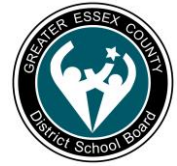


Greater Essex County District School Board
2016-2017 PROGRAM AND ACCOMMODATION REVIEW
Report of the Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 29, 2017 at 4:00 p.m.
Mount Carmel-Blytheswood Public School



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, Mt. 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:

<u>Gore Hill PS:</u>	Bill Cervini, Principal, Christine Williams, Staff Rep, Donna Stickles, Parent
<u>M.D. Bennie PS:</u>	Patti Oshar, Principal, Karen Koestler, Staff Rep, Erika Junge Bachmeier, Parent
<u>Mill Street PS:</u>	Michelle Sprague-Keane, Principal, Greg Dobson, Staff Rep, Joanna Zeiter, Parent
<u>Mt. Carmel-Blytheswood:</u>	Kim Pool-Oleynik, Principal, Becky Bunn, Staff Rep, Annie Froese, Parent
<u>Queen Elizabeth PS:</u>	Helen Dean, Principal, Chris MacLeod, Staff Rep, Nikki Barry, Parent
<u>Community Rep:</u>	Nicole Dupuis
Chair:	Superintendent Todd Awender
Recorder:	Christine Breshamer

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:12 p.m. by Superintendent Awender thanking everyone for their attendance and Principal Pool for hosting the meeting. Introductions were made. Everyone was seated in working groups. Maps of each school's catchment areas were distributed to the groups. Superintendent Awender gave the Committee a brief synopsis of what is taking place in other boards across the province with respect to accommodations.

2. Review Committee/Community input to date and Information Responses

We have received numerous pieces of community input that has been shared with the Committee. It was noted that Community input received is placed on the website and updated as received, from time to time.

The ideas which resulted from the group discussion at the last Committee meeting, held March 2, 2017, were reviewed.

PROPOSAL #1:

1) The Closure of Mill Street will

- Create a "Domino Effect" on the Boundaries of all the Leamington Schools resulting in boundary changes for many families with very little notice. Approx 326 Children will be affected this fall of 2017 alone. Possibly more as the full affect will not be clear due to the Grandfather rule and how many families have children entering school in the next few years.

- This plan also has the possibility of a number of students having to move schools twice in a 3 year period.
 - Moving in town kids from Mill Street district to a Country School – Mount Carmel is problematic as these children have other in town options for schools very close by. Parents with no vehicle or one vehicle would have a hard time getting to their kids if need be.
 - If you live in a Town Core, children should be able to attend an In Town Core School. This Proposal calls for immediately moving In Town Core Kids to a Country School and in 3 years moving Country Kids to an in town core school.
 - The proposed boundary change for Antonio Court is not fair considering they are being moved to Gore Hill – a school slated to close in 3 years. In 3 years it does not make sense moving them to MDB considering Queen Elizabeth is significantly closer so it's possible the boundary will be changed again.
- 2) The Closure of Mill Street so soon is problematic as this school falls under the Ministry's definition of a Community Hub. What is the plan for the Ontario Early Year Center? Access Program? It also will result in a very specialized program – The GAINS program to be moved. This is a very specialized program and not easy to move as there are many factors involved. No formal plan has been presented so far. With Queen E and MDB at or over capacity as per the Initial Staff Report it is possible that an in town core school will not be able to hold this program in the fall of 2017 and these kids would have to move to a Country School. Schools will have to be altered to house this program. This would require more of an investment and it is possible that this program may move again. GAINS program should remain within the town core and moved to the school where it can stay permanently – ideally built into the new MDB School.

[The Ontario Early Years Centre is currently under review, along with the Parenting & Family Literacy Centres across the region. A plan will be formalized in the near future. The Access program will be informed and discussions would take place if they had interest in another one of our schools.](#)

- 3) French Immersion JK Program to begin at Gore Hill and then move when consolidated to MDB. I believe the French Immersion Program will have the best chance of success at an In Town Core School that it will remain in permanently to re-assure parents knowing their children will not move schools again. Therefore if MDB is the intended final destination for this program then start it there to begin with and leave it there.
- 4) Based on Enrolment, since over 69% of the Students attend in town Core schools, it does not make sense to have only 2 in town core schools and 2 Country Schools in the area.

