

SW Area Boundary Study
Committee Member Emails
November 11, 2015 – December 4, 2015

Prepared by the Baltimore County Public Schools

Office of Strategic Planning, December 4, 2015

Brocato, Christopher J.

From:
Sent: Wednesday, November 11, 2015 12:00 PM
To: Boundary Study
Subject: Matt Cropper - from Committee member Donna Knutson - Hillcrest

Categories: Orange Category

Hello Matt,

My name is Donna Knutson, I am a boundary committee member and I will be at the meeting tonight. This however, is the first meeting I'm feeling nervous about.

At the last meeting, I saw map C with adjustments to increase the diversity at Hillcrest and Westchester Elementary schools and to make the increases in the FARM levels at Catonsville elementary less drastic as our best option.

Options C, **with the above changes** -- reduces overcrowding at Johnnycake elementary. Brings some of the Johnnycake students to Westchester, a school with very low diversity numbers. The C option also reduces the diversity at Hillcrest. But as it leaves Hillcrest below capacity, the school could take back students that are currently attending Hillcrest that in C are moved to Catonsville. If those students STAY at Hillcrest it benefits both Hillcrest and Catonsville.

It also addresses what some people described as showing map C as Catonsville taking over the world.

I notices that all of these issues were touched on in the emails you received since our last meeting.

I really, really wanted to see a map this meeting that addresses all of these issues.

I think based on all that we've talked about such a map creates

1. Strong Woodbridge Valley Elem
2. Recuces overcrowding at Johnnycake Elementary
3. Improves diversity at Westchester and Hillcrest Elementary
4. Gives Catonsville a lower spike in its FARM numbers, allowing the school to better meet all of its students' needs.

Still this leaves one school in need, and that is Edmonson Village.

I believe that school's overcrowding can initially be handled by moving some students to the new Westowne School.

I know that we brought many of these issues up to you at the close of our last meeting.

I am usually really quiet. I like to speak out if I understand fully what I think is needed.

I am praying that this information was heard and incorporated in tonight's offerings and that a version of this plan can be presented to the public at large in our following meeting.

See you this evening.

Sincerely,

Donna Knutson

Hillcrest Parent - Boundary Committee member

Brocato, Christopher J.

From: CHI B
Sent: Friday, November 13, 2015 8:35 AM
To: Boundary Study
Subject: Walk zone for new Catonsville Elementary School

Categories: Orange Category

BCPS,

Is it possible to show on the remaining four plot maps where the proposed walk zone will be for the newly located Catonsville Elementary School on Bloomsbury Ave. Perhaps a circle with walk zone hatching around the new school location as the possible limits of the proposed walk zone can be shown. Showing the existing walk zone at the Catonsville Elementary School located on Frederick Road is not a true representation of what the new walk zone will be.

Thank you,

Chris Burk, P.E., Prof.L.S.

Brocato, Christopher J.

From: allison white
Sent: Tuesday, November 17, 2015 6:25 AM
To: Boundary Study
Subject: Concerning PBs 510, 354 and 543

Categories: Orange Category

Dear Committee Members,

I wanted to make the committee aware of a conflict that occurs in each of the final four map options left in the process. The community consisting of planning blocks 510, 543 and 354 have been made into an "island" by all of the maps. This community is only accessible by a residential street (Hilton Ave). These students will have to drive past their neighbors (all attending Hillcrest), through a corridor of other Hillcrest students, past Hillcrest itself and then on to their new school, Catonsville Elementary.

I would like to suggest the following (Referring to Option I- now Option 3):

1. The Johnnycake schools in blocks 481-485 move to Hillcrest
2. The planning blocks 525 and 462 move to Westchester
3. The planning blocks 510, 543 and 354 move to Hillcrest

I mentioned this to Mr. Cropper at the last meeting and his concern was that by doing this (referring to 1 and 2 above), the current Johnnycake blocks would become an "island" much the same way the Hilton blocks are in the current maps. However, I would argue that the Johnnycake blocks are going to be an island no matter what school they attend on the south side of Rt. 40 because that is such a large road. These students would be riding on the same main road (Rolling Road) to get to either school. The Hilton blocks however, MUST drive through an entire residential community attending Hillcrest before they even get into another planning block that attends Catonsville Elementary. They also would need to drive up to Hillcrest itself, then pass it to get to Catonsville Elementary.

