DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF NIAGARA  
FORT ERIE ELEMENTARY  
ACCOMMODATION REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING  

MINUTES  

NOVEMBER 30, 2011  
6:00 p.m.  
General Vanier Public School  
105 Torrance St, Fort Erie  

ATTENDANCE:  
Committee Chair: Superintendent Marilyn Hyatt  
Committee Members: Marina Butler, Sally Cocco, Candace Cochrane, Meaghan Coopman, Katherine Foster, Gary King, Cindy Kohinski, Stephen Passero, Stuart Phin, Sherry Storrey-Perchaluk, Dave Schaubel  
Resource Staff: Cam Hathaway, Sue Mark, Christine Thompson, Doug Durant, Joe Weinberg,  
Audience in Attendance: John Robbins, Kay Green, Karen Bredin, Gregg Dame, Kristen Brooks, Mark Brooks, Ron Canavan, Denise Everett, Susan Taylor, Jason Clarke  
Recording Secretary: Brenda Chatterton  

CALL TO ORDER  
DSBN Superintendent Marilyn Hyatt, the Chair of the Fort Erie Elementary Accommodation Review Committee (ARC), called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.  

WELCOME  
Superintendent Hyatt welcomed everyone to the ARC meeting of the Fort Erie Elementary Accommodation Review and noted that Councillor Passero would be late for the meeting. The handouts were then reviewed by the committee: the Agenda, Minutes of the last ARC Meeting November 3, 2011. At that meeting Superintendent Mark presented the Senior Administration Option and the concerns were the bussing, size of the gymnasium and the general use area. Superintendent Mark presented to the committee the changes to the site plan for General Vanier that address these concerns. Manager of Projects and Maintenance, Doug Durant reviewed the proposed site plans. The current gymnasium is 2,200 square feet, today’s standard is 2,500 square feet, therefore consideration was given to build onto the side of the gymnasium and relocating the stage making the gymnasium longer and narrow. It was then considered to build a new gymnasium at a size of 3,250 square feet which the DSBN has been building for the past few years at the following schools: Power Glen Public school, Forestview Public school, Orchard Park Public school and River View Public school. In building a new gym there would be changerooms, storage area, stage, a possible kitchen space or meeting room. The two kindergarten
classrooms would remain where they were proposed. The present gymnasium would be retrofitted into three classrooms approximately 900 square feet each. The size of the staff room would be extended near the library entrance based on 20 staff. The proposed plan is based on a full gymnasium, 5 classrooms and addressing the staff room and entrance area. It is proposed that the bussing load/unload area would be on Champlain Drive with a walkway to the asphalt play area. The kindergarten classrooms will have their load/unload area in the front of the school.

A committee member inquired about the access for students with special needs. Manager Durant answered that the special needs students would be load/unload at the front of the school. Superintendent Hyatt noted a conversation with NSTS that the larger busses will be loading/unloading off of Champlain Drive and the smaller busses will be accessing the front of the school.

A committee member asked about the location of the Parent and Family Literacy Program in the school. Manager Durant explained that it will be located on the far right of the school the last classroom closest to the exit at the end of the hallway for easy access.

The question arose about changerooms and washrooms being incorporated into the new gymnasium design and Manager Durant explained that there are changerooms, washrooms and a public washroom in the hallway.

Superintendent Hyatt referred to the public meeting held November 16, 2011 where committee members were present to hear input and comments and copies of the minutes were provided. There were two options that came forward and one through the Task sheets distributed.

The Mandate of the ARC is to receive input, prepare and study alternatives on student accommodation options, respecting the school or group of schools under review. The committee prepares a final report representing the public input and makes recommendations to the Board.

Correspondence received was reviewed. A letter was submitted noting that small schools were personal and nurturing; could a public pool be incorporated into the design so the health of the students would be considered; there will be two more vacant buildings in Fort Erie and lastly the environmental aspect more bussing places more emissions in the air.