Jan 2017 Enrolment numbers – all 5 schools 1448

Total Enrolment at 3 in town core schools – 999 – 69% of total enrolment

Total Enrolment at 2 Country Schools – 449 – 31% of total enrolment

The utilization for the country schools is also significantly lower. Based on these numbers, how can closing an in town core school in June 2017 be justified?

- 5) Closing Mill Street will cause uncertain enrolment numbers for Queen and MDB. It is possible that one school next year based on boundary changes would be well over capacity and not possible without portables and may result in certain schools being over utilized and others underutilized. See Attached Spreadsheet

Queen Elizabeth Utilization could range anywhere from 89.5% to 106.5%

MDB Utilization could range anywhere from 76.3% to 109.3%.

Gore Hill and Mount Carmel would both still be underutilized resulting in 2 under utilized Country Schools.

Explanation: If you include East Mersea, the numbers go to approximately 59% and 39%. Excluding Queen Elizabeth, which is nearly 500 students, the remaining 5 schools all have under 250 students. We have to look strategically at all the schools as an overview versus just an individual school.

Recommended Changes to the Initial Staff Report

- 1) Mill Street Public to remain open until a New School is built at the MDB site and an addition or new school build for Queen Elizabeth. At this time, Boundaries are adjusted accordingly between Queen E and MDB to accommodate students.
- 2) Gore Hill closes effective June 2017. The boundaries adjusted to move these students between Mount Carmel Blytheswood, East Mersea – if possible, and Queen Elizabeth, and MDB if needed.
- 3) French Immersion JK Program at MDB to begin September 2017. The boundary for FI would encompass the entire Leamington family of Schools

Advantages of Recommended Changes

- Eliminates the Domino effect of boundary changes and the uncertainty as Mill Street would still be open. The only kids moving would be the population of Gore Hill (3 years earlier than expected). This would allow MDB to be able to house the French Immersion Program Long Term giving the program the best opportunity for success as the program would be within the Town Core at a Prime Location and parents would have the peace of mind to know the program will start and remain at the same school
- In 3 years the GAINS program can move, after being properly built into either Queen E or MDB resulting in only one properly planned move.
- This Plan involves **only** moving 227 Students from Gore Hill for 2017, 3 years earlier than expected as opposed to proposed boundary changes for approx 326 Students for 2017 (possibly more based on Jan 2017 enrolment numbers). Due to the short timeline involved – **Greatest Good for the Greatest amount of Students.** Eliminates the Domino effect of moving the boundaries of all schools so quickly and the enrolment uncertainty that will come with the changes. 6 months – 1 year prior to the closing of Mill Street the boundaries can be re-adjusted and plenty of time to send out letters of intent to all families to better understand the enrolment picture for the following school year. Students living within the Town Core can remain until such a time as the other 2 in town Core schools can accommodate them. This mitigates the risk of families moving to different school boards.
- Keeps 3 schools open within the town core. Enrolment numbers show that over 69% of students currently attend in town core schools so it makes sense they have more schools in the interim than Country Schools.
- Allows Mount Carmel the opportunity to increase its population and achieve maximum utilization. Many of the Gore Hill Families expressed interest that they prefer a country school with more acreage and this allows most families that prefer a Country School the opportunity to attend one.
- Keeps in Town Core Kids in an In Town Core School and as much as possible will Keep Country Kids in Country Schools.
- More Balanced Enrolment Numbers with very little uncertainty for 2017.

