

Southwest Area Boundary Study Committee

Meeting # 2 Notes
September 30, 2015

Committee and School System Attendees

PTA/Parent Representatives

Nazish Khan – Arbutus ES
Krista Wallman – Arbutus ES
Kelvin Carney – Catonsville ES
Samantha Lewandowski – Catonsville ES
Larry Martin – Edmondson Heights ES
Romaine Smoot – Edmondson Heights ES
Corinne Louden – Halethorpe ES
James Kitchel – Hillcrest ES
Donna Knutson – Hillcrest ES
Obi Linton – Johnnycake ES
Jeff Sanford – Johnnycake ES
Molly Cammacho – Lansdowne ES
Jane Allen – Relay ES
Shaunta Chapple – Relay ES
Tadd Russo – Westchester ES
Allison White – Westchester ES
Christopher Burk – Westowne ES
Kecia Johnson – Westowne ES
Beverly Coleman – Member at large

Teacher/Staff Representatives

Lori O'Donnell – Arbutus ES
Paula Doll – Catonsville ES
Whitney Plunkett – Edmondson Heights ES
Danielle Gemmell – Halethorpe ES
Erika Herman – Hillcrest ES
Cara Detwiler – Johnnycake ES
Nicola Styer – Lansdowne ES
Patricia Wilding – Relay ES
Kim Noppenberger – Westchester ES
Andrea Gibble – Woodbridge ES

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Principal Representatives

Brent Grabill – Arbutus ES
Linda Miller – Catonsville ES
Juliet McDivitt – Edmondson Heights ES
Jill Carter – Halethorpe ES
Doug Elmendorf – Hillcrest ES
Bre-Anne Fortkamp – Johnnycake ES
Stephen Price – Lansdowne ES
Lisa Dingle – Relay ES
Phil Byers - Westchester
Lori Phelps – Woodbridge ES

System Representatives

Matt Cropper – Cropper GIS, Consultant to BCPS
Heidi Miller – Co-Chair
Monique Wheatley-Phillip – Co-Chair
Kara Calder – Executive Director, Strategic Planning and Research
Paul Taylor – Coordinator of Strategic Planning
Chris Brocato – Planning Analyst
Pam Carter – Planning Consultant
Candace Logan-Washington – Organizational Effectiveness
Lynn Morningstar – Transportation

Other Attendees from the Community

Cathy Engers – Office of Councilman Quirk
Heather Norris – The Catonsville Times
Tracey Bowden – Catonsville ES
Quint Gregory
Chris (?) Miln (?)

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Materials provided for members of the Southwest Area Boundary Study Committee were distributed to each member of the committee and staff. The materials included a meeting agenda and schedule, meeting goals, a review of the project objectives and guiding principles, responses to questions raised at Meeting #1, a review of Meeting #1 information, results of the SWOT analysis, data on school overcrowding, and the first three preliminary boundary options and statistics.

Meeting Highlights

- At 6:00 p.m. Matt Cropper greeted committee members and observers and walked committee members through the packet contents, sharing the evening's three goals:
 1. To provide follow-up and responses to committee requests and questions
 2. To review DRAFT baseline options and related data
 3. To break into small groups to discuss and mark up baseline options and provide feedback, ask questions, and continue to advance options
- Mr. Cropper then reviewed the major goals of this boundary change process:
 1. To address the overcrowding at nine elementary schools in the southwest region of the county;
 2. To develop boundary change scenarios that will equitably distribute students within available school space in a manner that ensures that students will be redistricted only once; and
 3. To develop scenarios that maintain neighborhood continuity, maintain or increase diversity, make efficient use of available school capacity, maximize walkability, and minimize transportation time and distance to the greatest extent possible.
- At approximately 6:10, Mr. Cropper went over the questions and requests raised by committee members at Meeting #1. He referenced informative pages in the materials packet for their reference. Plats of large-scale maps depicting southwest study area features such as zoning, landmarks, industrial, commercial and residential properties, hospitals, college campuses and aerial views were available. He also informed the committee that the Baltimore County planning office had provided information on approved developments as well as future, as yet unapproved development requests.
- Mr. Cropper spent some time demonstrating the features and layers of the online interactive maps that can be referenced as a powerful resource to locate planning blocks, numbers of students residing in each planning block, and boundary change options posted with current boundaries superimposed over proposed boundaries. These may be accessed via Firefox and several other web browsers.
- At 6:17, Mr. Cropper began to address questions posted between the first two meetings, so that all members of the committee could be made aware of these issues. The first concerned under what conditions a student might remain at the school they are currently attending, even though a boundary change may go into effect. He referenced Board of Education

Policy and Rule 5140, indicating that the latest version of the policy allows students in the last two grades of any school undergoing a boundary change to apply for and receive a special permission transfer to remain in the school they have been attending until they matriculate to the next level. That would affect existing students entering grades four or five of elementary school in the year that the boundary change goes into effect.

