendency for friends to wish to stay with friends when electing to enrol in FI.

Senior Staff asked if there is a need for another dual track school in this area given the fact that P.L. Robertson PS, Tiger Jeet Singh PS and Anne J. MacArthur PS are all dual track. Are the numbers there? What's the long term picture?

Senior Staff pointed out that some Leiterman Drive area families have expressed the wish to attend the new SW Milton #9 ps.

That feedback was surprising to some BRC parents as it did not seem to totally align with feedback they had been receiving.

Trustee was surprised families were comfortable with crossing Louis Saint Laurent Ave.

Senior Staff talked to Halton Student Transportation Services (HSTS) and they and Planning Staff will work with Milton to provide a crossing guard at Louis Saint Laurent Ave and Farmstead Drive. The area east of Ontario Street, transportation would likely need to be provided for. Students do cross streets like Louis Saint Laurent Ave all over our board, such as Main Street in Milton, for Chris Hadfield PS students.

Discussion followed about the number of lanes on Louis Saint Laurent Ave because anything over 4 is bussed (HSTS guidelines).

Senior Staff noted that residents of the Tiger Jeet Singh PS 'puzzle piece' (Phase 17) area were very nervous about being moved out of the school.

The streets for this area can be depicted clearly in an appendix to the Board Report.

Trustee stated that the feedback is often very self-focused but the BRC table looks to themes from the feedback and is thinking about the school community as a whole.

Senior Staff pointed out that the negative comments are over-represented in feedback because fewer contented or non-impacted families take the time to provide feedback.

Also, Senior Staff pointed to the criteria as being useful for bringing conversation back from self-focused personal stories to overall effectiveness of a proposed scenario.

Trustees are going to vote for stable long-term boundaries so that people are not concerned about constant disruption and change and can focus on learning.

Senior Staff explained that the BRSC thoroughly discussed the preferred scenarios and this is what resulted in the development of Scenario 12c. One of the pieces looked as was the whole Leiterman Drive area.

Planning Staff provided an overview of Scenario 12c. When first looking at Scenario 12, the biggest concern was opening a brand new school with less than 40% occupancy in the first year with slow growth as Boyne comes online. Having an underutilized brand new school while all of these other schools bursting at the seams is undesirable.

When asking, how Scenario 12 could be improved, Planning Staff looked to expanding the English catchment. Area south of Leiterman Drive (including all Leiterman addresses) is now being directed to the new school. You can see the school from Leiterman Drive.

There is no change to P.L. Robertson PS projections. Anne J. MacArthur PS English and FI catchments are not identical.

Tiger Jeet Singh PS numbers exclude the Phase 17 area, similar numbers to Scenarios 12a and 12b. The new school opens with almost 500 students and reaches OTG by 2018.

Senior staff stated the proximity piece has been addressed here, and there is a little more relief for Anne J. MacArthur PS. As has been stated, ideally the new school is not under populated.

Senior staff asked BRC members to revisit the preferred scenarios plus scenario 12c against the criteria with the goal of identifying some preferred scenarios.

Planning Staff reiterated it is not the objective of the BRC to come up with one preferred scenario, it could be a spectrum of scenarios for the BRSC to hand to the Director.

What scenarios can you live with and publicly support?

Senior Staff pointed to Scenario 4a grade breakdown stating there are problems with the class building here and in scenario 14 (low FI numbers in lead class).

A BRC parent offered a counter point that a small class can work really well. Senior Staff clarified the point was about the balance of English and FI enrolments being problematic in Scenario 4a and 14.

BRC parent felt that school atmosphere was richer for having English and French.

School Staff asked if there was pressure to enrol in FI and a BRC parent indicated that there is some pressure to do so.

A BRC parent asked for clarification on transitioning between programs and Senior Staff explained that students can enter FI as late as Christmas of Grade 1 year, after that no. In terms of demitting from FI, it can happen at any point.

Trustee wondered if a second FI entry point would provide relief because it seems like many parents are making the decision to enrol in grade 1 FI in a hasty way based on the realization that they could not enrol later.

The larger group was given the opportunity to review the recommended scenarios against the criteria and then come back together to discuss.

Regarding Scenario 4a, Senior Staff asked BRC members if there was anything to add here or remove.

BRC members stated that Scenario 4a was included for a dual track option to be shared at the Public Information Meeting, this scenario then lead to the development of Scenario 14.

Trustee asked if both of these scenarios are needed to present to the Director. Could one be eliminated?

It was clarified by Planning Staff that there are about 180 English students in the Leiterman Drive area currently.

Senior Staff asked if the BRC was prepared to take Scenario 4a off the table. Response was unclear.

BRC members asked for clarification on how many scenarios ideally should be passed on to the Director.

Trustee responded that any more than 3 scenarios can be a little messy.

The BRSC does want to know what the preferred scenario is for the BRC. The problem with recommending only one scenario is that if the BRSC or Director opts for a different scenario it looks as if the BRC work is being ignored.

The difference between Scenarios 4a and 14 is the Leiterman Drive area; both scenarios create dual track programming at the new school.

Senior Staff asked, of the dual track options, which is better?

The Tiger Jeet Singh PS 'puzzle piece' is in the new school for all scenarios. The Leiterman Drive area changes by scenario.

Planning Staff pointed to Scenario 4a as offering a sense of community being a more walkable school. Scenario 14 is a more heavily bussed school, potential for fewer walkers.

Planning Staff pointed to the map to show where the new development is in the south of the new school catchment, starting east of Bronte.

Scenario 4a and 14 continued to be compared.

BRC members wondered if Anne J. MacArthur PS becomes a more walkable school in Scenario 14.

There was further discussion about the online feedback regarding walking to the new school versus discussion at parent council, hearing different things (parents reluctant to cross Louis Saint Laurent).