Thank you for your consideration,

Allison White
Committee Member
Westchester Elementary

Brocato, Christopher J.

From: Detwiler, Cara D
Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2015 3:04 PM
To: Detwiler, Cara D
Cc:

Subject: RE: Southwest Boundary Study - public information session
Attachments: boundaryletter (003).docx

Categories: Orange Category

Attached please find a letter about some of the concerns I have about the Boundary Redefining Process. Thank you for your time.

-Cara Detwiler

November 16, 2015

Dear Mr. Cropper and The Office of Strategic Planning,

I am a veteran teacher at Johnnycake Elementary School and I am a member of the panel for the Southwest Boundary Meeting. Throughout the process, I felt like Mr. Cropper and the planning committee have been responsive and open. During the last meeting in which the four final maps were chosen to present to the public and the Board, I became aware of several systemic racial inequities that may impact the outcomes of this process. I know the Office of Strategic Planning and Mr. Cropper have been dedicated to finding equitable solutions and as such, I wanted to share some concerns and possible solutions.

- All of the boundary meetings have been held at Catonsville High School, south of Route 40, which is a predominantly white and higher socio-economic area in the southwest community. Two other high schools, Lansdowne and Woodlawn were not selected to house these meetings. I feel it may have been beneficial to alternate between the three schools to make it easier for parents to attend as observers. Our parents would have had easy access to a meeting at Woodlawn High School because that is in their backyard, just as Catonsville High School is in the backyard of Catonsville, Hillcrest, Westowne, and Westchester. Parents who don't drive or who share a family car would have been able to walk to a meeting at Woodlawn. I fear that many parents and community members outside of Catonsville area may have been effectively shut out of the conversation from the very beginning of these meetings.
- At the November 11th meeting, maps were eliminated based on majority rules. Using majority rules gives more power to the schools south of Route 40. There are more schools south of Route 40, and subsequently this area had more representation at the boundary meetings, affording schools with a majority white population more input and a larger voice than neighboring minority communities.
- Three pieces of criteria were presented to us as how the boundaries would be considered: walkability, diversity, and capacity. In all of the remaining proposed maps, Woodbridge, Johnnycake, and Edmondson Heights are still the least diverse and Johnnycake is still over capacity. The criteria of walkability was overly valued when assessing why children south of Route 40 could not attend schools north of Route 40; at the same time, walkability was not a consideration for how students north of Route 40 would attend schools south of Route 40. While diversity was considered a benefit when it allowed for students of majority minority schools to be redistricted to predominantly white schools, diversity was considered a hindrance when discussing moving predominantly white students to majority minority schools.
- Only one proposal in the final round actually addressed integration that would enhance the diversity at Johnnycake, Woodbridge, and Edmondson Heights (Map J). I feel that the lack of options supporting diversity north of Route 40 is a representation of the lack of interest in relieving these schools of overcrowding and increasing diversity in these areas. Given that our county has addressed so many issues of equity and diversity head

on, I am disappointed that more care was not taken to address these critical equity issues that will impact our children for generations to come.

- I am concerned that the decision to eliminate some maps, including Map J, was done by majority rules and was therefore not equitable to areas with less representation.
- The four maps that are going to the public are essentially identical in terms of how they affect schools north of Rt. 40. Johnnycake will not really see any relief. I am concerned that the majority of the conversations, and subsequent revisions to the draft maps, have revolved around providing relief to the schools south of Rt. 40 (Hillcrest, Catonsville, Westchester, and Westowne). I am further concerned that the input has been provided by community members, staff, and parents representing schools north of Route 40 have not received the same weight as input from other areas.
- As I have reached out to members in the community of the school I represent, there is an overwhelming hesitancy to speak up and give voice to their concerns. Parents and community members have expressed that they are hesitant to bring up these issues for fear of being labeled an angry black parent or for fear that people would roll their eyes, dismiss their feelings, and convey irritation that they were “playing the race card.” While I am sure it is never the intention for the committee to systematically disregard the voices of minority communities, I am concerned that our community members have not felt like their voice would be respected and heard. Even as a white woman, I felt some of this tension as I spoke on behalf of my school during these meetings.

