

# Alton School Boundary Review Committee

## Minutes

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

7:00-9:00 p.m.

Board Room, J.W. Singelton

**Present:** Kim Sedor-Dorder, Tracy Davis, Michelle Stone, Susan Rankin, Jeff Cockshutt, Roula Sousa, Shazia Syed, Chris Roszell, Jeff Peeters, Jaymz Cossitt, Mark Cernjul, Remy Campbell, Steve Naylor, Karen Hill, Denise Nacev, Jen Nielson, Amy Collard, Mark Zonneveld, Tricia Dyson, Rob Eatough, Dianna Bower, Dane Tutton, Domenico Renzella, Michelle D'Aguiar, Jennifer Hlusko, Jeff Blackwell, David Euale, Mark Zonneveld, Lucy Veerman, Michelle Paradis, Simona Rosenblood

**Absent:** Ying Wang, Ersan Alper, Sohail Iqbal, Karen Hobbs

---

Mark Zonneveld welcomed everyone for the last of the Boundary Review Committee meetings. We have a cake to say thank you for your hard work and dedication to this process. The Steering committee and the Director will review all your comments and viewpoints in order to make a final decision.

### Community Feedback – Who Responded?

114 responses: .....43% (49) Charles R. Beaudoin French Immersion  
.....41% (47) Florence Meares  
.....6% (7) Alton French and English

### Responses in support of each scenario.

Some people indicated support of more than one scenario, a few didn't support any scenario

- 22F .....68
- 26C .....28
- 27 .....39

### Significant Criteria to respondents

- 68 Grandparenting and Optional Attendance availability
- 41 French Immersion program viability
- 35 Keep families together as much as possible
- 28 Least disruptive to students

### How did our 4 criteria stand up to those of the community? Committee member answers and observations:

- All comments from public are largely emotional whereas committee tried to look at best scenarios for all schools, programs and facilities for all children.

- How many of these people who responded were at the Open House? Did these people really understand the purpose and process of the committee and all the issues and implications
- Three of the four are pretty much the same thing.
- Not surprised that these are the issues of highest concern given conversations with parents and how emotional people are when looking only at their personal circumstances.

**Were there any surprises in the narrative that should have come to committee? Or anything they have forgotten or missed?**

- Having very few Alton responses is indicative of the feeling that all 3 scenarios are okay with those parents. Or could it be because they do not have an organized group like other schools (e.g., School Council)?
- Present schools had Parent Councils for communication to community and formal organization.
- There is no viable option for French Immersion at the new Alton school.

**Q.** Based on parent feedback at school what the group missed is keeping families together. How can we ensure that families are kept together?

**A.** Rob Eatough and Dom Renzella said no overall revelations since all responses were pretty much all personal. Collating of answers being done now.

**Q.** Does the feedback point to criteria/issues that the BRC missed?

- Think we missed parts of grandparenting issues.
- The Florence Meares parents' are supportive of process, even if they were being impacted negatively.

Discussion about responses – surprised proximity was so low on their criteria list. Proximity is not an emotional issue since all scenarios covered proximity. Committee worked very hard to cover this issue.

**Is there anything else significant in the feedback that we should discuss?**

- High school boundary questions arose.
- Clarksdale appreciates what we are doing but what are you doing about that school going from 700 down to 400? (move to end)
- Responses came primarily from 2 schools. Director said he makes decisions on issues not volume of responses. When the community piece was written in admin council, it was made clear that feedback on issues was a priority, not the volume of the responses.
- Parent concerned about numbers being incorrect and being back in 3 years. Steering committee looks at this very closely when trying to make these decisions.

Parent asked if there is an equivalent to the ombudsman within the Board? The Director answered that we have an Internal Auditor and Audit Committee that look at financials and respond to Board. They can audit admin functions, planning, admin procedures. We have a new Regional audit – external committee that is looking at risk assessment in IT and other departments. Now just beginning its initial assessment.

This is final meeting of the Boundary Review Committee and after this the information goes to the Steering Committee comprised of the Director, Superintendents, 3 Trustees of affected areas who will decide on which scenarios, with or without variations, they choose to submit to Director.

The group members broke into groups at the 3 scenarios to summarize what the final things are they want to say to Steering Committee ( strength, weakness, important issues). All members of the committee have done a great job of honouring the norms.

Follow a process for sharing thoughts on each scenario, then any questions. Steering committee can also ask questions, then anyone on BRC may present an opposing view.