Senior Staff pointed to Scenario 12c as addressing some of these points.

BRC members acknowledged it is better to look to the criteria to assess the scenarios

FI projections were reviewed: 70 FI students in Scenario 4a, 50 in Scenario 14. Scenario 4a has a better sense of community. Some parents felt that Scenarios 14 and 4 were very similar.

There was some difficulty in deciding which, if either of these scenarios was preferred.

Senior Staff moved the conversation on to the other three scenarios, starting with Scenario 12c.

Planning Staff reviewed Scenario 12c for the group, again. New school is single track English, have now included everything west of Bronte street.

Ideally, the new school should not be opened at less than 50% utilization. Schools below 50% enrolment are supposed to be considered for closure, it just does not make sense to underutilize the brand new school.

Anne J. MacArthur PS is still at about 950 and continuing to grow until such time as the new Martin Street PS rebuild takes place. The school is growing because it is accommodating FI from Boyne survey.

Senior Staff pointed out that projections are just that, there needs to be a buffer, due to changing circumstances. What if 100 additional kids show up? Always think about the numbers as a range.

In any scenario that comes forward, the Director is a proponent of labeling Tiger Jeet Singh PS 'puzzle piece' as a holding area so that it could potentially be repatriated to Tiger Jeet Singh PS when enrolments allow for it. While some Senior Staff are really not supportive of the 'puzzle piece' being removed from Tiger Jeet Singh PS, it has been demonstrated that the school cannot accommodate the growth.

Senior Staff asked the group to choose the best of the Scenario 12s (a, b, c) and a BRC member responded that Scenario 12c appears to be the only one that makes sense. The numbers are low at the new school in Scenario 12a and 12b.

In Scenario 12a, overcapacity red flags show at P.L. Robertson in 2019, Anne J. MacArthur in 2020, in new school in 2019. Scenario 12b is similar in this regard. This does not address a dual track system.

It is expected that the new SW Milton #10 will address the over capacity enrolments at SW Milton# 9 ps.

The question was raised, is Scenario 12c the only scenario that helps justify the funding for Milton #10?

Senior Staff asked the committee if we are now looking at just Scenarios 4a, 14 and 12c?

Some BRC members felt that Scenarios 4a and 14 would not be considered because of being dual track.

Planning Staff pointed out that the BRC in Oakville is recommending dual track for the new school there. Three options were put forward to the BRSC there.

BRC members debated whether this is considered two or three options given that Scenarios 4a and 14 are both dual track.

Senior Staff, looking to the map noted that having 3 existing dual track schools that are overcapacity, a single track structure at SW Milton #9 ps would provide relief to existing schools. The proposed SW Milton #10 might well be a dual track school, subject to the outcome of a boundary review.

Senior Staff indicated that this feedback would be shared with the Director.

BRC members wondered if there would be a healthy English cohort at Anne J. MacArthur in Scenario 12c. Planning Staff pointed to the grade breakdown, not going to end up with a 50/50 split.

Senior Staff expressed satisfaction with the English/FI ratios in the grade breakdowns. The balance at Anne J. MacArthur PS might appear better after the Escarpment View PS area FI students are redirected to the new Martin Street PS.

Trustee asked BRC members to vote on their preferred scenarios as the Trustees themselves will ultimately have to vote on only one.

A show of hands was taken on preference for dual track; 2.
Preference for single track – vote not counted.

Looking at the dual track scenarios: Scenario 14 – 2, Scenario 4a - 5

Now looking at Scenario 4a and Scenario 12c: Scenario 4a – 1, Scenario 12c - 5

Trustee expressed that this was helpful and summarized the BRC ranking Scenario 12c, 4a and Scenario 14 in last place.

BRC members expressed concern about FI demits if the new school is single track (harder transition for students who must change schools rather than just change classes as in a dual track school).

Senior Staff expressed there are camps in favour of both options; there are truly pros and cons. In single track FI, the demits are more stressful in that it means a school move, but students are also returning to a neighbourhood school. The flip side is that you are moving across the hallway, sometimes there is group divisiveness, so it can be hard making transitions there too.

Dual track program structure was discussed in terms of the blend-ability of English and FI classes. Staff explained that there can be some English and FI integration at the school level which is really good for kids but logistically very hard to do, so by and large, students are with their class for the bulk of the day.

Trustee asked if Core French pilot would be offered at the new school. Senior Staff explained that it has not yet been determined if the Core French pilot will be expanded. This discussion has yet to happen and will be separate from this process.

Senior Staff explained the timelines for the Director's recommendation and reports to board; delegations are possible at both meetings.

The Director will be brought up to speed following this meeting.

Trustee asked that requests to delegate be made as soon as possible after the release of the report on Friday January 30th. Delegation requests should be made to Gail Gortmaker (gortmakerg@hdsb.ca).

The Report will be emailed to BRC members as well as posted on the Board website as part of the agenda package.

BRC members were invited to share information about Scenario 12c with other parents. A Synrevoice home notification is planned for January 23 summarizing the timelines etc., Scenario 12c may be included in this communication and will be posted online on the Boundary Review Website.

It is worth noting that Scenario 12c is not a brand new scenario but rather it is a variation of a scenario.

Delegations are often opposed to what is on the table for approval and it can be helpful for trustees when delegations speak to what is liked about the recommendation. Ideally, this provides a more balanced representation of perspectives.

Like-minded delegations are invited to group together.

Trustees do not make up their minds until the delegations have all presented.

Senior Staff asked for thoughts or final comments as this part of the process comes to a close.

School Staff commented that it is impressive to see parents looking out for the best scenario versus being self-focused.

Senior Staff expressed additional thanks to parents for taking the time to come out and volunteer their time.

BRC reps were dismissed.