



# MINUTES



## William Merrifield VC Public School Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) Meeting #3

Location: William Merrifield VC Public School

Date: Thursday, November 27, 2014

Time: 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

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Present: **Sherri Dean** (Parent and Chair of the Committee), **Carol Lucio** (Principal), **Elena Palazzi** (Teacher), **Joe Maurice** (Superintendent), **Don McConnell** (Municipal Representative), **Steve Fratesi** (Transportation Supervisor), **Anthony Mannarino** (Transportation Consortium)

Regrets: Ruby Blue

Public Attendance: 7

**(1) Introduction of ARC Committee (5 min)** Meeting started at 7:00 with Sherri Dean introducing the Committee.

**(2) Purpose of the Public Meeting (5 min)** Joe Maurice outlined that the purpose of this public meeting was to present data on neighbouring schools and define viable options for William Merrifield students after the school closes in June. He provided a summary of what occurred in the last public meeting which included a review of the current condition of the building, and the decision of the Committee to begin looking at options for the students when the school closes at the end of June as keeping it open was not considered to be a viable option by the ARC. Based on what was shared at the previous meeting, Joe Maurice reviewed the data about neighbouring schools (FCI, Enrolment, Occupancy, and distance/driving time from WM Merrifield) and presented the options of moving some of the students to each of the neighbouring schools.

**(3) Review Neighbouring Schools Options for 2015-2016 School Year**

Joe Maurice outlined that since the last public meeting, he sent out a survey to the neighbouring schools asking for information about things such as Breakfast and Lunch Programs, Clubs, Sports, and Other Programs that were available at each of the schools. The schools included within this survey were:

- Greenwood Public School
- HM Robbins Public School
- Isabel Fletcher Public School
- Kiwedin Public School (JK-6)
- Northern Heights Public School
- Korah Intermediate (7-8)
- Superior Heights Intermediate (7-8)

A profile was developed for each school a shared through a PowerPoint presentation and a more detailed summary chart was distributed to those in attendance. In addition, maps were reviewed outlining the location of William Merrifield families both within the school boundaries and those out of boundaries, the current boundaries of neighbouring schools, and the number of families and estimated number of students living within different zones in the William

Merrifield zone, including West of Farwell Terrace, between Farwell and Moody Street, East of Moody Street, the Kiwedin/Merrifield co-zone, and the home school zones of “out-of-boundary” students. The following chart summarizes the information:

Area	Number of Families	Estimated Number of Students
<b>Out of Boundary</b>		
Isabel Fletcher PS Zone	4	6
Kiwedin PS Zone	5	7
Northern Heights PS Zone	5	7
<b>William Merrifield Zone</b>		
West of Farwell Terrace	24	33
Farwell to Moody Street	8	11
East of Moody Street	29	40
Kiwedin-Merrifield Co-Zone	18	25

Mr. Maurice asked if there were any questions or if anyone wanted to go back to any of the slides.

It was agreed that students currently living “out-of-boundary” would be zoned in their home school boundary. If parents wanted consideration for another school other than their home school zone, they would need to apply for an “out-of-boundary” request. There are currently approximately 20 students attending William Merrifield that live “out-of-boundary” – distributed among Isabel Fletcher, Kiwedin, and Northern Heights.

It was agreed that it made sense that those students from William Merrifield currently living in the Kiwedin-Merrifield Co-Zone, should be zoned for Kiwedin next year, or Northern Heights if they are in grades 7 or 8 and do not want to attend the Superior Heights Intermediate Program. There are currently approximately 25 William Merrifield students living within this area.

With this agreement, the remaining question was determined to be, how to allocate the remaining students in the rest of the Merrifield zone. Mr. Maurice suggested that one of the considerations might be, for the remaining school population, to move everyone as a group into one school, or into two or more schools. There are currently approximately 84 students from William Merrifield living within the rest of the Merrifield zone.

Don McConnell asked if HM Robbins would be a consideration and asked further questions such as:

- Do we send all of the remaining students to one school, such as Isabel Fletcher, or do we split them up into two separate groups?
- Is it easier to send them as one group or is there any clear research to support whether sending them as a whole group?

Joe Maurice and Carol Lucio discussed that there is no clear research either way. Successful transitions can be planned either way. It was suggested that it is easier for the receiving school to absorb a smaller number of students. HM Robbins could be a consideration, however after reviewing the data and the boundaries map, there is not much room to accommodate more students at HM

Robbins, and the HM Robbins zone does not physically touch the William Merrifield zone – the Isabel Fletcher zone is between the two zones. In addition, with the number of students and high occupancy rate at both Kiwedon and Northern Heights Public Schools, it was agreed that they really could not accommodate any more students beyond the students from William Merrifield that are currently living in the co-zone with Kiwedon – in the former Etienne Brule zone. With this further analysis, the Committee agreed that at this point we are most likely looking at either or both of, Isabel Fletcher and Greenwood Public Schools for the remaining students currently attending William Merrifield.

Steve Fratesi asked if the 7/8's would be going to the intermediate schools at Korah and Superior Heights. It was indicated that the number of students in the intermediate classes for next year would only be about 18 so the numbers would not create a big impact on either intermediate school. It was also reiterated that the intermediate programs would be optional choices for students.

A parent asked, why can't we "rejig" the zones? Why can't we just go back to the zones that we had when we went to school? Carol Lucio stated that the committee doesn't make the decisions about boundaries, but that could be a recommendation that the committee makes to the trustees to consider a boundaries and school zone review in the future. Joe Maurice outlined that one of our ARC recommendations to Trustees could be to look at phasing in new or cleaner school boundaries in the future. It was explained that this is outside of the ARC mandate, but could be a consideration.