There was a Task sheet that referred to the concerns of adding onto General Vanier Public school when Fort Erie Elementary could accommodate the students and why an expansion to the gymnasium at General Vanier was not considered. Superintendent Hyatt noted that the gymnasium was considered and a scenario will presented to the committee from this contact.

A contact from the website referred to social interfacing between the students, the cost of bussing, walking verses riding the bus and small class sizes. It was explained that class sizes are mandated by the Ministry of Education.

A Task sheet expressed that they like the option because the same programs such as breakfast club may be available and the best feature was the excitement of a new school. Concerns were expressed about teachers losing jobs, but the only way a teacher will lose their job is due to declining enrolment not consolidation. If the same number of students are maintained the teachers should be maintained. The bus drop off area at the front of the school was a concern (but that has been addressed); question received about the alternate school placement policy; (it is consistent across the DSBN). The grade 7 and 8 in the same location was liked by the correspondent.
The other contact from the website was happy with the option being suggested and felt all the greenspace at General Vanier would provide a healthy environment for the students. The park was not a concern and the school being located in a low traffic area was good for the safety of the students.

The last correspondence was a Task sheet and the contact was in agreement with the proposed Senior Administration Option and also keeping all grades JK – 8 in General Vanier Public school and Garrison Road Public school.

Superintendent Hyatt then reviewed the three public scenarios that were provided since the last meeting.

Public Scenario A
1. Close Rose Seaton Public school
2. Close General Vanier Public school
3. Consolidate Rose Seaton Public school and General Vanier Public school into Fort Erie Elementary school
4. Do not adjust Garrison Road Public school boundary.

Supervisor of Planning Christine Thompson presented the following demographics on this public scenario A. In 2013 the enrolment at Fort Erie Elementary school would be 413 with only 332 pupil places (124.4% capacity), a four classroom difference at Fort Erie Elementary school. In 2021 there would be a student enrolment of 371 again with 332 pupil places (111% capacity) a two classroom difference at Fort Erie Elementary school.

Garrison Road Public school in 2013 would have a student enrolment of 357 with 431 pupil spaces (82.9% capacity). In 2021 would have a student enrolment of 321 with 431 pupil spaces (74.4% capacity). There would be no alterations required.

Public Scenario B
1. Fort Erie Elementary school grades 7 & 8.
2. General Vanier Public school JK–6
3. Rose Seaton Public school JK-6
4. Garrison Road Public school JK-6

Supervisor Thompson presented the following demographics on the public scenario B. In 2013 Fort Erie Elementary school with Grades 7 and 8 enrolment would be 145 students with 332 pupil spaces (43.8% capacity). In 2021 the enrolment would be 126 students with 332 pupil spaces (38.1% capacity).

Garrison Road Public school in 2013 would have an enrolment of 304 students with 431 pupil spaces (71% capacity). In 2021 the enrolment would be 273 students with 431 pupil spaces (63.4% capacity).

General Vanier Public school in 2013 would have an enrolment of 175 students with 216 pupil spaces (81.1% capacity). In 2021 the enrolment decrease to 160 students with 216 pupil spaces (73.9% capacity).

Rose Seaton Public school in 2013 would have an enrolment of 145 students with 305 pupil spaces (47.7% capacity). In 2021 the enrolment would decrease to 133 students with 305 pupil spaces (43.5% capacity). This option would have only one school above the 70% capacity mark.
Public Scenario C
1. All elementary students placed in High School
2. Close: Fort Erie Elementary school
   General Vanier Public school
   Garrison Road Public school
   Rose Seaton Public school

Supervisor Thompson presented the demographics for public scenario C where all students are placed in the high school. The enrolment in 2013 would be 1,257 students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 with a capacity of 1,113 pupil spaces (113% capacity). In 2013 the enrolment would decrease to 1,093 with 1,113 pupil spaces (98.2% capacity). This option would create programming issues at the secondary level.

Superintendent Hyatt reviewed with the committee the Guiding Principles that they had developed:

1. Make the best decision now for the next 10-15 years.
2. The school size should be in line with the research of 300 to 500 students.
3. Maximize the resources to support the needs of the school community.
4. All resources that are available at any given school should still be available.
5. Maximize outside agency supports.

