

**Greater Essex County District School Board
2016-2017 PROGRAM AND ACCOMMODATION REVIEW
Report of the Final Community Meeting
Thursday, April 20, 2017 at 6 p.m.
Leamington District Secondary School**



At the December 13, 2016 regular meeting of the Board, Trustees approved the following recommendation regarding Gore Hill PS, Margaret D. Bennie PS, Mill Street PS, Mount Carmel-Blytheswood PS, and Queen Elizabeth PS:

THAT THE BOARD APPROVE THE IMMEDIATE COMMENCEMENT OF A STANDARD PROGRAM ACCOMMODATION REVIEW THAT INCLUDES GORE HILL PS, MARGARET D. BENNIE PS, MILL STREET PS, MT. CARMEL-BLYTHESWOOD PS, AND QUEEN ELIZABETH PS, AS SET OUT IN THE PROGRAM ACCOMMODATION REVIEW - INITIAL STAFF REPORT, DATED DECEMBER 13, 2016.

Present: There were approximately 106 persons in the audience including committee members
Regrets: Trustee Kim McKinley
Chair: Superintendent Todd Awender
Recorder: Christine Breshamer

1. Welcome and Introductions

Superintendent Awender welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. This is the final community meeting for this Program and Accommodation Review. This evening, a draft of the final recommendations will be presented. He explained that notes were being taken and that the proceedings were being audio and video recorded. He pointed out the location of the washrooms and exits.

Superintendent Awender introduced Trustee LeClair, Trustee Buckler, Trustee Burgess and Trustee Taves, the Director of Education, area Superintendent, area principals, then introduced himself. He also thanked S. McLaughlin, Media Services, for setting up equipment and thanked the PARC committee who have worked very hard on behalf of all our students over the past few months.

2. Committee meetings (Overview)

A PowerPoint presentation used to share information with the community has been posted on the website.

Superintendent Awender informed the audience of the numerous meetings the Committee has had and thanked the Committee for their hard work during the course of this PARC.

The Superintendent noted that any information related to the PARC process is available on the Board website under the Student Accommodation icon which is the red schoolhouse located at the bottom of the front page of the website.

3. Draft Final Staff Report and Recommendations (Overview)

Superintendent Awender reviewed proposed recommendations which were presented in the Powerpoint presentation. He reviewed Guiding Considerations developed by the Committee. Relevant information and data was provided and the proposed new boundaries were displayed. The Committee's options and ideas were summarized as well as Committee and community input.

The Superintendent communicated the Final Staff Report will be sent to the Trustees and posted on the Board website on May 5. He then reviewed the Board meeting dates where delegations can sign up to make a presentation which will be held at the Board office at 7:00 p.m. on May 24, 2017. He confirmed that the June 8, 2017 date is when the Trustees will be making a decision on the recommendations.

Delegations

4. Delegations

Erin Visser, Mill Street Parent

Submission attached

Amy Testani, Gore Hill Parent

Submission attached

5. Questions and Input

The floor was opened up to questions and comments which would be followed by school focus groups, for each individual school included in this review.

Donna Stickle, Gore Hill

Mr. Awender, you shared with us at Committee meeting that the Greater Essex County school board only looks 1-2 years into the future regarding residential growth in the community because economies can change fast. The only growth over the next one year is in the Gore Hill district. I understand there is a subdivision that is geared toward retirees; however, there are several other subdivisions that are geared towards family dwellings that currently have the infrastructure installed. The growth that is drafted for north of Leamington is more than 10 years away. It is known that there is high phosphates going into the waterways and the sewer system that is required for behind the Superstore is not financially feasible for our municipality at this time which in turn pushes the development even further into the future and definitely outside the one year residential forecast. Speaking of north Leamington, the sewer lines that are going down Highway 77 which the public has been notified of has led to the whole east side of Highway 77 being classified as Commercial/Industrial as well as plots of land surrounding Mount Carmel-Blytheswood have also been zoned Commercial and Industrial. To put this into perspective for those who aren't from Leamington, the Staff Report is proposing, in a way, kind of closing a Tecumseh school where the growth is and deciding to put your school in say Essex or keeping the ones in Forest Glade and closing Tecumseh. For me, it doesn't make sense. When I think about the community of Leamington as a whole, I see that our municipality is taking great strides toward beautifying our town. There is a lot of work currently underway and it's evident. The blight of empty schools does not play into Leamington's beautification process. The eye sore, and I hate to say it, this building that we currently sit in right now is a prime example. Obviously it's an aged building and the Board is doing a fantastic job with the new site. However, the board has an opportunity to have a win-win situation. Build a brand new public elementary school on this site. This is a great location for educating in town children if in town is where they want to be. Even consolidate Queen, Mill and Bennie. Mill Street stays open until the new school is built. Keep Gore Hill open with a small boundary change. This reduces the need for so many boundary adjustments. I understand that it

