

## 2013-14 Happy Valley/Lowell Attendance Area Committee

### January 24, 2014 – Meeting #7 Minutes

1. Rob McElroy welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 3:10 p.m.
2. Rob asked the committee to review the minutes from the January 21, 2014 meeting. There was a request to include the discussion regarding the students west of 21<sup>st</sup> attending Happy Valley rather than Lowell. That will be added, and the minutes were approved with that change.
3. Rob believes there are three thoughtful options on the table, and that any of the three could work well for most families. A decision does need to be made regarding the committee's recommendation to the superintendent. There is another upcoming boundary change that will affect north side elementary schools, and the district's current intention is to communicate to families regarding all boundary changes at the same time (in February). Ron acknowledged that there is always some un-comfortableness when new boundary lines are being established, and reminded the committee that any proposal recommended by the committee will result in some families who will not be pleased with the outcome. Those could likely be alleviated with the transfer (blue slip) process, but there are no guarantees with that process. He believes that it was the strong consensus of this group that we go forward to the community with one proposal. Small adjustments to that proposal could be made, but to come up with a whole new scenario may make this committee lose credibility. Rob pointed out that, once the committee decides on a recommendation, there will be some work necessary to prepare the final recommendation to the superintendent, and Tanya Rowe would like to work with a small group from the committee next Monday to start the work on the formal recommendation.
4. Ron stated that he had Steve Walker put together some new maps that show open spaces and parks, as this helps to give some perspective to the region. A committee member pointed out that some of the areas on Chuckanut are not on the map and asked how many students are in that area. Steve indicated that there are about 12 students who live in that area, and the reason the map doesn't show that area is because it has been established that the decision on where the boundary lines are drawn will not be influenced by that area, and by not including that area on the map he is able to show more detail for the areas that are still being discussed. The committee member would like the record to reflect that the committee is aware of these students, and they are not being forgotten.
5. Ron displayed the slides for revisions under consideration. These slides include all current students, including students who are considered transfer students. There was some discussion about the differences in the scenarios. A correction was made to the free and reduced numbers. There was discussion regarding how parent involvement might be impacted by revisions to the proposal.

6. Rob asked if the committee could break into three small groups, with each group taking one of the possible revisions and thinking about how that particular scenario is reflected by the five main criteria/consideration factors:

- Provide overall balance of student numbers that relates to facility size and taking into account future growth patterns.
- Provide a reasonably balanced socio-economic relationship in all schools.
- Provide the most efficient and feasible means for student transportation to and from schools, including walking routes, and minimizing travel time and transportation costs.
- Whenever possible, keep neighborhoods together.
- Where possible, follow natural boundaries and utilize existing physical boundaries such as major roadways.

Each of the three groups then shared with the entire committee their feedback:

Scenario A:

- N/A
- Socio-economic relationship as it relates to parent PTA participation
- Safety (Hawthorne); Willow neighborhood has a bus stop; there is transportation; 2 buses – is it efficient?
- Small, separate neighborhood; cut out of a continuous community; blue slips into Lowell from this area
- No natural boundaries in Willow area and Bayside

Scenario A-1:

- Yes (or n/a) because they are so similar
- Yes, it mostly stays the same
- Within 1 mile for walking. Potentially more riders=too many riders, pushes bus limit for both time and number of riders
- There will not be any unusual boundaries, better than A, but leaves out Willow Court
- Chuckanut is a more natural boundary

Scenario B:

- Not much difference, seems to work
- Virtually no change in free/reduced, but there may be a difference in parent participation (not as good as scenario A)
- Bus access is better if no change to current bus stops; closer to Lowell; better walking route (closer)
- Better than A or A-1, fixes the strange boundary line, seems more natural
- Does a good job with the natural boundary, input was that there were frustrations with neighborhood continuity

7. Rob asked if there were any last comments:

Scenario A:

- worries about parent support at Happy Valley
- 13 families in a tile, worries about breaking those families up

Scenario B:

- During the public input session, there were families who were vocal. A member worries about the families who did not speak up but were happy with the proposed scenario, as well as those families who commented in the survey that they were happy with the proposed scenario.

Scenario A-1:

- With this scenario, we would be breaking up a neighborhood that has been together historically.
- If you are isolating a smaller group to Happy Valley, they will likely feel more isolated.