It is well-documented that children of color have access to better education, better programming, and better opportunities when they are enrolled in schools with white children. Johnnycake has worked hard to be culturally responsive to make sure that we serve our children, who are 94% students of color. Redrawing the boundaries presented a unique chance to create a more equitable and integrated world for all of our students. I know that the maps have already been chosen and I accept that it is what it is, but I ask that Mr. Cropper and the Office of Strategic Planning consider these issues and are cognizant of the impact that systemic inequity may have on the outcomes of redistricting as they continue with their work.

Thank you for allowing me to have a voice. I hope this committee will continue to keep equity as the forefront when making such complex and difficult decisions. The decisions we make today will impact generations of student and we have a unique opportunity to move our communities forward into a more diverse, equitable, and tolerant tomorrow.

Sincerely,
Cara Detwiler

Brocato, Christopher J.

From: Samantha
Sent: Sunday, November 22, 2015 9:22 PM
To: Taylor, Paul
Cc:

Subject: Re: Southwest Boundary Study -

Categories: Orange Category

Fellow Committee Members,

There are several concerns that I feel are worth mentioning prior to our December 9th meeting. Perhaps I am alone in my thinking, but I suspect I am not, and so I believe it important to share.

From the outset, I have been diligent to maintain a big picture approach and not view information and maps solely from my school's perspective. I have learned a great deal in this process, and appreciate this new knowledge and outlook on our community and school system.

I left last week's meeting with a hoarse voice, and far more questions than answers. I enjoyed speaking with many community members and found their comments and concerns insightful, and worthy of further investigation. As I've processed the meeting in my own way, I've returned to one question: are we doing the right thing? These changes will have a lasting impact, and it is imperative we make the best decision for our students and strike a balance among the guiding principles.

Many community members were passionate in sharing their ideas, thoughts, and objections to the maps we chose. In many ways, it would have been helpful to have this degree of public comment at an earlier meeting, as I find there is now even more information to filter given the strong feelings currently within the community. For example, are we making the right choice to move students from Johnnycake to Westchester when this may

potentially decrease Johnnycake's staffing? Is there a possibility for a future addition at Johnnycake that may alleviate their overcrowding, or do we offer the short term solution of moving students to a new school?

In addition, we have several planning blocks south of route 40 that are being impacted, and I heard strong opinions expressed from those living there (PB 525, 462, 463, 464). Is it worthwhile to move some students from Westchester to Hillcrest only to move another diverse neighborhood out of Hillcrest? If one of our goals is to move the smallest number of students, and maintain diversity, can we revisit options to leave as many as possible at their current school? Obviously Hillcrest needs relief, and we can't possibly please all, but incorporating some of this community feedback may help further guide us.

I appreciate that much of this has been part of our discussion from the start, but I also find that the public comments and concerns have increased greatly in the past few weeks, particularly in light of the information session, and that we now have additional information to take into serious consideration. It's my sense that the public was unsure (to some extent) of our process and the rationale behind some of the maps, and now that understanding has increased, more voices are being raised. How do we move forward while taking this feedback into account, especially with one remaining meeting?

This is not a critique of our committee or the outlined procedures, but rather a call for all of us to continue thinking critically, and long term, about our decisions. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share. I look forward to hearing from others.

Sincerely,

Samantha Lewandowski

Catonsville Elementary parent

Brocato, Christopher J.