HOW THE ENROLMENT AT SCHOOLS WOULD LOOK

- See attached Spreadsheet – more balanced and known enrolment numbers at the different schools.
- If needed some Gore Hill Boundaries can be adjusted to allow current Gore Hill Kids off Seacliff Drive between Erie St and County Road 33 to attend MDB. Not sure how many kids. So streets like Regatta etc. This would alleviate the pressure on QEPS if need be.

Queen Elizabeth School (QEPS)	Initial Staff Report Boundary Changes Ranges Low to High		Proposed Change To Initial Staff Report
January 2017 Enrollment	514	514	514
Grade 8's Leaving	-70	-70	-70
JK Estimation	40	40	40
Mill St School Boundary Change	126	126	-
Gore Hill School Boundary Change	-22	0	85
MDB School Boundary Change	-75	0	-
Total	513	610	569
OTG Queen Elizabeth School	573	573	573
Utilization Rate	89.5%	106.5%	99.3%
Margaret D. Bennie (MDB)	Initial Staff Report Boundary Changes Ranges Low to High		Proposed Change To Initial Staff Report
January 2017 Enrollment	263	263	263
Grade 8's Leaving	-40	-40	-40
JK Estimation	20	20	20
QEPS Boundary Change	0	75	-
Mount Carmel Boundary Change	-21	0	-
French Immersion Program	-	-	20
Total	222	318	263
OTG MDB	291	291	291
Utilization Rate	76.3%	109.3%	90.4%
Mount Carmel Blytheswood	Initial Staff Report Boundary Changes Ranges Low to High		Proposed Change To Initial Staff Report
January 2017 Enrollment	222	222	222
Grade 8's Leaving	-33	-33	-33
JK Estimation	20	20	20
Mill Street Boundary Change	82	82	-
MDB Boundary Change	0	21	-
Gore Hill Boundary Change	-	-	142
Total	291	312	351
OTG Mount Carmel Blytheswood	351	351	351
Utilization Rate	82.9%	88.9%	100.0%

Gore Hill	Initial Staff Report Boundary Changes Ranges Low to High		Proposed Change To Initial Staff Report
January 2017 Enrollment	227	227	-
Grade 8's Leaving	-19	-19	-
JK Estimation	20	20	-
Boundary Change from QEPS	0	22	-
French Immersion	15	20	-
Total	243	270	-
OTG Gore Hill	338	338	-
Utilization Rate	71.9%	79.9%	-
Mill Street	Initial Staff Report Boundary Changes Ranges Low to High		Proposed Change To Initial Staff Report
January 2017 Enrollment	-	-	222
Grade 8's Leaving	-	-	-19
JK Estimation	-	-	16
Total	-	-	219
OTG Mount Carmel Blytheswood	-	-	280
Utilization Rate	-	-	78.2%

A Committee member brought up a concern about the GAINS program being moved from Mill Street and about the French Immersion program being started at Gore Hill when that may be a temporary situation.

Superintendent Awender told the Committee that GAINS programs move from school to school every year. Needs are reviewed by Administration after which transition and planning are done. At the current time, interest from surveys that went to Kingsville and all Leamington schools, shows 14

students interested in the SK program and 16 students interested in the JK program, as well as 2 who registered at Kingsville who would move to Leamington FL. These numbers do not include any Wheatley families or families not with our Board at this time.

Q: Will decision on implementing French Immersion be made before the Trustees make a final decision about the PARC on June 8?

This has been discussed by Administration but still remains undecided.

Q: After the conclusion of this PARC, will all schools remain closed boundary?
Yes.

A Committee member commented that when looking at enrolment numbers, the newcomers to the area may be there on temporary basis. Superintendent Awender stated that once the newcomers become acclimatized to the area and see what opportunities are around, they may make the decision to stay or move elsewhere. It is very difficult to predict what will happen.