After reviewing the guiding principles the committee then discussed the scenarios that were presented. After a lengthy discussion the scenarios presented were narrowed down to pulibc scenario A. The committee expressed their views of the Senior Administration Options and public scenario A:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Vanier Public school and Garrison Road Public school Open</th>
<th>Fort Erie Elementary school and Garrison Road Public school Open</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs swim program</td>
<td>Firehall a distraction and safety issue (construction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustain enrolment through enhancements</td>
<td>Busy intersection</td>
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<tr>
<td>147 walkers</td>
<td>Train Tracks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase in bussing</td>
<td>Eliminate some bussing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build required</td>
<td>Danger re: rail bridge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Danger re: river hazard walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Only 37 walkers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in bussing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No build required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions arose regarding the cost of the scenarios overall. Superintendent Joe Weinberg stated that with these scenarios there are many variables. There will be a surplus of two properties that the DSBN would possibly sell and that will offset the capital costs of construction, but that is a decision of the Board. There will be increased bussing costs also but there are many variables involved in bussing; the number of busses required, the location of the routes and the distance of the routes.

Superintendent Hyatt regarded the two scenarios and asked the voting members to make their first and second choice of the scenarios. The voting members were the school council representatives, the business representative and the municipal representative. The scenario votes is as follows:
Senior Administration Option – 5 votes as the first choice, 1 vote as the second choice.
Remaining Public Scenario – 1 vote as the first choice, 5 votes as the second choice.
Some committee members shared the reasons for their vote: the safety issues that are involved with Fort Erie Elementary school, firehall, traffic, the location of Fort Erie Elementary school was central but General Vanier Public school has more green space and residential area around it, the bussing may be increased but, the students learn in the classroom. The committee agreed this was not an overnight decision, all options were discussed in detail and the committee decided on the most viable scenario.

Superintendent Hyatt then reviewed the next part of the process. At the public meeting they will learn that three scenarios were shared and the pros and cons for each were discussed and the scenario the committee continues to recommend. At that time the public will be able to have input into the process.

The draft ARC report will then be brought to the next ARC meeting for additional input.

Superintendent Hyatt asked each committee member if there were comments. There were none.

DATE OF NEXT ARC MEETING:
Wednesday, January 25, 2012 - 6:00 p.m.
General Vanier Public School
105 Torrance Street – Fort Erie

DATE OF NEXT PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING:
Wednesday, January 11, 2012 – 6:00 p.m.
General Vanier Public School
105 Torrance Street – Fort Erie

ADJOURNMENT
The meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

HANDOUTS GIVEN TO THE COMMITTEE
ATTACHED
   Agenda for November 30, 2011
   2 Email contacts from website
   3 Task sheets from Public meeting
   1 Letter from parent
   3 Public Scenarios

ON WEBSITE (www.dsbn.org/arc)
   Minutes of November 3, 2011 ARC meeting
   Minutes of November 16, 2011 Public meeting
1. Welcome

2. Prior Meeting Minutes

3. Business Arising

4. Discussion – scenarios, public input

5. Selection of Preferred Scenario

6. Clarification Opportunity

7. Next ARC Meeting Date: Wednesday, January 25, 2012

8. Adjournment
A user has submitted a comment through the Fort Erie Elementary Schools ARC Contact page.

Data from form "Contact Us" was received on 11/19/2011 9:50:41 AM.

Fort Erie Elementary Schools Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Nabil Khan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>Although, I am a parent at General Vanier I am happy with the current outcome of the Accommodation Review. I believe a school should be situated in an open area surrounded by lots of green space which in turn provides fresh air and healthy environment for young kids. One of the parents in Nov 16th public meeting had a safety concern related to Public Park. I do not believe that is an issue at all. I believe Public Park is safe and we can use it to benefit General Vanier School. This public park gives an opportunity to kids to walk and play on the grass during lunch breaks, and at beginning and the end of the day. As we know, General Vanier has close to 8 acres of land which provides options of building new class rooms as mentioned in the meeting and still maintaining the green space around school. General Vanier is not located on a high traffic area which is good for the safety of our kids. Busing issue could be resolved by having buses come in way and out the other to reduce any traffic congestions. Thank you for giving me opportunity to write my comments.</td>
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A user has submitted a comment through the ARC Contact page.