## **Scenario 22F**

### Supporting Views

- Identified what liked and not liked
- Liked that it did receive overwhelming support from parents of Charles R Beaudoin and Florence Meares as English only (because it is the only scenario with no change proposed for Charles R Beaudoin and Florence Meares)
- Did keep Orchard Park numbers nicely and in balance but still room in northern schools to take other students if necessary (e.g., TBD)
- Gives one firm choice for French Immersion and English for Alton school. Alleviates most issues of grandparenting of Charles R Beaudoin and Florence Meares
- And it does keep 10 out of 11 programs stable and viable
- Has Alton French Immersion students going to 1 school
- Didn't want to create another dual track school unless we cured program viability at other schools
- Estimates of French Immersion in Alton may be underestimated

### Opposing Views

- This is the only scenario which gives north Headon Forest students a different boundary for FI versus english. ie Clarksdale/Rolling Meadows for FI, but not CHNorton for english. Therefore it keeps an unnatural boundary for the high school (not Walker's Line).
- There is only one group of 33 students (north Headon) that is to be moved (FI from CRB with no grandparenting or gradual transition)
- If you go out 5 - 10 years there is a significant drop in C.H. Norton numbers.
- If Alton projections are low, will Orchard Park get totally full with Alton French Immersion? Will the TBD area go to Orchard Park? If the closest Orchard schools are full, where will the TBD students be transported?
- Didn't like: unnatural boundary in Headon Forest and it put Charles R Beaudoin over capacity

### **Scenario 26C**

#### Supporting Views

- All French Immersion in Alton go to Florence Meares
- Natural boundaries for English and French Immersion

#### Opposing Views

- Orchard Park French Immersion is vastly under-utilized
- Why start a new program when one is already available with necessary resources and staff?
- Are Orchard Park boundaries viable for French Immersion? No scenarios have English going to Orchard Park.
- Does it make sense to take French Immersion students from Charles R. Beaudoin and Orchard Park to create another French Immersion school if its not really needed?

### **Scenario 27**

#### Supporting Views

- Meets requirements of proximity
- Boundaries are natural and provides for more flexibility for TBD area

### Opposing Views

- Concerns about French Immersion viability if numbers are over inflated
- Seriously need to think about grandparenting. Talked about Grade 8 at Charles R. Beaudoin, Rolling Meadows and Grade 5 at Clarksdale staying for the 2012-13 year.
- Grandparenting should be applied consistently to all schools. If not applied, there is lots of movement of students.
- Flexible if French Immersion projected numbers were low because it creates options for the TBD area
- Issues long-term for FI at CRB and FM
- Other side is that Charles R Beaudoin will be 200 students below OTG numbers
- Florence Meares does not meet French Immersion viability

David Euale and Jeff Blackwell explained grandfathering versus Optional Attendance. Once a child is has been grandparented, that school becomes the child's home school. The primary focus of Optional Attendance is "if there is space at the requested school". Rob Eatough explained that the Optional Attendance process includes a discussion between the 2 affected Principals. Not only does there need to be room at the requested school but the sending school be negatively impacted (e.g., lose too many students so that it affects their numbers, teacher allotment, program viability, etc.).

### Other comments:

- Some parents want Alton to open K – Grade 8 to alleviate busing
- What sense does it make to grandfather Clarksdale's 5s to Grade 6 when they will be moving the next year anyway.
- (Trustee) Jennifer Hlusko stated that she was working with planning to see if there was a fix for French Immersion starting at Florence Meares in a gradual start of Grade 1 to Grade 3 or 4 ~~so that the Alton kids would not be split between 2 French Immersion schools.~~

Mark Zonneveld explained the further process. After these minutes are captured they will go to the Steering Committee on Tuesday. The Steering Committee will study all the information and may recommend these 3 scenarios, or 2 or any combination. From there, the Director will make his decision. Rob Eatough will write the report to the Trustees with the Director's direction. Then there is a 2-step process. The report goes to Trustees for information on Wednesday January 18, 2012 and they can ask questions. Two weeks later on Wednesday, February 1, 2012

they vote. Sometimes there is an extra Board meeting on the interim Wednesday to accommodate delegations. David Euale is hoping to get the report out to public the first week back after the break (January 9, 2012) so that people will have two opportunities to delegate can delegate. The Steering Committee would like to send the agenda to the Boundary Review Committee members first. However, this would not follow protocol. Therefore, the committee members will get it sent to their personal mailbox at the same time it is posted to the public.

**Q,** What is the experience of delegates? Is it better for the general public to be the participants or member of the BRC? Can they delegate?

**A.** Usually it is groups who feel passionate about specific issues and don't always see all the issues.

Don Vrooman (Chair of Board) explained that the bi-laws are straight forward for delegations. If there are 5 or 6 groups wanting to say the same thing he will call and ask them to get together and only 1 speak to issue. Delegations are decided on a first come, first served basis. Must request by the Tuesday at 4 p.m. a week before and need to send what they will be saying by the Thursday before.

Jennifer Hlusko (Trustee) hopes no one from the BRC will delegate unless they want to bring forward a new point of view that was not brought to the committee. She would rather read your letter. Why put the Trustees through it. Looking for delegations with something new to say.