PROPOSAL #2:

Close Mill Street. Also close Mount Carmel-Blytheswood since its population is declining. Bring the country students from County Rd 31 (Albuna Townline) to Hwy 77 into M.D. Bennie. Students east of Mersea Rd 12 down to Talbot Street can bus to East Mersea. Gore Hill stays open and has students from 77 to Mersea Rd 12, as well as its original area. Southern square that is Danforth might also fall into the Gore Hill area if numbers are needed. Queen Elizabeth picks up the Mill Students east of Erie Street. The 5th concession is very busy at that corner because of the number of semi trucks hauling mushrooms and bales of straw. Also, there is a cement factory on the Southeast corner on the eastern side of 77 that also has many trucks turning. Lastly, the prevailing winds are south west. The mushroom plant smells and the school is in a direct line for that smell. If the school is not totally air conditioned so windows can be closed and remain closed, the smell can be unbearable to say the least.

PROPOSAL #3:

If a boundary adjustment were made using Erie Street as the dividing line (i.e., students living East and West of Erie Street N. and S., how could this change the catchment areas for Mount Carmel-Blytheswood, MD Bennie, Queen Elizabeth, Gore Hill and East Mersea? Further to this, would this new organization create consideration for a different consolidation of schools (e.g., MCB and Bennie)?

Based on the adjustments mentioned, the different areas have been broken down into smaller sections with the number of students in each section. This will hopefully help guide in any specific recommendations the Committee may formulate.

- Mill Street catchment area west of Erie and north of Talbot: 40 students
- Mill Street catchment area east of Erie and north of Talbot: 35 students
- Mt. Carmel-Blytheswood catchment area west of Erie: 88 students
- Mt. Carmel-Blytheswood catchment area east of Erie: 111 students
- Queen Elizabeth catchment area west of Erie: 75 students
- Mill Street catchment area south of Talbot: 126 students

PROPOSAL #4:

Close Mill Street School and Gore Hill School.

The proposed boundary change of 75 Queen Elizabeth students to MD Bennie happens (west of Erie Street, north of Oak Street)

Adjust MD Bennie school boundary so all students north of Talbot Road attend Mt Carmel-Blytheswood. The proposed boundary change of 22 QEPS students on Antonio Court be cancelled to allow those 22 students to continue to live within QEPS school boundary. These students could likely transition between 3 schools in three years which is not in the best mental interest of these students.

Divide the students who attend Gore Hill PS between MD Bennie and East Mersea: students who live south of Seacliff Drive could attend MD Bennie. The exact student distribution (school boundary) will reflect school capacity of East Mersea and MD Bennie. It does not seem rational to bus students from out of town to town daily.

Queen Elizabeth will be fully utilized.

MD Bennie will be fully utilized.

Mt Carmel-Blytheswood will be more utilized.

Close school boundaries.

All students need to attend their home schools in September (with the exception of grade 8s)

Discussion took place around proposal #4 and it was reiterated that all boundaries would have to close immediately and students would have to attend the school in their catchment area, except grade 8s. It was felt this would allow fewer moves for students. Students in the marina area of Gore Hill would attend M.D. Bennie.

Q: Is there room at East Mersea for the Gore Hill students in the northern catchment of Gore Hill?

Enrolment numbers would need to be reviewed and specific boundaries would have to be determined. East Mersea does have some room.

Q: How many Out of District students attend East Mersea?

Currently, there are 4 out of district students plus another 99 from the Wheatley area.

NEW PROPOSALS:

New build to go on current Leamington District SS site.

Positives:

- Board already owns land
- already established cross walks
- two entrances
- existing track
- close to Sherk
- new build can be built without disrupting learning

Negatives:

- safety – busy road
- 12 minute walk from Sherk
- not aesthetically pleasing

A number of committee members stated they felt this is not a good site for an elementary school. Superintendent Awender told the Committee that the demolition costs alone would be over \$1,000,000 just for the asbestos removal. He also stated the Ministry may not support utilization of the Leamington District SS site because of the cost of the large demolition. It would make for a better business case to utilize the current M.D. Bennie site which measures approximately 9 acres and costs much less to demolish.

Q: Does the Ministry have a cap on the number of students in a new build?