Data from form "Contact Us" was received on 11/26/2011 2:19:43 PM.

Contact Us Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Donald Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>The thoughts of closure of public schools in Fort Erie does not seem to consider the children. Walking to school beats riding a bus. Social interfacing beats a lower cost education. Staying on school grounds to play together beats meeting a bus schedule. Staying after school hours to get more teacher help beats missing a bus ride. Getting more help with troubling course problems beats getting home on time. Remember the little red school houses, they turned out professionals that built this country and housed dedicated students and teachers. Smaller classroom sizes are a positive effect and are the desires of many of the teacher unions, which when not accepted, have led to teacher strikes. Your time on the board will be remembered by the quality of students turned out, not by how much you were able to squeeze out of the budget. Look at the big merged schools in Toronto and how much they are suffering and then think more about how you can enrich the children's time and life in public schools you are reviewing. Be the leader not the follower.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The Task
1. For the option determine:
   
a) What do you like about the option?
   
   I like that the same programs (ie breakfast club) will continue to be available to students if and when the schools merge.

   What is the best feature of the option?
   
   Some of the kids will experience the excitement and benefits that come along with a new school.

b) What do you dislike about the option?

   ▶ Closing perfectly good schools
   ▶ Teachers possibly losing jobs
   ▶ Taking the small town feeling out of schools

   What is the worst feature of the option?

   ▶ Closing schools, uprooting children
   ▶ Not enough room in front of GV for more kids

c) Is there a question you have about any aspect of the option?

   If someone is unhappy about where their child will be moved to, will there be more flexibility to move their children to another school.

2. What other realistic accommodation option would you like to consider? (this could include school closure, boundary changes, change in grade organization, facility upgrades and renovations, facility replacement and program changes.

   Someone at the meeting mentioned moving gr. 7-8's to Fort Erie Elementary by themselves. I think that would benefit all the children.

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Your Name (Please print)  Lindsey White  Address  314 Brock St

Please Check:  Parent (✓)  Community Member (✓)  Staff Member ( )  Student ( )

Other (Please Specify)  __________________________________________
The Task
1. For the option determine:

   a) What do you like about the option?

   I like the amalgamation of the schools. General Varner has the better option of Green space.

   What is the best feature of the option?

   Beneficial to the children of all grades.

   b) What do you dislike about the option?

   What is the worst feature of the option?

   c) Is there a question you have about any aspect of the option?

2. What other realistic accommodation option would you like to consider? (this could include school closure, boundary changes, change in grade organization, facility upgrades and renovations, facility replacement and program changes.)
To whom it may concern,

At the meeting the option of closing 2 schools and starting major construction at another was presented. Here are my feelings about it and I am sure these feelings are shared by many others.

I like to live by the motto: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The way things are now, might not be the most cost effective, but all the kids know each other in the school. All the teachers and staff know all the kids and a lot of their parents. This works a lot like a family with close ties. Is this not the environment we all want our children to grow up in? I believe it is important for every one child to be known by name and character and personality. Is this possible in a school with mass quantities of students?

I personally went to a very small and a very large school as a child. The small school won "hands down". This is just the more personal option for each and every child to be nurtured. I am afraid some kids might get left behind or even looked at such a large school.