Member of the committee spoke to Don Vrooman saying that many people thought communication from Board was cold and uncommunicative at Community Consultation. Facts were given but Board not viewed favourably by community in terms of communicating feedback.

Don Vrooman responded say his goal was to make public aware how delegations work. He wanted to meet committee member after meeting to settle the discussion.

Jennifer Hlusko asked if the question referred to staff then he should be talking to Director, and if issue was with Trustees then he should speak to Chair of Board.

David Euale noted that group was off topic. We do know and are sympathetic to those who feel they are not being heard. I will stand by this committee and my report and hope you will see that my report reflects that.

Dianna Bower (Trustee) explained that she was just a one year trustee. She would like to hear from any delegation regardless of who they are. She is available and appreciates concerns. Her personal opinion is that she would like to hear your opinion in whatever format.

### **Reflections:**

#### Product Goals:

**Q.** 3 points – in terms of end product. Did we accomplish this?

**A.** Yes

#### Process Goals:

**Q.** 4 points – did we meet these?

**A.** Yes

#### Comments:

- Week 3 there were issues around the gifted numbers that were not transparent. Numbers had not been mentioned before. Committee should have been told at beginning that there was a whole process regarding moving gifted classes.
- Would have been better to have a broader scope of other schools i.e. John Wm. Boich, BT Lindley, Alexander's
- Don't think communication went to school with regard to BRC in time to appear like a transparent process (e.g., Orchard Park).
- Timeline was too short with only one week to get two representatives. Response: Timelines posted, mass emails, Synrevoice messages. How can we do it better next time?
- Need to vet the people better to ensure they can meet the expectations. Existing schools vetted representatives but Alton area did not.
- Want to be able to replace those who cannot meet expectations
- All Synrevoice messages and emails should be made clearer with time commitment
- One member felt the Board did a good job with communication. We can't make people read the notices. Everything was timely and clear. It is parents' responsibility to stay informed (re: child's school).

**How can we improve the Boundary Review Process in the future?** Final comments in writing by committee members . See below.

#### Continue

- Sticker process was great to draw out people who are otherwise quiet
- Good communication to BRC. Felt very informed

- Board members very respectful of our opinions.
- Continue the process.
- It was very valuable process to go through and I feel that it was run very well
- Involvement of parents in the BRP
- If people know what to expect and what is expected from them they will participate and benefit from the process
- The collaborative spirit and approach to reviewing scenarios and narrowing the recommendation
- Use of group norms and enforcement of those norms to ensure the committee functions effectively.
- Excellent prep by planning – large size paper scenarios.
- Having Steering committee members attend BRC meetings.
- Having Director attend the BRC is valuable – shows the importance of the process.
- Well developed Agendas
- Great/effective co-chairs – kept discussions on track
- Stickers good way to get consensus

#### Start

- ensure parents understand context of potential changes both for students **AND** staffing/programs
- ensure committee understands context of which programs and groups of students and problems are up for consideration for “fixing”
- be more realistic about the time involved in being on this committee i.e.: 4 hrs/night; homework
- give more time to select reps. I did not receive an email. We were just told by principal at a Council meeting that we needed 2 reps. It didn’t give parents who do not come to Council an opportunity.
- Earlier communication with school communities with specific info on how their school might be affected which might elicit more involvement from parents i.e.: CH Norton parents felt they would not be affected other than the already planned move of Alton area students – they did not know the boundary could be changed in other ways – had they known this there may have been more interest in the BRC
- There seems to be a lack of communication within the new community. All current schools have Councils and are well informed through them. Perhaps survey or some other method should be tried to bring the new school community on the same page, so the reps don’t have to struggle to reach out to other community members.
- Communication/engagement – have the trustees visit parent councils to discuss the process and the importance of their voice
- Facilitation techniques to reduce the “spin’ and repetition of opinions. These techniques will also help deal with difficult personalities
- Coffee at meetings
- Special meetings for the school – don’t wait for regularly scheduled Council meetings
- More Synervoice messages and letters to parents.

## Stop

- Limit input from Trustees during meetings as it can intimidate BRC members and leave false impressions

## **Communication**

This committee has completed their work. Please let your community know the next steps in going to board. Let public know feedback was digested & reviewed the 3 scenarios, with communications from Open House community input. Tell public that we face some constraints right from start (i.e.: no portables at Charles R. Beaudoin and why). If the community knows the constraints the committee had to work with they will understand more easily the thought processes.

## **In Conclusion**

David Euale thanked everyone for their participation and hard work. You have enlightened us. You became involved with the decision making right from the start.

Mark Zonneveld stated that all thoughts and comments were listened to. You have made a significant impact. You have really thought about and talked about all students. You have honoured all the students involved in this Boundary Review.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.