Based on the last two business cases the Board submitted, it is typically in the 500 to 650 student range. However, every case has different circumstances.

A Committee member expressed an opinion about the amount of students our Board is losing to private schools. The member felt this was concerning and said there are more students in the private system than in the catholic system at this time. A new build may not be inviting to the Mennonite population in the community. Superintendent Awender reminded the Committee that keeping the current situation status quo is not an option. Our current schools have too many empty spaces and have low school enrolments with the exception of Queen Elizabeth.

Additional ideas were brought forward with respect to changing the boundaries (maps outlining changes are attached):

Option 1

East of Lutsch St. Go to Gore Hill
 West of Lutsch St. to Queen
 North East Talbot to Queen
 North West Talbot to Bennie
 South Mersea Rd 4 to Rd 5 up to RD 15 to Gore Hill
 South Deer Run (Including Deer Run) to Gore Hill
 East Rd 12 (to rd 5) to East Mersea

Option2

East of Lusch to Gore hill
 East of Briarwood To gore hill
 East of Bennie to Gore Hill
 South Mersea Rd 4 to Rd 5 up to RD 15 to Gore Hill
 South Deer Run (Including Deer Run) to Gore Hill
 East Rd 12 (to rd 5) to East Mersea

3. Recap of some Guiding Considerations

Superintendent Awender reminded the Committee while working in their groups to keep the following in mind:

- what would make for a strong business case to Ministry
- consolidations
- transportation
- facility FCI and renewal needs
- utilization rates
- student changes

4. Working groups: Mixed

This item was removed from the agenda.

5. Working groups:

Superintendent Awender asked the groups to consider the following and discuss:

If your school closes, what is the best scenario for the students of your school?

Bennie: M.D. Bennie students would move into the new build at Leamington District SS, making it a K-12.

Superintendent Awender told the Committee that the new Leamington District SS is at or near capacity already. There would not be room for M.D. Bennie students.

Queen Elizabeth: Change boundaries and redistribute students. When looking at any proposal, the Committee needs to look at the original recommendations and take into account considerations such as FCI, aging infrastructure, low enrolment, and utilization rates used to formulate original recommendations. We need to be responsible and we have too many schools with low enrolments. Superintendent Awender reminded the Committee that the Board received renewal monies from Ministry in the amount of approximately \$45,000,000 which only covers approximately 20% of the high and urgent needs. Typically the Ministry gives about \$6,000,000 per year. The Mill Street portapak must be removed for next year. Portables would be required at approximately \$100,000 each to replace space needed from the removed portapak. Another consideration is the septic system at Gore Hill that is of concern. If it breaks, as we have to replace, the approximate cost would be approximately \$500,000.

Gore Hill: Send Gore Hill students as a whole into another building consolidating with another school OR divide students and send some to East Mersea dividing on Bevel Line Road then up 33 and across Talbot Road East and send the other to M.D. Bennie.

Mill Street: Split students between Queen Elizabeth and M.D. Bennie using Erie Street as the dividing line.

Mount Carmel-Blytheswood: Split students between all perimeter schools such as Gosfield North, M.D. Bennie, East Mersea, etc.

A point was made about keeping “country” students in the country and “town” students in town; however, ultimately when these students reach high school age they will be attending school in town anyway.

Superintendent Awender asked the Committee, “What are priorities as parents when looking at schools? Would you prefer your children to follow their friends or prefer some other aspect ex. Closer v farther, new school v old?”

The Committee responses were:

- Students should attend school in their own catchment area and make it work. All the schools are great.
- It’s nice to go to school with friends from your neighbourhood.
- Going to school close to home is important.
- Having a new building would be enticing and would hopefully draw more students.

Q: Is there a possibility there will be no decision on June 8th?
Anything is possible until a decision is made.

6. Whole Group Discussion of small group ideas

This item was removed from the agenda.