From: Detwiler, Cara D
Sent: Monday, November 23, 2015 9:43 AM
To:
Cc:

Subject: RE: Southwest Boundary Study -

Categories: Orange Category

Many people at the meeting expressed concerns to me about the equity issues happening north of Rte. 40. (Some of them sought me out because they had watched the livestreams of the previous meetings.) A few brought up a point that I think we all had missed. . the PBs north of 40 are generally much more populous than the ones south of 40, meaning that part of why we've had difficulty moving kids out of Johnnycake is because to keep a neighborhood or PB together, we'd be moving LOTS of kids, as opposed to just moving 5 or 10 like the PBs south of 40. On the other hand, parents south of 40 expressed frustration that their PBs were so small because they felt that neighborhoods were being split apart.

A few parents also brought up that it doesn't seem to bother anyone that the kids from Johnnycake are crossing 40 but we have a problem with kids south of 40 crossing it. I know that several of us had noted this double standard before in committee meetings.

I will say a lot of parents at Johnnycake are feeling pretty upset that the additions were all put south of 40. As a community, we're also offended not just by the sentiments made in the public email log, but more so that after those sentiments were made, attempts to truly relieve Johnnycake of overcrowding were thwarted in this process, thereby giving the impression of kowtowing to the people who made the offensive sentiments. I know we are supposed to be looking out for all of the schools, but in all of the maps that we have left, it feels like there wasn't even a reason for those north of 40 to be at the meetings, and that did not go unnoticed at that community meeting. I know it's not in the purview of our committee, but we really need an addition built somewhere north of 40 if there is actual concern about relieving Johnnycake. Just moving 70-100 kids out of our school still leaves us overcrowded. On the other hand, many Johnnycake community members, including me, were approached by some very hostile members of the public who said some pretty blatantly racist things to us. .so I know we're also not feeling great about the idea of our kids being sent to schools that don't want them.

I know I've been a bit mouthy throughout this process and I won't apologize for that, but I do appreciate everyone's patience. Samantha, I'm glad you brought up that things still don't feel exactly right. I know several of us have been feeling that way for a while but it's hard to keep advocating for changes that few people want to discuss. I won't be at the next meeting – our fifth graders are performing their school musical. Honestly, I probably would have abstained

anyway since the maps don't make any difference for Johnnycake and last week's meeting made it very clear that we don't really understand the nuances of the communities outside of our own schools that are being affected by these changes. I think that maybe this public meeting should have happened earlier in our meeting process so we could be truly responsive, but hindsight's 20/20.

Brocato, Christopher J.

From: Kitchel James
Sent: Monday, November 23, 2015 1:55 PM
To:
Cc:

Subject: RE: Southwest Boundary Study -

Categories: Orange Category

I agree with the concerns both of you have raised. I am in the process of developing, as an individual, an email to the consultants, BCPS and the Board of Ed requesting that we refine the process going forward. Briefly, here are the points I'm going to be addressing. I am certainly interested in anyone's feedback.

1. I don't think we should have had 11 schools involved in the process, especially not this year. With Lansdowne and Relay getting new schools over the next couple of years, and with Arbutus and Halethorpe being in between those two new schools, it does not seem fair to that part our community to make them go through this twice in a 1st grader's elementary school career. As others have mentioned, the relief being provided to the schools north of 40 through this process either isn't real relief or may come with some significant, albeit unintended, consequences. If you look at a school like Chadwick as well, that whole area obviously needs a new school, and their participation in this process doesn't help that in any way.
2. Personally, I think there are multiple structural reasons why we should never have had 11 schools in the first place, and should not continue with 11 schools. But, if we had to, we certainly would have needed more time to really be able to learn each other's needs and what we might have done to accommodate as much as what was needed, by each school, as possible. We've really never been able to go through that process to the depth needed and, consequently, I think many of us found it difficult to explain to the public last week why the options were the way they were. To me, they are more the result of a coincidental process than a truly functional one. These next bits may seem a bit silly or small but think about this - first, we saw AND rejected multiple options in one meeting. Is that really the hallmark of a careful and fully considerate process? Second, I doubt more than a couple of folks can "name and face" all the members of the committee, or even more than half. I know I can't, and neither can any committee member whom I've asked. So here we are voting on things important to each other's lives and we don't even know each other's names??!! (The obvious extrapolation being that we also don't really know each other's needs and concerns.)
3. The results of the process, in multiple ways, do not conform to the stated goals. We have significant underuse and reduction of diversity in some schools, in more than one option. There are transportation, walkability, and both neighborhood and social cohort (moving through the school system) cohesiveness issues that have not been addressed. I don't attribute this to anything the least bit nefarious – it is just another unfortunate outcome of a coincidental, rather than a considered, process.