- As a follow-up to the first question, Mr. Cropper was asked how the choices made by the people requesting special permission transfer to remain at a specific school would affect the outcome or effectiveness of the boundary changes, especially if large numbers of families chose to make such a request for students and their younger siblings. In response, Mr. Cropper reminded the committee that there is always a transition period in which students who have received special permission migrate through the grade levels.
- When asked about transportation for special permission transfer students, committee members were reminded that Board Policy requires special permission transfer students' families to provide the transportation to the school they have requested, as bussing is not provided.
- The next question involved planning blocks and how they are devised and if they can be modified. Mr. Cropper defined planning blocks as small geographic units, such as a neighborhood or a development or an apartment complex that should move or stay together as a unit. They should be created with reasonable size and density. Many also conform to existing middle and high school boundaries to help maintain continuity of progress through the grade levels for resident students. They can of course be modified if there is a need to do so.
- The following question asked if target attendance numbers had been created for each of the schools in the study. Mr. Cropper reminded committee members that the whole cluster of schools is over 100% of capacity. Even with the construction of some replacement schools and some additions, the cluster will still be at over 90% of capacity. He indicated that, "There isn't a hard target for each school, but we'd like to keep them within 94% of capacity."
- Another question referenced the proposed replacement of Lansdowne Elementary School with a new, larger building, which will appear in the FY17 capital budget. Mr. Cropper indicated that as a result of this boundary study, Lansdowne could get some short term relief, but would not go below 100% of capacity until after the capital project is completed.
- The principal of Edmondson Heights Elementary School wondered how accurate the student enrollment numbers were, given that they appeared lower than her actual end year pupil count. Mr. Cropper reminded the committee that the numbers he has been using do not include PreK students, since it is a half-day program that is not offered to all students nor at all schools. In addition, some students qualifying for PreK do not necessarily receive instruction at their home school. Multiple members of the committee expressed concern about the impact of PreK program location and enrollment on their deliberations. Mr. Cropper will provide information at the next meeting on the distribution of PreK students in the area and the impact that they have on space use within the schools.
- At 6:35, Mr. Cropper reminded committee members that the committee will try to come up with as many draft options as possible and then refine them by identifying those options which proved to be most viable.

- At 6:39, the committee was to break into six groups of randomly assigned committee members to allow individuals from a variety of schools to consider the initial DRAFT options, but additional questions were raised about the impact of PreK on their review of the DRAFT options. Mr. Cropper reiterated that stable boundaries are created based on the residency of the students within them, not necessarily on special programs that may be moved from school to school, however he restated his commitment to update the data for the next meeting to include information on the impact of PreK and other regional programs.
- Another individual asked if pupil yields for new or proposed development had been factored into the data. The answer was that it has not historically been added in because it represents an average which may not be reached until a development has been approved, constructed, and occupied for a number of years, but that we should certainly consider it as one of many factors that can affect future enrollments.
- There was also a question about whether household income has been provided for the planning blocks. Mr. Cropper explained that the standard indicator of household income that is used in boundary change processes is the number and percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced price meals (FARMS).
- One concern raised was that the proposed project for Lansdowne Elementary School could be put at risk if Lansdowne received overcrowding relief while the project was still in the planning and funding stages.
- At 6:53, with the above questions answered, the committee broke into six groups that were each provided with three large scale maps depicting the three initial DRAFT boundary change options for consideration. Folks were encouraged to study the maps, write questions or comments on the maps referencing what they liked, where they had questions, etc. Committee members were actively engaged for the next half hour considering the changes for each school that could take place, given each option.
- At 7:22, the entire committee was called back to order and each group was encouraged to share their main ideas and issues related to the initial draft options. Input included:
- Observation that a good part of the group's time was related to figuring out the intent behind what had been offered in each of the scenarios.
 - Some boundary adjustments seemed to be consistent across the scenarios.
 - Why were certain planning blocks moved?
 - Why, in all three scenarios, was there movement of students back and forth between Catonsville and Halethorpe and Westchester?
- Will FARMS data related to the boundary change be included in future reports?
- Concern about students from Westchester crossing Route 40, related to potential bus problems.
- Concern that children within walking distance of Westowne but transported due to lack of sidewalks would be redistricted to a school where their bus ride would be increased by time and distance.
- Concern about attention to neighborhood continuity related to planning block #5.
- Questions regarding the distance students would travel to Westowne from north of Route 40 in option 1.
- Concerns regarding a largely Burmese population of an apartment complex currently in Halethorpe and nurtured by that school being pulled into the Catonsville boundary and

subjecting the youngsters to an abrupt change of schools and little chance to take advantage of special permission transfer, given families' lack of transportation.

- Question as to whether special programs offered by specific schools would remain there, despite boundary changes.
- From an equity perspective, many of the schools in the area are old and that more new schools are needed.
- Concerns regarding fraudulent enrollment of students residing within the Baltimore City portion of zip-code 21229.
- Concern that in the DRAFT options, certain planning blocks seem to be pushed around more than others.
- Question about why neighborhoods of mostly single family homes were targeted for movement out of the Johnnycake boundary, leaving more needy students from rental housing units in place. The concern was that even though the enrollment would go down, the desire for current staffing levels required to meet the needs of the most fragile students would be compromised.
- Planning blocks zoned for Halethorpe should be in Relay.
- Question regarding why all students residing on a specific street should not go to the same school, even if there is a division between single family homes and townhouses.
- By 7:45, the groups had reported back and an additional question was raised, concerning Scholars K-8. There was some concern that when the school is closed at the end of the year 2015-2016 school year, students may be returning to Edmondson Heights and other schools involved in the study. Mr. Cropper agreed to bring information on the potential impact of the closing of Scholars K-8 to the next meeting.
- A committee member asked if, before next meeting, any additional options would be able to be accessed in advance. Mr. Cropper replied that although he usually introduces new DRAFT options at meetings of the committee as a whole, he would explore whether the two-week turnaround time would allow for an earlier release of new option, he also encouraged committee members to continue to review the original options on their own, using the interactive map if needed and to send him emails or write down additional thoughts to share at the next meeting.
- The meeting was brought to a close at 7:50.

NEXT MEETING:

Boundary Study Committee Meeting # 3

Wednesday, October 14, 2015

Catonsville High School Cafeteria

6:00-7:30 p.m.

(Light dinner for committee members served at 5:30 p.m.)