



Attendance Areas PreK-12 Standing Committee

Jan. 26, 2017

Welcome Back - Rob McElroy

Co-Chair Rob McElroy (Executive Director) welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided a brief overview of today's agenda. He shared that it is his hope that by the end of today's meeting this committee may be ready to make a recommendation to address the two most immediate issues (growth in the Cordata Elementary neighborhood and balancing enrollment between Bellingham High School and Squalicum High School). Once this group believes they have some viable recommendations, there will be meetings scheduled for those families who would be directly impacted by the recommended changes.

Review Jan. 19, 2017 Minutes – Rob McElroy

Rob asked that a few minutes be spent reviewing the minutes from the Jan. 19, 2017 meeting. A motion was made by parent representative Emily O'Connor to approve the minutes as written; the motion was seconded and there was a unanimous affirmative vote to approve.

Respond to Inquiry Questions – Team

Rob directed everyone to the inquiry questions at the end of the Jan. 19 meeting minutes. The team of Rob, Steve Clarke (Assistant Superintendent, Department of Teaching and Learning), Simone Sangster (Assistant Superintendent, Finance and Operations) and Chris Behee (City of Bellingham Planning Department) took time to respond to those questions:

1. The district's data system has the ability to monitor enrollment and withdrawal (transiency) of students at each school.
2. For the 2016-17 school year, there are approximately 400 students who attend a school that is not their neighborhood school. That number was over 700 a few years ago. When a family submits a student transfer request, it is reviewed by the principal of the neighborhood school and the principal of the requested school. Steve and Rob talked about the reasons why transfers are approved (both voluntary and involuntary), such as location of a student's childcare, family employment, etc.
3. Because the district does not have a way to know the income level for its individual families, the free/reduced meal rate is used.

Share Small Work Group Analysis of Draft Elementary and High School Attendance Scenarios – Rob McElroy and Steve Clarke

Rob shared that a small group met Wednesday morning to review the scenarios that were developed by small groups at the Feb. 19 meeting. The criteria that was used included:

1. Do not do something that would be a quick fix but not be aligned with likely future attendance changes.
2. Minimize the number of families impacted in order to move 50-100 students from the Cordata attendance area and 100 students from the Squalicum attendance area.

Simone distributed an elementary spreadsheet detailing the proposed scenarios and the impact of moving neighborhood “tiles” from one elementary school’s attendance area to another’s (student enrollment and free/reduced meal percentage). Time was then spent looking at maps that Chris created for the scenarios suggested, followed by time spent in small groups discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the two most feasible scenarios. Those small groups shared their thoughts with the large group, and each individual was given a set of red/yellow/green cards to use for indicating their individual level of support for the two scenarios. There was more support for scenario A over scenario B.

Simone then distributed a high school spreadsheet, detailing the proposed scenarios and the impact of moving neighborhood tiles from one high school’s attendance area to another’s (similar to what was provided for elementary). Chris demonstrated the effect of the different scenarios. There was time spent in small groups discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the top three scenarios, followed by sharing of those thoughts with the large group. Included was some discussion regarding balancing the socio-economics for Bellingham High and Squalicum High, neighborhoods’ geographic proximity to the high schools and access to public transportation and providing for future growth for both schools. Committee members then used the red/yellow/green cards to indicate their individual support of the three scenarios.

Several questions/concerns were expressed. It was suggested that the district leadership take a deeper dive into both proposed scenarios to answer questions or address concerns. After discussion, it was decided that the committee would like to meet again next week to process the top scenarios for both the elementary and high school short term attendance area adjustments more fully.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.

Inquiry Question:

1. Can we see the middle school numbers for the proposed elementary school change?