4. Call me crazy (I mean, for this specific reason) but I also think we are being short-sighted from a capacity standpoint. If you compare current enrollment to capacity in the four core Catonsville schools, we've got about 400 seats to spare, or roughly 100 per school. How long do we think it will take for that capacity to be used? Well, here are a couple of fun facts. Hillcrest's enrollment, this year, is around 750. But for a number of years it was well over 800. If you take that history, look at planned developments and talk to local real estate agents about the age demographic turnover happening every day in our community, this year's enrollment does not seem to be the norm. Plus let's just take the development at Caton Reserve. We already know – based on executed contracts, not projections – that there are ~ 20 elementary school age or younger kids coming into that development, with fewer than half the houses sold! In ONE year, if Hillcrest's numbers return to recent historical norms and Caton Reserve fills out the same way . . . Boom! . . . what was about 400 seat of excess capacity is now more like 280 or even less. In one year. And I don't think we will be able to address this as "easily" in 4-5 years as we did this time. We already know there are not a lot of great sites for schools around town, just sitting idly by, vacant and waiting to be filled. We also know that we have already picked the low hanging fruit by expanding Westchester and Catonsville to ~ 700 seats. Sure, you could put another classroom or two at Westowne and maybe Hillcrest but that's not much of a long term fix. Even if we had sites, we also know that the middle school and, perhaps more urgently, the high school situations have to be addressed sooner rather than later. I doubt there will be much money floating around for another round of elementary school expansion. I think, from a long-term perspective, it is best to add capacity north of 40 and redistrict in more geographically coherent areas around each chunk of new capacity.

Anyway, I will climb down off my soap box. There is still time, I think, if we refine to process: a) to not subject the Arbutus, Halethorpe, Lansdowne and Relay areas to repeated rounds of redistricting; b) to focus energy on providing real relief to schools north of 40 through the acquisition of a new school, which I would be happy to help work on; and c) to only redistrict in this round among the core Catonsville schools. Overall, my belief is that this would be Better Together for SW, and better than what we are doing now.

Thanks. Jim.

Brocato, Christopher J.

From: Shaunta Chapple
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 1:40 PM
To:
Cc:

Subject: Re: Southwest Boundary Study - information

Categories: Orange Category

Good afternoon,

I agree that an additional meeting would be appropriate.

I urge the committee to keep in mind that there will not be an option that appeases everyone, so we should not attempt to take on such an impossible feat. We must not waiver from the duty that has been bestowed upon us, or doubt our decisions thus far. If anything, we should build on our progress. We are to select the best option for the majority of students/families in the southwest area. The public information session was insightful, but much of what I have heard from the public (in reading emails and during the public information session) seems self-centered, and, discriminatory.

It is important for administrators to ensure that parents are aware that along with proposed changes, the appropriate resources will be put in place. For example, if Johnnycake loses students, and subsequently loses staff, the obvious fix would be to send the excess staff to the school where the students are being moved to, as they will then need these extra resources. If a school has resources now that may no longer be available once students are moved, we really have to examine whether those resources are still as necessary anyway if the majority of the children who needed them are relocated. I am speaking in very general terms, so I hope that what I am saying is not taken out of context or misunderstood. There are ways to ensure the success of this boundary change process, and the BCPS system has several offices that can lend support. For example, if there is concern about mixing students together in one school where there is a sharp divide in socioeconomic status, the office of equity and diversity should most certainly be in the back pocket of administrators as a tool, so to speak. Lets stick to the task at hand- selecting the best option for the majority. Individual school dynamics are beyond our scope, and I am confident that administrations are ready to address them.