8. Rob handed out three different colored dots to each committee member, to chart their first, second and third choice:

Green dot – best option

Blue dot – second best option

Red dot – third best option

Results:

Scenario A – 7 green, 5 red

Scenario B – 5 green, 7 red

Scenario A-1 – 12 blue

Rob asked what the possible reasons could be for Scenario A receiving 5 votes for third best option. Comments from committee:

- B appears to be a tweak to A.
- Worried that the public will think public feedback wasn't considered.

Ron commented that he read through the online survey results again yesterday. There are quite a number of comments that the committee did a good job considering options. It was noted by a committee member who helped compile the survey results that there were several responses from the same IP address.

More discussion/comments:

- Worries about not remembering that there are probably a lot of people who were happy with the proposal of scenario A.
- If change is the right thing to do, make the change.

- Is it our job to weight concerns equally, or use our reasoning to prioritize for the school community as a whole?
- Socio-economic and family involvement is a big piece.
- Parent involvement (support for enrichment programs) can make or break a school.
- Larrabee's free/reduced lunch rate is over 40%, yet Larrabee has the most robust enrichment program in the district.

9. Rob asked if there is any support for scenario A-1 as a compromise. Comments:

- Feels the argument was good for that section not going to Happy Valley.
- Has a hard time believing 5 kids/families can make or break a school.
- Why would we make a major change for so few students?
- There will be positive energy around being at a brand new school (Happy Valley).
- One member is supportive of B because it seems to best address all of the consideration factors.
- Would like to avoid splitting up the most vulnerable students/families.
- All of the students will end up going to middle school together, and some will stay connected through playing on the same soccer teams, etc.
- In support of scenario A, thinks there are things that don't necessarily make sense that have been that way historically and scenario A corrects those.
- Scenario A-1 shows that there was consideration given to the feedback from the community, feels change would help that feeling.
- Can we choose scenario A-1 when it was no one's first choice?

10. Rob commented that he doesn't think anyone on the committee feels any of the three are not viable options. He asked for a show of hands what, at this point, each committee member's first choice would be:

- Scenario A-1 (3)
- Scenario A (6)
- Scenario B (3)

A committee member asked if the superintendent will make the final decision. Should we give him two possible scenarios and let him make the final decision? Rob and Ron both stated that we are putting the superintendent in an unfair position if, after all of the hours that have been spent collecting data and discussing options, to say "we don't know". It is this committee's job to make a recommendation to the superintendent regarding what the best scenario would be. A committee member once again stated that scenario A-1 shows that the public input was considered and valued. There have been a lot of comments that the community wasn't heard during last year's process. One of the committee members said that was reason enough to change her vote to scenario A-1. Another committee member asked that the committee keep in mind that we perhaps should not focus our listening on those who were the loudest, that it is a fine line between listening to all of the feedback and reacting to those who are the loudest. Another member pointed out that some people who were positive in their responses would still be positive if we make a

change, and they might then buy into a trust the process more. A committee member asked if we have to have a consensus. Rob answered that all committee members do not have to necessarily agree on the same proposal, but the committee needs to feel good enough that the proposal submitted to the superintendent can be supported by the entire committee.

11. A committee member said that at the last meeting there was talk about splitting Hawthorne so kids didn't have to cross the street. Another committee member pointed out that this is not possible because there is a sidewalk on only one side of Hawthorne.

Rob stated he is hearing that scenario B should be taken off the table. Another vote was taken of the committee members, when considering scenarios A and A-1 only. Six committee members voted for scenario A, and six committee members voted for scenario A-1.

12. A committee member stated she thinks it is reasonable to put two proposals forward to the superintendent. Rob stated that the committee was charged with the responsibility of presenting its best work to the superintendent, and by bringing forward two proposals it would appear that we did not do our job.

13. The suggestion was made that the families who were affected by scenario A-1 could be contacted for feedback on the proposed adjustment. Ron commented that scenario A-1 appears to respond to the feedback received and also to fit within the committee's criteria. It was pointed out again that families are welcome to submit transfer requests.

14. Rob asked if there is anyone who voted for A that cannot live with A-1. No one raised their hand. Rob stated he is hearing that the decision is to go forward with scenario A-1, with the recommendation that the superintendent consider any feedback from the 6 families.

15. The wording for the recommendation could say something like: "The committee saw benefits with both scenarios A and A-1. The committee reached agreement that scenario A-1 addresses natural boundaries and walkability, and scenario A-1 aligns most closely with the 5 criteria, after considering all of the input received."

16. There was clarification that Hawthorne is the boundary line with students on one side attending Lowell and students on the other side attending Happy Valley and that it stops in the vicinity of Middlefield.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.