may be a bit larger population than initially planned, however I look at Kingsville and there will be well over 1,000 kids there once it's built and completed. This option allows for the town kids to stay in town and the potential blight of the old LDSS is taken care of. The Queen, Bennie, Mill sites can be sold as they are all desirable residential locations. The LDSS site is safe, potentially has safe kiss n ride programs with two entrances, all town kids can have equal access to the Sherk complex instead of just a select few. More kids get the benefits of a brand new facility. There is an existing track here in close proximities to the new LDSS site. I know this proposal has been brought forward to the committee and we have had discussions about this but I feel it was in the best interests for the general public and everybody here to be aware of this.

Christiana Beno - Mount Carmel-Blytheswood parent and business owner

As an accountant, I get the business need for everything that's going on - the financial component surrounding it just makes sense. Having said that I've heard around about the potential of closing Mount Carmel and moving those students as well, perhaps into Queen Elizabeth so I just wanted to talk a little about that and some of the concerns, I guess discussion, around Mount Carmel. One of the biggest things about Mount Carmel is, we've already been through an amalgamation. There was an amalgamation from Mount Carmel - Mount Carmel and Blytheswood have already amalgamated. What that did is enabled us to be able to improve the school as a whole with renovations, retro-fitting, remodeling of classrooms and the result of that is we've managed to add 10 new classrooms, an accessible washroom which is phenomenal, new staff room, new kitchen which supports the hot lunches, and a new large gym. There's been a lot going on at Mount Carmel that makes it a good site, it's economical to operate and it's got low replacement costs. The other thing with that that brought that amalgamation of course is our boundary lines already changed. Now our boundaries go all the way out to Staples. That's far. That's the largest boundary area in the Leamington district. So when you consider that, if we're going to have all these students from that far out being bussed all the way into Queen Elizabeth or whatever school, it just doesn't make sense. It's a long time on a bus and it's costly as well. There's not an economical support for that either. The site itself is a good site. I think everybody's talked about that but there's some other good land sites as well but we've got a fully fenced, large piece of property out at Mount Carmel. The other thing no one likes to talk about is it's the reality that, and this is not a comparative to country schools or city schools but it's to talk about preference and if you're in the country, you're in the country for a reason just like if you're in the city, you're in the city for a reason. There's a lot of our culture, country culture, that we're losing enrolments across because people want to homeschool or we're losing students to private schools. If you close those country schools - if you close Mount Carmel and ultimately Gore Hill as well, now there is no country school close by other than East Mersea and I think that there is going to be a significant drop in enrolment from parents that pull their children out to put them in private schools or home school them as a result because they are in the country for a reason.

Pete Epp, Gore Hill parent

We have two rural and three urban schools in this Leamington PARC. Most of the school population is found in town including a portion of the Gore Hill student body. It looks obvious to close at least one of the rural schools if spaces have to be eliminated. Stepping back a bit, the elementary students in Leamington are spread out between the two separate boards, the public board, and the private schools in our area. The public board has the largest number of students followed by the private school system and then the separate boards. The private schools have expanded their numbers greatly in the last 10-15 years at the expense of the public board. Over 1,000 students are in the 7 private schools between Wheatley and Kingsville. Why have so many parents opted to put their kids in these private schools? How has the Board reacted to this trend

besides providing low cost buildings to them in the rural areas? We know that the two rural schools, Gore Hill and Mount Carmel-Blytheswood are looked at more favourably by the families that will consider whether their children will attend public or private schools. We also know that if Gore Hill closes and the school is offered for sale this school will be purchased by a private school. Parents are not inclined to spend money on tuition and bussing to private schools unless there is a reason. Let's give these families a reason and a spot to stay in the public board.

Karen Gartner, Gore Hill parent

Is there a reason why the two final meetings are held in Windsor instead of in Leamington where the people are affected rather than you having all these parents have to travel the highway to Windsor to be able to attend and get the information first hand?

These are meetings held at the Board office.

