



Attendance Areas PreK-12 Standing Committee

Feb. 16, 2017

Welcome - Rob McElroy/Steve Clarke

Co-Chair Rob McElroy welcomed everyone to today's meeting. He shared that since the last time this group met, information has gone out to families, staff meetings have occurred at schools that would be impacted by the proposed recommendations, and a parent input meeting was held at Birchwood Elementary for the families who will be impacted by the change in the high school attendance areas.

Review/Approve Feb. 2, 2017 Meeting Minutes – Rob McElroy

Rob asked that everyone take a few moments to look at the minutes from the Feb. 2, 2017 meeting. A motion was made by Bellingham High School Principal Linda Miller to approve the minutes as written. Committee member Tommy Lingbloom seconded that motion and there was a unanimous vote to approve.

Highlight School Staff Meetings – Team

Co-Chair Steve Clarke asked that the principals on the committee relate the feedback they have heard from their staff:

- Squalicum High School Principal James Everett shared the proposed recommendation with staff last Friday. People were understanding of the current and expected growth and are wondering how the changes will impact the staffing at Squalicum.
- Bellingham High School Principal Linda Miller noted that declining enrollment has been a concern for BHS staff for a number of years. They are excited to welcome new students.
- Shuksan Middle School Principal Amy Carder shared the proposal with her staff, as a small number of students from Shuksan will now be attending BHS rather than SQHS. Committee member and Shuksan teacher Dustin Heaton has checked in with the students who will be affected and asked them to share any questions, and he thinks that they've done well processing the change.
- Rob also shared that he and Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Bob Kuehl met with Northern Heights Elementary staff this morning. There was great acceptance there, they are excited to welcome the new students.
- Rob and Bob met with the Cordata staff, who will be losing approximately 75 students. While the staff is relieved that Cordata will have a more realistic number of students, they are concerned about the well-being of kids and families.

- Parkview Elementary Principal Mylo Allen stated that most comments and questions from Parkview staff were logistically based. They look forward to accepting the students, and are wondering what that means for next year.
- Alderwood Elementary Principal Micah Smith said that his staff is understanding of the reason for the changes, although they are disappointed that they will be losing kids from Villa Sante Fe.

Rob shared that the families affected by the proposed elementary recommendation will be receiving information this week. The meeting with those families is scheduled for March 9, at Cordata.

Share Out Feedback from Public Meeting – Team

Rob asked the committee members who attended the community meeting at Birchwood last evening to share the input that they heard at the meeting:

Elementary School:

It was a relatively small group of elementary families, and the overall feedback was positive and viewed as good news. There were questions about why additional students would not be moving, such as those who live along McLeod Road and Seaview. They were generally happy due to the proximity of Bellingham High School to the Birchwood neighborhood.

Middle School:

There were only 2 middle school families. There was a feeling that the Birchwood neighborhood families have already experienced school changes due to the rebuild of Birchwood Elementary, and some Alderwood students changed when Cordata opened. Middle school students feel invested in attending Squalicum High School, as all Shuksan students have followed that path for many years. One parent expressed that they liked the proximity of Bellingham High School to the Birchwood neighborhood. One 7th grade student is disappointed to be attending a different high school than most of the classmates.

High School:

There were many questions about specific roads, some concern about splitting neighborhoods, and concern for the small group of Shuksan Middle School students who will be attending a different high school than many of their classmates. Several parents of current Squalicum High School students shared that their students are invested in being at Squalicum. There were questions about transportation for students who are requesting to remain at Squalicum. One parent shared that their 8th grade student was resistant to the change, but when they looked at the Bellingham High School website and saw the programs that are offered there, they are more accepting of the change. Some parents shared that it may be more difficult for parents than the students.

Tanya Rowe, Executive Director for Communications and Community Relations, noted that there were 49 survey responses from the 130 letters that were mailed.

There was a question regarding what families were told with regard to transfer requests. Linda Miller stated that most requests from juniors and seniors who wish to remain at Squalicum will be granted. Steve Clarke added that the seniors and juniors would have priority for transportation. Tanya Rowe asked if transfer requests for students who live in the Alderwood neighborhood who would like to transfer because they see that they may eventually be at Bellingham High School (in the next phase of recommendations) would be approved. Rob answered that those requests would fall under the regular district transfer policy and procedure.

Discuss Survey Results and Identify Emerging Themes– Small Group

Rob asked that small groups of 5-6 spending some time looking at and processing the themes that emerged from the community meeting. The small group findings were as follows:

- In the future, could we do this with individual graduating classes, such as 8th graders, rather than all grade levels at once?
- The consideration factors can conflict with each other. For instance, running 2 buses through the Birchwood neighborhood is not cost effective.
- There is some concern about only 31 kids from Shuksan moving on to Bellingham High, and it's wondered if additional students could be moved from within the Alderwood neighborhood.
- Is it possible to reconsider the area north of McLeod Road and east of Bennett Drive?
- If this is a temporary fix or a first step in a staged process? We want to be very transparent about that.
- While none of these are easy decisions and it feels somewhat messy, it is important.
- It is important to reassure families that their input was heard.
- Would it be possible to issue a "soft invite" to attend Bellingham High School to some nearby 8th grade families?
- Is there capacity at Bellingham High School for all of the Alderwood neighborhood to be included?

Steve Clarke asked how the committee would feel about going forward with the high school attendance area recommendation, and also invite the families in the buffer areas to apply to attend Bellingham High School. It was requested that the number of 2017-18 high school students living in the buffer area be available for the March 16, 2017 meeting.

After discussion of adjustments, all committee members present were in favor of sending the original high school portion of the recommendation to the superintendent as written.

Review Report Draft

Rob shared that a draft recommendation to the superintendent will be emailed to the committee, and asked that any feedback be sent to Simone Sangster, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.