7. Questions

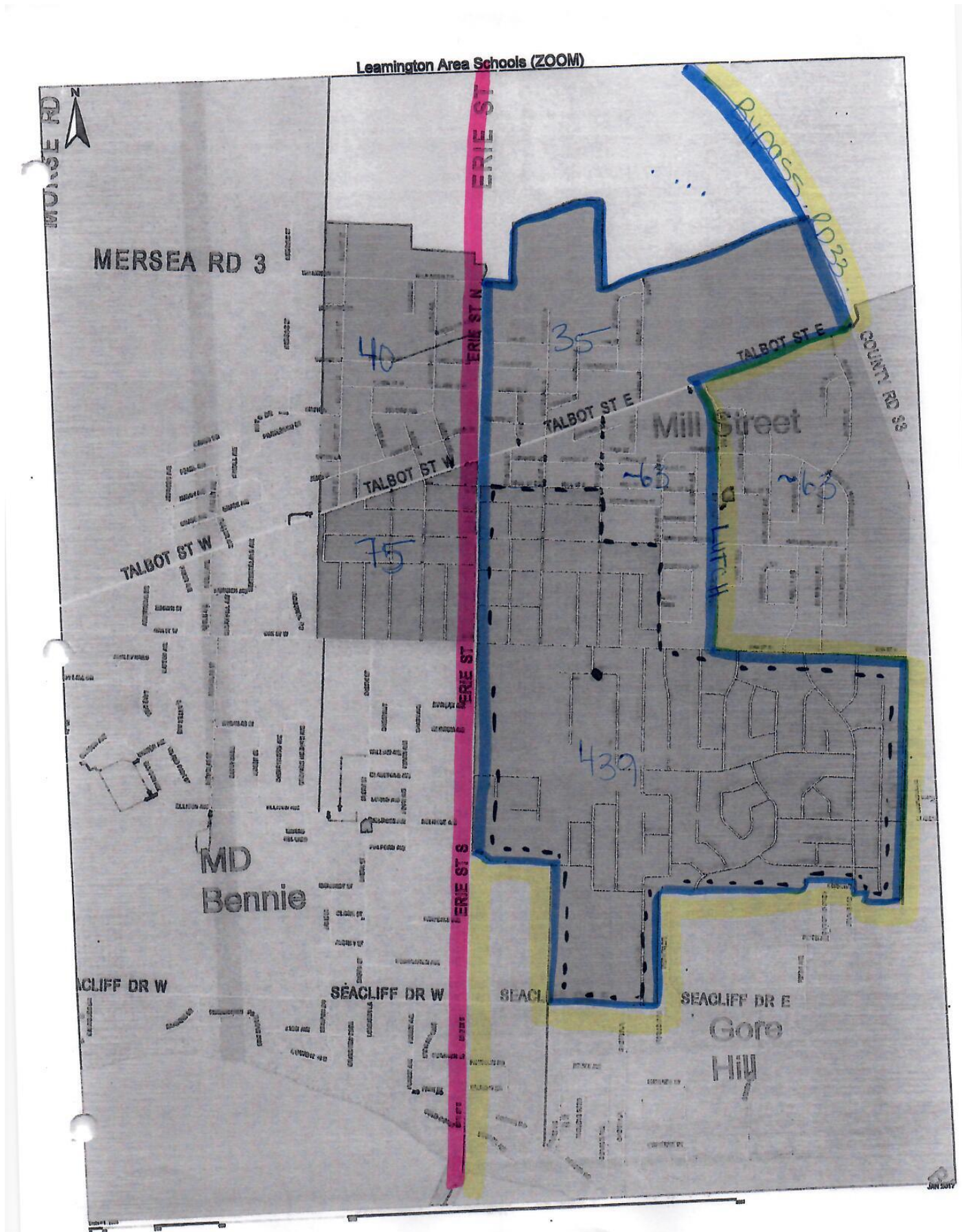
There were no further questions.