Exactly but this is affecting Leamington children and Leamington parents. The meetings should be held in our town, not in Windsor for us to drive downtown Windsor which is an hour away. That's going to really greatly reduce the amount of parents that can attend because you're putting two hours of travel on that. If the meeting affects Leamington children and Leamington parents, it should be in Leamington and I think I can say many, many people would agree with that. Why at the Board office and not here?

Trustee Burgess identified herself at this point to address the concern. At a regular Board meeting we would have many things on the agenda. One of those things on the agenda would be this PARC. Another thing on the agenda would be the Forest Glade/East side PARC and all the other business that we're doing at the Board meeting that night so it's not a one item agenda meeting. It's going to be inconvenient for a lot of people to come to that meeting because they're potentially coming from the entire district.

But Forest Glade compared to Leamington, what's the travel distance?

I'm staying there are going to be people from all over the district. They could be coming from Lakeshore. They could be coming from Amherstburg.

But still, they're within 30 minutes. We are one hour away.

I understand. I come from Kingsville.

This meeting should be taking place in the town that's affecting the schools. Whether you're closing schools in Tecumseh, that meeting should be taking....

Our Board room is at 451 Park Street and the only time that we would ever do that is if we had a meeting that would be well beyond the capacity with the Fire Marshall, etc. and we could not be in the building where we conduct our Board business. We have nine municipalities.

Then each of those should be in that district.

But the Board office is at 451 Park.

And my other thing is, who is going to provide our childcare because our children are probably not welcome there at that meeting.

Sure they are. Sure they are. This is a public meeting and they're welcome at our public Board meeting. Babes in arms.

It's a school night. There's lots of argument here as to why Leamington residents should not be travelling one hour on a highway that's already deemed dangerous to go to a Board meeting that's affecting the closure of our schools and our children. You have families travelling two hours on a highway with children because otherwise they're going to need childcare for five hours. I think you really need to reconsider having this district's meeting in Leamington and Forest Glade in Lakeshore instead of a 20 or 30 minute drive into the city. We are driving one hour.

Donna Stickles, Gore Hill parent

Through the emails that have been passed back and forth with the Committee, as a Committee member for Gore Hill, I definitely looked at the FCI and the school profiles and what the cost of everything was. So the FCI calculations for Gore Hill have been questioned by myself and by other Committee members. I have brought this to the Board's attention and I haven't received a response yet but I know that you're busy and I get that. We were told by the engineer that there may well be duplicated costs on Gore Hill's School Information Profile. So my question is, if the engineer states that there may be duplicated costs, doesn't those duplicated costs affect our FCI?

We don't know where the assessors are. We wouldn't be able to get ahold of them but there is a possibility that there was a couple of those that had to do with the wiring.

Branch wiring and septic.

Wiring yes – septic no. There's no duplication with that but with the wiring we were trying to figure out how they labelled it and we don't know because we don't know how they did it. We don't know if it was duplicated or if it wasn't and that was four items, two of which might have been the same or may not have been.

Yes and they were in large quantities. Not to go into the nitty gritty details but they were in large quantities along with our roofing. Our roofing was supposed to happen in 2038 for Gore Hill at \$153,000.00 so if I can reduce our costs by roughly \$500,000.00 then I would assume it would affect our FCI.

Yes, it would affect the five year.

Carrie Reid, Gore Hill parent

To talk about these FCIs, it's all on paper for the Trustees but I don't know how many Trustees, other than Dave Taves, have been to the Leamington schools. I just wondered, is there a tour of all schools planned?

Yes, there is. Many trustees have already been to all of the schools.

Pete Epp, Gore Hill parent

This is about the septic system again. Listed under our five year renewals, the biggest expense, I think, is the septic system that's supposed to be replaced at a cost of about \$500,000.00. We've heard that the Board doesn't want rural schools that aren't on municipal sewage systems. I imagine this stems from the Board's recent experience at Jack Miner school and probably other schools like Gosfield North where significant unexpected costs have appeared in their septic systems. Our understanding is that the sewage issues also exist with schools like MDB where a combination sewer system requires that the solids be pumped regularly because their sanitary system wasn't designed for everything. We met with the owner of a local sanitation company who installs large septic systems in order to under the septic system in use at Gore Hill. His rule of thumb is that a system lasts between 30 and 40 years making the life expectancy for the Gore Hill system another 8 to 18 years. The codes have changed regarding the systems. One of the major differences being that the bed thickness is now 36 inches in the code versus the 18 inches of media that was installed in 1995. He asked what issues we had had with the system. I knew of none but I stand to be corrected. I know that we replaced the dosing pumps last summer but other than that I have never even noticed the holding tank being pumped out but I stand to be corrected on that as well. When we asked about the cost of the Greater Essex County District Board replacing the system, he mentioned quickly that the new, or modified, design would have to be engineered and that the installation would have to be done by a contractor who employed unionized workers. He did not see the new system costing \$500,000.00 and he has a lot of experience with installing large systems but he agreed that the board would probably spend the \$500,000.00 redoing the system.

