



Our Task:

At the January 15, 2013, regular meeting of the Board, Trustees approved the following recommendation regarding the Belle River Family of Schools:

1. THAT THE SUPERINTENDENT RESPONSIBLE FOR ACCOMMODATIONS FACILITATES A BOUNDARY STUDY TO ADDRESS CAPACITY ISSUES WITHIN THE BELLE RIVER FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

Present: Bill Toews, Wes Arthur, Kathleen Westlake, Kim Beneteau, Belle River DHS; Larry Anderson, Deb Grady, Monica Hennessy, Joe Vizard, Belle River PS; Janet Hannigan (arrived at 4:35) Kelly Bugeja(arrived at 4:30), Kim DeMers, Laura Armstrong, Centennial Central; , Dustin O'Neil, Marg Hwozdecky, Tara Hodgson (arrived at 4:40) Lakeshore Discovery School

Regrets: Sharon Pyke, Leigh Netherton

Chairperson: Terry Lyons, Superintendent of Education

Recorder: Lynne Hornby

1. Call to Order and welcome

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m. by Superintendent Lyons.

2. Review of minutes of May 13 Committee meeting and May 22 Community meeting of May 22

The minutes of the May 13 meeting have been circulated to the committee via e-mail. They have been posted to the Board website and copies will be filed to be shared with Trustees at a later date. Copies were provided to the committee.

The Committee was provided time to review the minutes of the Community meeting.

3. Review Community input to date

The committee was afforded time to review community input received via the e-mail box to date.

4. Discussion on above items 2 and 3

The Superintendent opened the discussion. He asked the committee what they felt were the prevailing messages taken from input provided at the community meeting of May 22 and from the e-mail box.

Several parents had asked why could they not just drive their children to the current school in order that they stay there. Superintendent Lyons explained that when there are capacity issues to make an exception to approve this does not alleviate the problem. Out of district students present their own set of challenges for us. When a school is at capacity, then the boundary generally becomes closed to out of district.

Some inaccurate facts that were presented by speakers at the Community meeting were rectified. The lowest point in Belle River DHS' enrolment will be 2014, when it is approx. 746. As has been previously stated, the data shared with the committee is the most up to date available, but some of the data used at the Community meeting may have been from last year's annual report which is online and the only data available to the general public. The Patillo/Orchard Park area is difficult, it is fairly equidistant to Tecumseh Vista and Belle River DHS. At this time, we have not heard from the majority of families.

One committee member felt that the high school situation should be reviewed and a lengthy discussion ensued.

It was noted that although Belle River DHS will have available student space into the near future, at some point, if elementary growth patterns continue, a grade restructuring in the family of schools may become necessary. At that time, Belle River DHS could be restructured as a grades 7-12 school and into the near future there is space in the high school to accommodate such a change. The high school's enrolments will begin to increase; next year will be the lowest enrolment at 65% capacity, and then projections indicate an increase as we move forward.

If the boundary should be adjusted as suggested by a parent at the community meeting, then it would affect DM Eagle and AV Graham students. Prior to the opening of Tecumseh Vista Academy, students from those schools did feed into Belle River DHS but since the opening of Vista, the Board's retention rates from that area have improved significantly, from approx. 80% before Tecumseh Vista opened, to 116% and 120% respectively each year. While Board Administration is not opposed to the idea of DM Eagle/AV Graham students attending Belle River DHS, it does not seem appropriate for their students living in the Manning Road area and further west to attend Belle River DHS. This is a very lengthy bus ride in comparison to the distance to Tecumseh Vista Academy. At this point in time, students may apply to attend Belle River DHS as out of district. This choice continues. No board transportation is provided.

It was clarified that if the committee determines they would like to explore the adjustment of Belle River DHS' eastern boundary, then representatives from Tecumseh Vista must be invited to the table.

The principal confirmed that Belle River DHS offers a diverse range of programs which is often determined not only by enrolments but also by the desires of teachers. There are great teachers in every school who go above and beyond. Teachers do not leave schools only due to low enrolments, the Board is bound by contractual agreements. The principal noted that he does not foresee a dramatic change in program offerings in the near future.

The school competes in a range of sports. The school offers a range of Specialist High Skills Majors focused programming which is designed to give students a sense of their concentrations in post-secondary education. Such programs continue to receive Ministry of Education funding.

By consensus, the committee proposed that any consideration for changes to a secondary boundary should defer to the Tecumseh PARC. Should the Tecumseh PARC feel a need to review Tecumseh Vista's secondary eastern boundary (i.e. Belle River DHS' western boundary) it should be that body's decision. The Belle River Boundary Committee determined to support any applicable decisions of the Tecumseh PARC.

The committee heard concerns about using Rourke Line as a boundary and a discussion took place. It was determined by consensus that Rourke Line will remain as the dividing boundary. A Committee member added that a number of affected residents in the area have been expecting such a boundary adjustment.

The term “limited exception” was explained. Using this term allows for an exception to be made for the student in question only and not future siblings. The current grade 6 students will be entering grade 8 in 2014. Historically, those students entering grade 8 at the time of a boundary adjustment are often given a limited exception, an option to stay for the grade 8 year, however it is dependent upon numbers. The grade 8 graduating class of AV Graham was not afforded the option to stay there when Tecumseh Vista opened because there were too many of them. It was understood by the committee that having large classes of grade 8 students remaining in a school does not assist when there are existing capacity issues.

The Committee also felt that the Centennial Central parents expressed concerns about the viability of their school. It was questioned if the recommendation allowed for the relocation of enough students from Belle River PS to sustain the school’s viability. Enrolment projections indicate, however, that the school will grow.

The committee determined that the boundary should be County Road 31 so as to prevent a long commute to school.

There was discussion about the group of students around County Road 42, an area behind Lakeshore Discovery. Someone had questioned why these students had been transitioned to Belle River PS rather than Lakeshore Discovery upon the closure of Maidstone. Superintendent Lyons explained that when Maidstone closed, those families understood they could not transition to Lakeshore Discovery as the school was over capacity then, before the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten.

Consensus was that the committee is comfortable with the boundary as is.

It was noted that there are four homes at the corner of County Roads 31 and 42, west of County Road 31, across from St. Ambrose Church. It was suggested that these four homes, as well as approx. 20 homes near the seasonal campground in Rochester, that is Riverside Road and Canal Road, remain in the Centennial Central school boundary. This would mean that Centennial Central School would be the home school for all residents of the town of St. Joachim and they would no longer be split between two schools.

In consultation with Transportation Consortium, it is possible to incorporate the homes into Centennial Central. The boundary will be adjusted slightly and will be revised on the website, as will the narrative (see attached) to adjust the boundary slightly. The homes at Riverside Road and Canal Road, are an extension of County Road 31, and are incorporated into the proposed Centennial Central boundary.

Tin consultation with the Transportation Consortium, the boundary has been slightly revised:

Belle River Public English Track – Proposed Boundary – Narrative Description
North:

Lake St Clair

East:

County Rd 31 (Both sides not included), south to CP Rail, west along rail to Golfview, South along Golfview (both sides included) to County Rd 42, east back to County Rd 31 (both sides not included) south along County Rd 31 (both sides not included) to Hwy 401.

South:

Hwy 401

West:

Hwy 401 to Lakeshore Rd 107 (both sides not included), north to County Rd 42, east to Rourke Line Rd (both sides not included), north to Lake St Clair

The committee also heard concerns about children changing schools more than once. It was clarified that when Lakeshore Discovery School opened, Puce closed and the students transitioned en masse to a brand new school. Puce was in a state of disrepair.

A lot of questions were raised at the Community meeting about dual track; both for and against it. Some even said that if there was to be one English school and one French school they would pull students out. It was felt that the majority of parents don't want their children in two different schools. In reply to concerns that were heard about combined classrooms, a principal said that there are opportunities to be experienced in combined classrooms. Superintendent Lyons added that his experience to date has been that French Immersion programs increase; it has been many years since we saw a decrease in French Immersion.

The debate over single vs. dual track was revisited and a lengthy discussion took place.

If there were a change to single track now, which group of students moves out of the school? It was determined that such a change would affect far more families and the transitions as presented to the public were a better option.

The Superintendent added that the Board works very hard at transitions for students. Every transitioning student needs to feel comfortable going into another school and we work very hard to ensure that. It is usual that one of the recommendations will be that a transition committee is struck, comprising school administration, parents, staff and the Area Superintendent. The principal of Belle River PS noted that the school is a very positive school; the staff is very strong, he foresaw a very positive transition. It is quite likely that due to the affected change in enrolments, some Lakeshore Discovery students may well transition with the student to Belle River PS. This, too, will also assist in transitioning the students. It was clarified that French Immersion programming allows for a decrease in the language of instruction each grade so that by grade 8, only 50% of instruction is in French.

Lakeshore Discovery School staff has put a listing together of those students who could be relocating and should trustees approve the recommendations, the Principal stated he will do his best to reorganize the class lists so the students will be together next year in an effort to provide opportunity for them to form relationships ready for the move the following year.

Should the recommendations be approved and a number of Lakeshore Discovery students are transitioned committee to Belle River PS, a committee member suspected there may be a lack of daycare spaces in the Belle River PS boundary.

In consultation with Transportation Consortium we have been advised that the new proposed French Immersion boundary will incorporate two more daycares. If at the time the boundaries change and the parents apply for spaces and there aren't any then the Transportation Consortium does have as process in place to identify another out of boundary daycare that can be serviced, usually the daycares that are closest and minimize the increased costs. Transportation is not provided to in home daycares that are out of boundary.

5. Additional community meeting on June 11?

There was discussion regarding the possibility of holding another community meeting.

By consensus, the committee determined not to hold another community meeting; nothing has changed.

The committee was invited to attend the Board meeting in June 19, when trustees will make a decision on Administration's recommendations and in order to be recognized by trustees.

A communication to all families in the Belle River family of schools will be forthcoming as to the next steps in the process and how to make a presentation at Board.

6. Discussion to determine final recommendations and presentation at next community meeting

Please see conversation documented under item 4.

The committee determined to move forward with only minor changes to the recommendations. Superintendent Lyons will present Administration's recommendations at the Special Board meeting. Trustees will vote on those recommendations. Again, the Boundary Committee acts in an advisory capacity.

7. Adjournment

Superintendent Lyons thanked the committee for their hard work and all the hours of their own time that they have devoted to this process.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.