On a lighter note, try not to think too much into the fact that different options put schools at or near capacity. For all we know, there could be a huge blizzard this winter, which would subsequently cause a greater influx of kindergartners a few years down the road ;-). Some things, we can't predict! Meaning, we may select an option where a school is under capacity now, but a huge number of things could change that in a year or two....

Parents who are concerned about middle school feeder patterns should probably take this up with the BCPS Board of Education and not wrestle with it during this process. It may be worthwhile to reexamine middle school boundaries after this process is complete if it is high on the list of concerns. However, personally, I do not understand why this is a crisis. Families move, sometimes children go to different middle schools than the friends they went to elementary school with, and vice versa. Now students will be exposed to different sets of children, instead of one big group moving from school to school. What a wonderful opportunity to make new friends, potentially learning new things and points of view! Children are resilient and much more open to change. This is also why extracurricular activities are important. While children who historically would have both attended the same elementary school and middle schools, but may be going to different elementary schools as a result of our process, there are still play dates, birthday parties, and soccer practices/games where these children can continue to forge close relationships with their peers at different elementary schools. Lets start taking about real life here, it is more than maps on a paper.

We cannot reject boundary options because it will send children from a school that is a "7" to a school that is a "3" because when you think about it, it is UNACCEPTABLE for any school to be a 3. After this process, it is up to the schools' communities to jump right in and examine the factors that are causing this negativity and figure out how it can be addressed to improve the quality of each school. All of the schools.

I had one of the officers of the PTA at my school tell me that her family member is outraged because she spent over \$300,000 on her home, and we (the committee) are considering zoning her children to the same school as children whose parents paid \$150,000 for their home. WHY IS THIS RELEVANT??? Just because people are in a lower income bracket does not make them any less dedicated to their child's education. If there is a school with limited parent involvement, it is up to the administration to find meaningful, effective ways to get these parents involved. Every parent cannot sit in every single PTA meeting when they have to work and may not have the option to take time off from work. Our current school structures cater to the parent who works Monday through Friday, 9-5, which is not representative of the entire Southwest area.

We should carefully consider moving children zoned to attend Halethorpe and Arbutus because a new Lansdowne Elementary could indeed be a game-changer. We can provide a little relief to these schools with the expanded capacity of a new Relay, but it does not have to be drastic. I think so far, we have done a good job with this. Keep in mind, Baltimore Highlands and Riverview Elementary are the schools poised to receive the greatest benefit from the replacement of Lansdowne Elementary.

In closing, we should all keep in mind that this is a public school system, and if, after our work is done, there are parents who believe their children have sustained an intolerable change in the newly zoned elementary school, they have the option to do one of three things: request a special permission transfer (though this is not guaranteed), move, or send their child to private school. Whatever happens, it is not the end of the world.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving!

Shaunta Chapple
Parent, Relay Elementary School

Brocato, Christopher J.

From: Kitchel James
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 2:32 PM
To:

Cc:

Subject: A request to refine the SW area boundary change process

Categories: Orange Category

Dear Baltimore County Public Schools and Baltimore County Board of Education,

I am writing to respectfully request that the current boundary change process, taking place among 11 schools in the SW part of the County, be refined to include only four (4) schools for the 2016-2017 school year. I have listed below, as briefly as I can, the reasons why I believe this is the best course of action for all the schools involved, and the community at large.