Erin Visser, Mill Street parent

I know I asked meeting and just because we're getting closer to the date to get a little more information about it. If, whether it's Mill Street or Gore Hill or some other school that closes because we know something is going to happen at the end of this year, the whole idea of transition times and all of that kind of stuff – you're saying that what you're presenting to the Board on May 24th and then the final, final vote where things can change up to is June 8th. Do we start preparing our kids with activities after the May date, do we wait for June and then if stuff changes and kids get excited about a new school, and then wait, no, you're going to stay here and how all that works because in the email I had sent to the PARC email, when the decision is made June 8, June 9 is a PA day and then you have a weekend so unless it's published in the Windsor Star and someone goes and reads it and puts it around on Facebook, I would assume, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, that most parents would not find out what's happening until a letter is probably sent home on the Monday or the Tuesday which would be the 12th or 13th, giving only 2 ½ weeks left of the school year and you've got grad in there and grad trips and fun days and barbecues and all that stuff. What does it look like trying to fit transition activities in there for basically every school because the boundaries are going to change and kids are going to be moving and domino effect from one school to another and more importantly, the school that actually closes and has to divide all of their students?

What I would suggest is not necessarily preparing them for any particular recommendation that's there because we don't know until the June 8 meeting what the final decision is going to be. Explaining to them some of the recommendations that are here, some of the possibilities that are out there, you can always do that. If I look at myself as a parent, that's what I'd be doing with my kids. As far as the transition, it is a shorter period of time but we have, quite frankly, many of the principals involved in this particular review that have been involved in these kinds of transitions previously so they have some very good expertise with that and there's many activities they've already participated in with their former schools that have gone through a review. This experience will be used in a potential transition in the shorter time span.

In that 2 ½ weeks?

Yes. At the Board we're already talking about some of the things that we should be doing. Once we get a little closer, there's going to be a meeting with the principals, myself and anybody else that needs to be there and we're going to then talk about if this happens this is what we might do, if this happens, what might we do. When we're transitioning the kids regardless of where it may or may not be, that still looks the same. As far as getting the information out there, we do have cynervoice message and we could get it out to all of the families and the website as well.

That would probably be appreciated.

6. Future Input Opportunities and Dates

Future meeting dates are as follows:

Board meetings at 7:00 p.m.:

1. Wednesday May 24 - Board meeting where public delegations will be heard
2. Thursday June 8 - Board meeting where Trustees will hear public delegations and make final decision

Input is collected through the PARC email at parc@publicboard.ca which is then posted publicly. Questions will be responded to and posted for all to see, as well as all notes from this Community meetings.

7. Focus Groups

There being no further questions, Superintendent Awender thanked everyone for coming and invited the community to join the focus groups.

8. Closing Comments and Adjournment

There was no further input. In closing, Superintendent Awender thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting adjourned at 9:38 p.m.

Submission of Amy Testani, Gore Hill parent

Good Evening Chairpersons, Trustees, Gore Hill family and the Leamington Community,

I was hoping that I would never have to be standing here tonight FIGHTING to keep a school that has brought nothing but a POSITIVE BALANCE for our family.

4 years ago I decided to transfer my 3 children from the Catholic Board to the Public School Board. I drove to GORE HILL PUBLIC SCHOOL, went to the office, spoke with the secretary and principal and proceeded to register my children as an Out of District family. We were accepted and the Queen Elizabeth Principal gave the ok for us to transfer out of district.

All 3 of my children have highly diagnosed ADHD. My son has learning disabilities. When we transferred to Gore Hill it only took the teaching staff 2 days to see that he needed extra help. Something I had been trying to get in the Catholic Board for almost 4 years. He is enrolled in the SERR program and now receives A & Bs due to the AMAZING STAFF at Gore Hill. He could not read or write when he got there. He is NOW GIVEN A CHANCE IN LIFE TO SUCCEED!