Mrs. Rouble asked if there are going to be any changes to projected enrollments based on projected JK numbers for next year? Will there be any changes to what schools can accommodate based on those? Joe Maurice indicated that enrolment decline had leveled off as in many schools the number of incoming JKs is close in number to the number of graduating grade 8s. In addition, while it was acknowledged that William Merrifield had a large JK class this year, this was not the case in all of the neighbouring schools. Even if enrolment increased, there is room for over 350 students in the neighbouring schools.

A parent asked if after moving William Merrifield students this year, would one of the receiving schools be looking at closure in the near future. Joe Maurice shared that within the capital plan, this is not being considered in the near future. With the closing of William Merrifield and the transfer of its students to neighbouring students, all of the neighbouring schools are projected to have an occupancy of over 75%. It was also outlined that there are several housing developments being built in the Greenwood and Isabel Fletcher zones that will assist in maintaining enrolment.

Mr. Maurice asked if any of the parents had a preference regarding whether we should move all remaining students to one school or split between Isabel Fletcher and Greenwood. If we leaned towards one school, was there any preference between Isabel Fletcher and Greenwood.

A parent suggested that moving all students to one school would give the students a support network. It was also suggested that if the students were divided between two schools, there would still be a fairly significant support network in each school.

A parent asked if the Jessie Irving day care was closing. Don McConnell stated that the daycare is run by the city and outlined that in the Catholic Board, St. John's and St. Theresa's are both closing

as well. He outlined that the recommendation for closure of the daycare came from city staff due to lack of funding. A decision will be made by the city in the future.

A parent asked if the Jessie Irving daycare remains open, will there be any bussing available from the Centre. Transportation staff outlined that if the daycare became part of a school zone, such as Isabel Fletcher, then the students would be able to be bussed there. Don McConnell further outlined that daycare space is needed in the city and the funding for daycare moves around the community depending on the need.

Parents raised questions about bussing. Steve Fratesi indicated that the transportation consortium would have to look at existing bus routes to see if they could accommodate moving all the students to one school or another. In terms of the difficulty of changing routes, he outlined that it would be easier from a transportation standpoint to move the students all to one school however the bussing would have to be looked at more carefully based on the decision of the Trustees. Busing is provided for the Intermediate Programs.

A parent asked the question, being the Superintendent where do you stand on the “super schools”? Joe Maurice outlined that larger schools may mean more options and more opportunities for students (e.g. sports, clubs, specialized teachers). However, even if all the remaining 84 students went to a school such as Isabel Fletcher, it would only have around 250 students – much less than a super-school.

Don McConnell asked for clarification, “If I understand correctly – everyone in the remaining area – the 84 students - everyone could go to Isabel Fletcher or Greenwood? They could go as a block to Isabel Fletcher or we could set up boundaries within the Merrifield zone and have the students go to two different schools (Isabel Fletcher or Greenwood).

Joe Maurice outlined that he was not sure if we could actually physically move all of the 84 students to Isabel Fletcher or Greenwood. On paper, there is capacity for 84 students at either school, however, physically on the ground, it might be a tight squeeze. It would need to be looked at more closely. Joe Maurice outlined that if the 84 students were split between the two schools, they could easily fit in the available space without jamming up the classrooms.

Joe Maurice will arrange for evening tours at Isabel Fletcher and Greenwood in January for interested parents and the ARC to visit and view the buildings. He will also invite the Principals of these two schools to the next Public Meeting.

Carol Lucio will work with transportation to review the family location maps and accurately determine how many students and what grade level live at each of the red dots on the map.

#### **(4) Draft Recommendation for 2015-2016 School Year**

Based on discussions at the Public Meetings, the ARC is working with the following draft recommendations. These will be reviewed prior to the last Public Meeting in January, taking into account a tour of some neighbouring schools by members of the ARC. A draft set of recommendations will be presented, discussed and be opened for comment at that meeting.

- William Merrifield VC Public School should close at the end of June 2015 and students redistributed to neighbouring schools.
- Rather than moving to another elementary school for one or two years, and moving again to a secondary school, to reduce the number of transitions, students entering grades 7 and 8 will be encouraged to enroll in one of the Intermediate Programs at either Korah or Superior Heights. However, this would not be mandatory, and those that choose not to attend the Intermediate Program would be zoned to a K-8 school within their neighbourhood.
- The 20 students currently living “out-of-boundary” would be zoned in their home school boundary. If parents wanted consideration for another school other than their home school zone, they would need to apply for an “out-of-boundary” request.
- The 25 students living in the Kiwedin-Merrifield co-zone should be zoned to attend Kiwedin Public School (JK-6). Those grade 7 and 8 students who reside within this zone and choose not to send the Intermediate Program at Superior Heights, would be zoned for Northern Heights Public School.
- The remaining 84 students who live within the William Merrifield zone would be zoned for either one school to move as a group, or split and zoned for two different schools. The schools being considered for these students are Isabel Fletcher and Greenwood Public Schools. Further research is needed regarding whether it would even be possible to move all 84 students into one of these two schools.

**(5) Questions from the Public – no further questions**

**(6) Confirmation of Fourth Public Meeting Date:**

- Tuesday, January 20, 2015, 7:00 pm

**(7) Wrap and Adjournment – meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm**