

**SW Area Boundary Study 2015:
Committee Member Emails
December 4, 2015 – December 9, 2015**

Prepared by the Baltimore County Public Schools

Office of Strategic Planning, December 9, 2015

Brocato, Christopher J.

From: Kitchel James
Sent: Friday, December 4, 2015 1:43 PM
To:

Cc:

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

Categories: Orange Category

I don't think I have received a substantive response to my previous email. If I have and have overlooked it, my apologies. To perhaps further the discussion, I would like to simply ask a couple of questions.

A. Given that the Arbutus/Halethorpe/Lansdowne/Relay areas will need to go through redistricting again, soon, in preparation for when the new school at Lansdowne comes on-line, why it is useful, fair and efficient to make them continue participating in this process now?

B. Given that this process is not providing real relief to Edmondson Heights, Johnnycake and Woodbridge and given that the process has highlighted the need for additional elementary school capacity in that area of the county, why is it useful, fair and efficient to make them continue participating in this process now?

It is entirely possible that I am overlooking something – wouldn't be the first time! <g> So I would love to hear from anyone – BCPS, BoE, committee members – as to what I am missing and why my questions are not germane.

Thanks. Jim.

Brocato, Christopher J.

From: Gemmell, Danielle M
Sent: Friday, December 4, 2015 3:49 PM
To: Kitchel James
Cc:

Subject: Re: Follow-up - A request to refine the SW area boundary change process

Categories: Orange Category

Halethorpe will be affected next year even though Relay will not be built for another year. Students at Halethorpe will be re-zoned to several schools which will take affect next school year and the following year.

For example, there is a planning block that will be sent to Catonsville Elementary which they will go there next year. There are some students who may be zoned for Arbutus which will take affect next year as well. Those who are going to Relay will not move until the following year.

I hope that makes sense but we are affected next year and the following year so I feel as though we should be a part of this committee right now.

Danielle Gemmell

Sent from my iPhone

Brocato, Christopher J.

From:
Sent: Monday, December 7, 2015 4:13 PM
To:

Cc:

Subject: Some notes from running the neighborhoods

Categories: Orange Category

Mr. Cropper and the Boundary Committee,

Throughout the boundary study process, I have altered my normal running routes to make my way through some of the neighborhoods affected in the proposed boundary changes. It has helped to get a view from the ground, although it can't compare to actually living in the neighborhoods. I'd like to offer my observations (for what they're worth) to the committee. I approached these notes from the perspective that the process is moving forward with the four options presented to the public with the possibility of making some slight adjustments to the current maps.

My apologies that these observations come so close to the end of our study. What I observed before the public information session mostly confirmed the wisdom of the proposed maps. Most changes have been made in a way that preserves or reconnects neighborhoods and makes adjustments based on similar lots and construction, clearly defined roadways, and geographic features. But after the public information session I was more curious about some of the comments we were hearing. I wanted to investigate things a bit deeper and run through some planning blocks that I had not yet explored. I hope some of this could still be useful during the remainder of the process.

In response to public comments, and after carefully observing these areas:

– A few parents were concerned about walkability to the new CES from the west. One parent mentioned that there were no sidewalks on Magruder and their kids would have to be bussed to CES whereas they could walk to HES. I found that, although a section of the sidewalk is somewhat overgrown asphalt, there is a sidewalk on one or both sides of Magruder from Mellor to Forest. A crosswalk, stop sign, and crossing guard at Magruder and Mellor would be safest to get students across to the new CES, but this should be walkable. There are not many stop signs on Magruder and cars tend to go a bit fast, so some traffic calming on Magruder would be appropriate to ensure the safety of walkers along that road.

– Some parents were concerned about the perception of the proposed Relay boundaries as three "islands," and indeed the proposed maps have the Relay boundaries sprawling across the map—enveloping Arbutus and Halethorpe. I ran through the areas east of UMBC and noticed that the added blocks north of the current boundaries are blocks with similar construction and with a feel of a neighborhood. I also noticed that in the current maps, this section looks even more like an island. Below, I go into some possible planning block adjustments about this area. I didn't run the proposed addition east of Washington Blvd, but I have run there in the past (that area is on my list for my next run—possibly tomorrow). From my memory, this neighborhood is constrained by Washington Blvd and tucked in between railways, industrial/commercial areas, 695 and a cemetery. And while it doesn't seem obvious to connect it to Relay, if it all moves in one section, this makes sense to me. I realize that the busses might have to travel through another boundary to get there safely, but I also realize that busses already do that with the current boundaries in some circumstances.

–Other parents questioned whether PB525 should be rejoined with its neighborhood. Running down Melvin and Suter, it makes no sense that this block was ever removed from its neighborhood. The houses along both roads are identical in construction and the traffic flows like a unified neighborhood from PB252 through PB460.

–Adding Arkla Ct. back to Westowne makes perfect sense. It feels like an autonomous neighborhood (mostly post-war single family and duplexes) and if it's already part of Westowne, it's a good opportunity to limit disruption. I was surprised to see that there was one house west of Tanglewood that was included in that block, but if it's already in that boundary, it seems appropriate to keep it there.

–Planning blocks 511, 513, and 515 came up again and again. Even though there is a crosswalk, Rolling Road is extremely difficult to cross as a runner. I would imagine it would be even more harrowing as a walker and no picnic as a driver either. It seems less intuitive to move these blocks to CES than the blocks immediately west of the new building. I could see if all of Newburg was moving to CES, but moving the southwest part without moving the northwest part doesn't make much sense from the ground. To that point, planning blocks 511 & 515 include houses on either side of Rolling, where drawing the boundary along Rolling might make more sense (more below about that).

–I heard and read many comments regarding block 514 in option 2. Most thought that cutting into a current walking zone for Hillcrest in order to change their students to possible busses at CES didn't make sense. I tend to agree. The only way that might make sense to me, would be to split PB 514 and send part to HES and part to CES, possibly along Forest as there is a sidewalk leading east along Magruder.

Planning block adjustments for further consideration:

–Some houses in planning blocks 511 & 515 seem separated from their neighborhood in most options. I realize that the middle school boundaries use the same planning blocks, but it might make more sense if the houses NE of Rolling were moved into planning block 351. This has not been an issue for elementary school boundaries, since all those blocks are zoned together currently.

–In the proposed changes, Relay loses a few planning blocks that might be reconsidered. PB995 currently has 2 students and mostly covers the grounds of Arbutus middle school. Is it possible that those students and houses could remain at Relay? There is also a small group of houses along Sulphur Spring and Garrett in PB 48 separated from the rest of that planning block by Arbutus Memorial Park Cemetery. Would it make sense to add that neighborhood to PB995 and connect the north "island" of Relay to the south "island?"

The occasional odd-house-out scenario (thinking of what would make the most sense long term, we might consider adjusting these to be within more intuitive boundaries, but I would hope that the current residents could be given the choice of staying with their current boundary or going with a new one):

– In PB51 (Relay), there is one house on the SE side of Shelbourne (5105 Shelbourne) that sticks out from the rest of PB51 and is immediately behind 7 properties in PB416. It is like that currently and in all scenarios.

–In PB1001, 605 Hilton is zoned for Arbutus MS, and while the boundaries for option 3 match the middle school boundaries up to Hilton, this property is not included in the new CES boundary.

Thanks for reading.

Again, these are based on my perceptions running through these areas. Perhaps spending a bit more time in each than one might in a car, but a lot less time than anyone who lives there. I make no claims of expertise in assessing neighborhoods, but these are my honest impressions from my short travels through each area and some in-depth study of the maps.

See you Wednesday,
Tadd Russo
Parent, Westchester Elementary School

From: Kitchel James

Sent: Monday, December 07, 2015 4:43 PM

To: Brown, Russell

Cc:

Subject: RE:

Mr. Brown, I appreciate the response. A couple of things.

First, in terms of adjacency, Lansdowne is not adjacent to any building projects and is now slated to get its own new school. And, although Arbutus/Halethorpe and Relay fit your definition, their new capacity will not come on-line for a year. With the addition of the new school at Lansdowne, any reasonable argument for their inclusion in **this** round of redistricting would seem to be severely weakened. What reason is BCPS going to give that part of our community, as to why they have to do this twice in a couple of years? Second, the schools north of Route 40 may technically be "adjacent", in that their boundaries touch boundaries of schools. But with a transportation challenge like Route 40 in the mix, they don't seem to fit a functional definition of adjacent. This has been borne out by the process - their "adjacency" is conferring no advantage or assistance to them and may, in fact, be detrimental.

A school system, of all organizations, should be a learning entity. Whatever the initial suppositions were, there are clear lessons to be learned from the process so far, lessons that can be used to refine the process to benefit of **all** the schools involved.

Thanks. Jim.

Brocato, Christopher J.

From: CHI B
Sent: Tuesday, December 8, 2015 12:37 PM
To:
Cc:

Subject: Re: Some notes from running the neighborhoods
Attachments: Magruder Ave - Lack of Pedestrian Facilities.docx

BCPS, Boundary Committee, and Mr. Cropper:

There was definitely a lot of concern by the public with the lack of pedestrian facilities for children and even the public at large to walk to the new Catonsville Elementary School at Bloomsbury. I attached a google earth view of Magruder Ave. showing exactly what Tadd stated.

I would like for BCPS to let the Boundary Committee as well as the public know if they have been coordinating with the Bureau of Highways to have these facilities constructed. I can tell you from first hand experience, I had to fight with the County a year ago just to get pedestrian ramps at the existing Harlem Lane crossing in front of Westowne Elementary.

Thanks for your time.

Chris Burk, P.E., Prof.L.S.
Community Member, Westowne Elementary School



View looking west onto Magruder Ave from Mellor Ave.

Question to BCPS? Has BCPS reached out to the County Bureau of Highways to address the lack of pedestrian facilities for people to walk to the new Catonsville Elementary School at Bloomsbury.