Furthermore, I do realize that cost is a factor, but it should not be the deciding factor. All four schools are running below capacity. Why is the option to build more classroom space if the space already exists? Here is a comparison. In my nursing school I have been taught to go from the least invasive procedure to the most invasive procedure. Starting an extensive construction plan, is that not equal to a nurse coming at you with a scalpel instead of a blood pressure cuff in the emergency room triage? This construction plan will ultimately cost the taxpayers a lot of money in an economy that is not exactly booming. This money could be used in other places to benefit our children in this community.
The first place I can think of is our beloved public pool. Not every home has an inground pool where the kids can learn how to swim, not to mention how good swimming is for your health. There are 3 schools clustered in this end of town and the only thing here for all these kids is...was the Kinsmen Pool. The other end of town has the YMCA and the skatepark. We have nothing left for our kids to do in the summer. I do realize the funding for the pool is a municipal issue and the school funding is on a higher level. However, the rate of children that are overweight has increased drastically. Many children are now seen with problems in health categories such as hypertension, diabetes, and more. Everywhere you go you get preached about that kids should have proper nutrition and exercise. How much better can a person get than to swim for exercise? Here is what I strongly believe to be the better option. I would start with maybe closing one of the schools and dispersing the children among the remaining 3 schools. Also, I believe given the health reasons for active physical exercise, to reinvest some of the construction budget into the public pool. Ideally, I would like for all 4 schools to remain the way they are. Also, if it is decided for the 2 schools to close, what will happen to these two buildings in the future? Many places have closed down in Fort Erie and are now empty. The chances of these 2 school buildings to stay empty for many years to come is very large. This also leaves room for much vandalism not to mention the wasted space and eventually an "eyesore" on our streets. In addition, the numbers of children that would require busing would also increase. Extra buses would need to be put in place for children who would normally walk to school. This would increase the costs again. Also, it would put more emissions into our air. Is our goal not to save the environment as well bit by bit? There are a lot of primary and secondary consequences to consider when undertaking such a radical accommodation.
I believe the best interest for the children solely should guide the final decision. In my opinion a small school will have more opportunity to give each student the attention he or she deserves. Maybe by sending out a questionnaire to each child's home you will be able to get a complete picture of what the parents and community would like to see as a group.

We are the people of Fort Erie with the spirit of the Phoenix, the Phoenix's ability to be reborn from its own ashes implies that it is immortal (Wikipedia). Our children are our future, they should be able to experience the best education possible and not be "mass produced" without personal nurture. Please don't let our beautiful city become a ghost town with empty schools and nowhere for our kids to go.

Received from

Katja Graves - parent
Fort Erie Accommodation Review
Public Meeting
November 16, 2011

The Task
1. For the option determine:

a) What do you like about the option?

What is the best feature of the option?

b) What do you dislike about the option?

Spending money to renovate the smaller school that will still not be as large as Fort Erie Elementary, plans that do not even include expansion to the small gym at General Vanier.

What is the worst feature of the option?

c) Is there a question you have about any aspect of the option?

2. What other realistic accommodation option would you like to consider?
   (this could include school closure, boundary changes, change in grade organization, facility upgrades and renovations, facility replacement and program changes.

Please see attached.

Your Name (Please print) Christine Craft  Address 16 George Rd

Please Check:  Parent ( ☑ )  Community Member ( )  Staff Member ( )  Student ( )

Other (Please Specify)
- Why expand the smaller school?
  - Fort Erie Elementary is much larger to begin with, their gym is much bigger. How will all the combined students fit in General Vanier Gym??

- Why spend large amounts of taxpayers money to add onto the smaller school, that will still not be as big as F.E.E. when completed? (Poor use of tax money.)

- Fort Erie Elementary is the larger school and still has room for addition on the property to accommodate a rise in enrollment. The Gym is a lot bigger than General Vanier.

Another Option would be . . .
- Close Rose Seaton
- Close General Vanier
- Combine Rose Seaton & General Vanier into F.E.E.
  - Renovate if necessary (makes more sense to add onto the bigger school; better use of tax money)

- Leave boundaries as they are, Crescent Park will be expanding North of Garrison Rd filled with subdivisions while families will live. Garrison Rd School needs room for expanding enrollment changing buildings is not the answer.
- It was mentioned that General Vanier has use of public park close by.

Fort Eric Elementary has close access to public baseball fields at Oakes Park and Sugar Bowl Park, also closer to library.