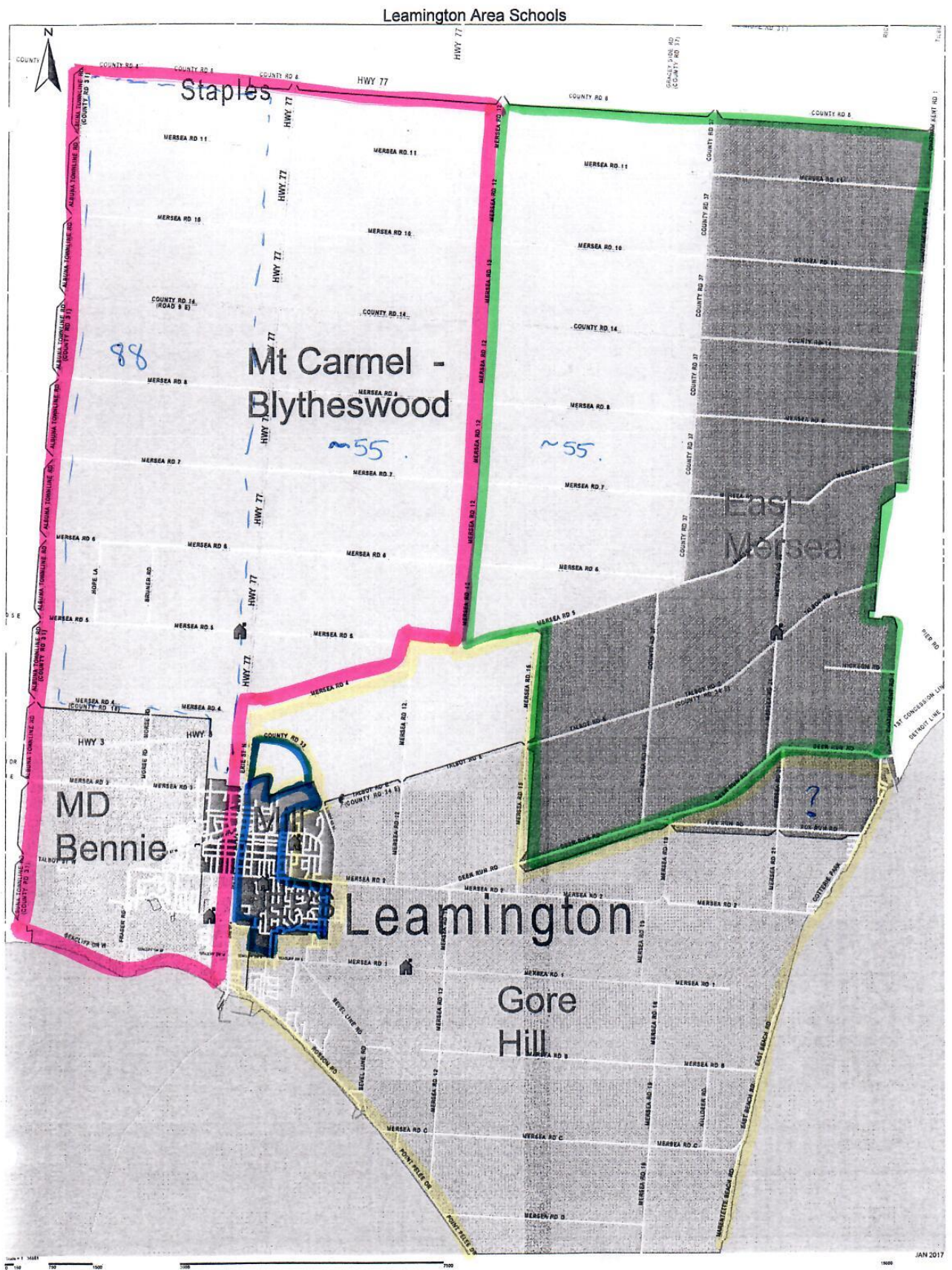
8. Tour of MCB (optional)

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

The next Community meeting is at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 20, 2017 at Leamington District Secondary School.





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