1. It is not apparent that a compelling rationale for including 11 schools in the boundary change process this year was ever put forth, although the question was asked at the first meeting. As the committee has worked through the process to date, and as more external information has become available, it is increasingly apparent that there are better reasons why all 11 school should *not* be included this year.
 - a. Over the time the committee has been in session, the prospect of a new elementary school at Lansdowne has become a reality. Currently, it looks like Lansdowne will come on line in 2018. Relay is already slated to be completed in 2017. At that point, Arbutus and Halethorpe will be between two brand new, higher capacity schools – and the boundary change process will need to begin again. It seems neither fair nor efficient to make that part our community go through this twice in a 1st grader’s elementary school career.
 - b. The current boundary change process is not going to provide significant relief to the three schools north of Route 40. At least one of those schools, Johnnycake ES, is concerned that “relief” will end up leaving their school in worse shape than if nothing was done to help them. More and more voices are being heard from that community regarding the need for equity – in the form of a new school – north of 40 as well. And, when you consider schools like

Chadwick ES, just a bit further north of those schools and quite overcrowded itself, the need for a new school is even more obvious and pressing.

2. I am concerned that we are being short-sighted, from a capacity perspective. The current enrollment of the 11 schools is approximately 5941. Not counting Lansdowne, the planned capacity will be 6109. That means, when all is said and done, we will have only 168 seats available for future growth. This equates to an average of 15 seats per school! Even if you add Lansdowne's projected capacity – and you assume that NONE of that additional capacity will be used outside the current 11 schools, which is nonsensical – you still end up with LESS than two classrooms of additional capacity per school. Many schools fluctuate by a class or even two within a year frequently. Two things seem obvious – we will continue to need additional capacity in the SW area, and refining the boundary change process so that it only spans more geographically appropriate areas is the best way to allocate the new capacity. When you consider the middle and, especially, high school capacity needs in this part of the county, as well as needs in other parts of the county, along with the difficulty of finding appropriate expansion sites in a set of mature suburbs, making the best of our capacity through a more targeted boundary change process only makes sense.
3. Not only are there the structural reasons, listed above, that speak to the problem of including 11 schools at once, the process itself exposes those challenges. For example, no committee member I have spoken with – and I have spoken with at least 10 – can name all the other committee members. Or even a simple majority of them. I certainly can't. I am not trying to be superficial here, but we're voting on issues crucial to people's lives and their communities. Yet we don't even know each other's names? How then can we have the necessary deep and nuanced understanding of each school and community's needs? Much of the process to date has necessarily been bilateral, between the committee and the staff/consultants. We've really never been able to go through that process to the depth needed and, consequently, I think many of us found it difficult to explain to the public why the options were the way they were. To me, the options are more the result of a coincidental process than a truly functional one. This also speaks to the need to refine the process at this point so that it can become effective. Our entire community deserves no less.
4. The results of the process, in multiple ways, do not conform to the stated goals. We have significant underuse and reduction of diversity in some schools, in more than one option. There are transportation, walkability, and both neighborhood and social cohort (moving through the school system) cohesiveness issues that have not been addressed. I don't attribute this to anything the least bit nefarious – it is just another unfortunate outcome of a coincidental, rather than a considered, process. Additionally, 50% of the options on the table differ only in the change of one planning block, from one school to another. If this were the result of a careful, considered process – the parameters and trade-offs of which could be fully explained – that would be one thing. But it isn't, because not enough of those discussions took place. Finally, I would like to highlight two things that happened in the last committee meeting before the public session. First, we received AND rejected multiple options – in the same night! Is this the hallmark of a considered process or a coincidental one? Second, at the end of the meeting, I asked why anyone had voted for the most “popular” option, given that it lessened diversity and exacerbated under use, specifically at some schools where both would be an issue. 21 people voted for that option. Not one person rose to explain why. Again, I do not attribute this to bad motives but rather that – when called upon – people, through no fault of their own, would not have been able to give a full explanation of why they voted that way – especially not in consideration of schools other than their own.

There is plenty of time to refine the process, make use of the work done to date and come up with a boundary change recommendation targeted to the four schools – based on capacity and construction schedule – that should be undergoing the process this year. Please grant our request and refine this process to include Catonsville, Hillcrest, Westchester and Westowne Elementary Schools.