When I heard about the chances of Gore Hill being closed I wondered where will they go now – Queen Elizabeth was at capacity 4 years ago now standing at over 530 students and you want to add more!

As a Parent and a member of the PARENT COUNCIL I ask you to RECONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS...

Gore Hill has ample space for a new SUPER school. We have an outdoor classroom, a nature TRAIL, a PICNIC shelter and much more to offer. I ask you at this time to come and tour our school and see why we labeled as the "ACADAMEY".

April 20, 2017

I am Erin Visser, a mom, volunteer, and the parent council chair at Mill Street Public. I know that the decision that the board and trustees have to make is a very big one with lots of considerations and moving parts. We all love our kids and their schools very much and want what is best for them, their peers, staff and the community.

Right now, when I look at the initial staff report, the changes that are being proposed seem to have more moving parts than needed. The following are a few of those moving parts I am concerned about.

For Mill Street to stay open, I understand that it means another school would have to close and that those parents would be also fighting to save their school. When I look at the numbers and listen to what people are saying, Mill Street is not the school to close at this time. It is an intown school with a lot of community/specialty programs run out of it, making it a community hub. Right now, 69% of the students are going to in town schools and 31% are going to country schools. If almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of our kids go to an intown school why would an intown school be the one to close. If almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of our kids are intown than I believe that $\frac{3}{4}$ of our schools/school spaces should be intown. Meaning that either Gore Hill or Mount Carmel would close and Mill Street would stay open until there was space with then new builds/renovations at MDBennie and Queen Elizabeth were completed.

The multiple boundary changes are another recommendation that sees more students having to move in September 2017 then seems necessary, with some of those students than having to move again in 2-3 years when new builds are completed. If you were to close Gore Hill and move those students you would only be moving 227 students unlike the 326 students that would be moving if Mill Street closed and the proposed boundary changes happened. That is a difference of 100 students not having to be relocated in a short time frame.

At the community meeting in April it was suggest that a mega school be made on this site (current LDSS Talbot St location). This is something that I have many concerns about. I have also heard from other parents and staff that feel the same way.

On a more personal note I would like to say that the Mill Street family may be small and not always the loudest, but a family it is. I see first hand the love and understanding that the administration, teachers and staff show towards the students and parents. You feel it when you walk in the door. With all my heart I want to be walking the halls next year and seeing that love and understanding. No matter what happens, I am proud to be part of that family and family they will always be.

Thank you for your time,

Erin Visser.

▲ I support the proposal that was handed in by Joanna Zeiter, committee Member for Mill Street and made public on the Boards website.



P.A.R.C. Public Meeting Comments:

- Parent Teacher
 Community Member

for: Grove Hill P.S.

As a new Syrian Government sponsored family, My children have really loved their school and easily adapted with the teachers and these peers. They have learned so much in so little time due to the phenomenal work Grove Hill Staff have invested.

The location of the school is perfect due to the great atmosphere, clean air and land.

I think it would be a bad idea closing the school.



Name: Sobhi Hanna

Address: 24 Rickway Dr. Leamington



P.A.R.C. Public Meeting Comments:

- Parent Teacher
 Community Member

for: Grove Hill + Mill St. Public Schools

New to Canada and have one boy attending Queen E. P.S.

I am worried about increasing the number of students in one school as my son is in ESL + struggling in learning due to the large number of students in the class.


I support having more schools with less number of students to be more efficient in teaching and learning aspects.

Not to speak about adaptability that my son have struggled with. Don't close Grove Hill + Mill St. School.



Name: yemen Aldhubia


Address: 116 Talbot St. West. Leamington

 **P.A.R.C. Public Meeting Comments:** Parents Teacher
for: Grove Hill P.S. & Mill St. School Community Member

On behalf of my Syrian friends, we are all new to the country & we thank Canada for the amazing support that was and still is given to us. Our students have struggled in their first year to reach the highest level of education they should have achieved due to the large number of students in one class.

We suggest not closing the schools to keep these #'s as low as possible in one class rather than big numbers and affect the education aspect. Maybe even have a specific # of students in one class.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

 Name: Ahmad AlZoubi / Abdullah Alacadiy / Ibrahim Eid.
Address: 6. Sadinwood Cross Leamington Flip Card →

- Khalid AlKadafi
- Fawzi Lababidi Tarabishi
- Abdul Kaseem Raad Abed Abu-Rtaiba
- Mohammad Kassoorn
- Abdurazzak Kalil
- Jihad Al Amin.