Thank-you for your consideration. I am available should you have any questions.

Jim Kitchel

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Brocato, Christopher J.

From: Detwiler, Cara D
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 5:06 PM
To:

Cc:

Subject: RE: Southwest Boundary Study - information

Categories: Orange Category

I think another committee meeting could be really helpful. I also think another public meeting would be helpful. Do all of the meetings have to be at Catonsville High? Could we meet at Woodlawn or Lansdowne High to create more opportunity for different families to attend?

A member of Johnnycake's PTA suggested that some sort of information should have been held at the beginning of this process at each of the schools before any maps were drawn. Obviously, it's too late for that, but is it possible for someone in charge of the committee to make a point to meet at the affected schools directly before a final recommendation is made?

Thanks! Happy holidays!

Brocato, Christopher J.

From: Taylor, Paul
Sent: Tuesday, December 1, 2015 10:12 AM
To: Brocato, Christopher J.; Chandler, Bonita
Subject: FW: Please add to email log

Categories: Orange Category

From: Shaunta Chapple
Sent: Tuesday, December 01, 2015 9:06 AM
To: Taylor, Paul
Subject: Please add to email log

There are some concerns that were raised by a representative of Relay Elementary; she was urged to submit this information to the entire committee. Below is my response:

There are few other school zones that have comparable geographical considerations like ours. The areas of UMBC, the Halethorpe industrial area, and even the Patapsco State Park exist in close proximity to our school, so while they do not add students to our numbers, they must be planned around accordingly. Visually, it does create islands, but in actuality, it makes sense.

We cannot focus too much on the capacity issue, as things happen that are beyond our control that can either add to or take away from our student enrollment numbers as times moves on. We do not want to start out on the first day the school opens being over capacity, but so long as we are under and have a little cushion, I think this is great.

I totally agree that a bus should not make a left hand turn off of Clarke Blvd onto Rt.1, unless there are plans to have a traffic light put at that intersection prior to the opening of our new school. Otherwise, maybe a modification of the green bus route may accommodate this change.

There is a much safer left hand turn onto Rt 1 at a traffic light in the St. Dennis area- at Rt 1 and South Street. Perhaps the bus could leave Relay, go through St. Dennis, turn left, pick up students in planning blocks 406, 407, and 527, circle around, then make a right turn off of Rt 1 onto Clarke Blvd to get back to Relay. Is there a guideline about how long bus trips should be (distance and time)? Over 1.5 miles doesn't seem like much given that if a student lives within 1 mile, they walk, and outside of that, they catch a bus, but this is said without my knowing the intricacies of the transportation guidelines.

A new Lansdowne Elementary is being considered, but it is a lot farther from the families in PBs 406, 407, and 527 than Relay, so I think our current options are the most effective way to relieve Halethorpe since Relay is closer than Lansdowne. Lansdowne is a distinctly different community, but Halethorpe, Relay, and Arbutus blend. At the library, at sporting events, at neighborhood stores, and community events, you are likely to find families from all three of these schools.

Zoning planning blocks 430 and 431 for Relay seem to enhance neighborhood cohesiveness, as at present, one side of Westland Gardens attends Relay, and the other attends Arbutus. Those students should all attend one school. Our most recent boundary options ensure this, and speak to maintaining/increasing diversity at Relay.

I think that it would be a great thing to bring Pre-K back to Relay. There are families whose children do not qualify for headstart or admission to Pre-K because of income restrictions, but those families cannot afford to send their child to private Pre-K. I just read an article about this. Without Pre-K at Relay, the area's Pre-K programs at other schools have lengthy wait-lists, and, children from middle class families are left out in the cold...at home an extra year when they could be in school learning. Only 20 children are accepted for each session, so this is not a huge deal numbers wise.

I do think that expanding enrollment in the Halethorpe-Arbutus area is best, as opposed to extending into Catonsville. This would protect the middle school feeder patterns that some are concerned about.

Thank you,
Shaunta Chapple