



South Washington County Schools

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ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO: Members of the School Board
Dr. Keith Jacobus, Superintendent

FROM: Michael Johnson, Assistant Superintendent
Michael T. Vogel, Director of Facilities and
Construction Management

DATE: July 14, 2017

TOPIC/PURPOSE OF REPORT: Middle School Attendance Boundary Discussion

REFERENCE TO POLICY/STRATEGIC PLAN: Strategic Objective #2

RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTION: Discussion

DATE FOR BOARD ACTION: July 20, 2017

REPORT

The adjustment of the Middle School Attendance Boundaries is one of the final tasks to complete the implementation of those portions of the School Board approved Long Range Facility Plan that were included in the 2015 bond referendum, the lease levy financing plan and the Long Term Facility Maintenance Plan. To assist administration in the middle school attendance boundary planning process, we are seeking the Board's input regarding the proposed changes to the district's Middle School Attendance Boundaries.

We ask the Board to consider the following questions that have emerged throughout this process to assist the Task Force and Steering Committee in their upcoming meetings:

1. Was it reasonable and appropriate for administration to divide the school district into approximately 130 neighborhood groups for the purpose of providing flexibility in attendance boundary design?
2. Is the School Board satisfied that the baseline map was an appropriate starting point for the steering committee and task force deliberations on alternative middle school boundary plans?
3. Do the metrics derived by administration accurately reflect the Board's desired outcomes on the guiding change document? Those metrics are as follows: average variation in enrollment, walkers converted to riders, distribution of growth areas between the four middle schools, numbers of students moved, number of pure feeders, <10% to <30% cohort group size, and exceeding functional capacity by >2%.

4. Demographic changes have occurred since the Long Range Facility Plan was approved in 2014 and the voters approved the Middle School bond referendum question in 2015. Is it still reasonable and appropriate for the Steering Committee and Task Force to consider middle school attendance boundary plans that shift existing and emerging residential developments in neighborhood groups in Woodbury to schools in Cottage Grove?
5. Demographic changes have occurred from 2014 to the present. Does the School Board want the Steering Committee and Task Force to consider or create an alternative attendance boundary plan that maintains the Middle School Spanish Immersion program at Cottage Grove Middle if so doing improves the long-term sustainability of the boundary changes?
6. The Steering Committee and Task Force are reviewing the feedback provided from the community conversations and “we’re listening” comments. Should satisfying a greater number of neighborhood group concerns be an equal priority to meeting the outcomes in the Guiding Change Document as possible alternatives or revisions to the plans are evaluated?
7. Is it the Board’s preference that the Steering Committee recommend a single plan for its approval or submit multiple acceptable plans allowing for the Board to make the final choice?

At the meeting on July 20, administration will present a power point that illustrates the entire process and plans. However, a key component of the presentation is the summary of community feedback: the Community Conversations, attendance, and neighborhood groups represented; the emails from the community regarding the three plans; and the “We’re Listening” district website submissions over the last two months.

The overall themes to the feedback are:

- Cohort groups should be allowed to remain together
- Flip neighborhood groups W61 and W64 in Plan C
- Split neighborhood group W64, and send them with W63 to Lake Middle School
- Adopt Plan C2 as developed by neighborhood group W64
- Keep Stonemill Farms community together
- Plan C is preferred over Plan G
- Length of bus ride should be considered as a key factor
- Do not move Spanish Immersion to Woodbury Middle School
- Prioritize developed areas over underdeveloped areas
- School attendance boundaries will impact property values

Following those key components of the presentation, administration will then explain the three proposals again. At that time, the Board would be able to discuss each plan. After the presentation, and when the Board has finished their discussion, we will provide community members the opportunity to speak in front of the Board.

With the guidance and information from the Board, administration will then be able to complete the next steps in our process with assistance and input from our Task Force, deliberation and recommendation from our Steering Committee, and the ability to provide the Board with a recommendation at the next meeting on Aug. 3.

ATTACHMENTS: Summaries of Community Conversations for each plan.

Middle School Attendance Boundary Community Conversations: **Plan C** Comments

Positive aspects:

- Pure feeder system (27)
- Keeps neighborhoods together/clean boundary lines (25)
- Spreads out growth across neighborhoods/Sustainable plan for several years (12)
- Less bus time for students (7)
- Moves the fewest number of students (5)
- W10, W11 and W12 cohorts are feeders for WHS (5)
- Geographically closer (4)
- Realignment of Cottage Grove schools (3)
- Follows the Guiding Change Document (2)
- Educating the Board regarding capacity problems/building issues
- Moving AES to CGMS
- Developed by Task Force (not school administration)
- This plan provides an easy modification if W64 is split into northern and southern parts
- Prioritize existing residences before planned or new developments when considering new MS boundary lines
- C40 moves into new OMS

Concerns:

- SI is taking priority and impacting other areas (18)
 - Violates #5 of Guiding Change Document
- Added/increased transportation (11)
- Disconnecting cohorts from their community (10)
 - Affects social well-being (2)
- Lowest cohort percentages (7)
- Farm fields with no development (W61) are getting priority over current residents (W64) (7)
- Cohort groups in W64 are too small (6)
- LMS and WMS will be over capacity in two years (5)
- Not a pure feeder system (4)
- Cohort groups being split multiple times (4)
- People move to certain areas (W64) and now may be displaced/changed (3)
- Split small groups from ES to HS
- Increased walking distance (3)
- Unclean boundary lines (3)
- Moving between middle schools (2)

Considerations:

- Grandfather current students (and siblings) (16)
- Split W64 into 2 sections - W64a and W64b (8)
 - Future residents can choose this neighborhood based on current and accurate information

Middle School Attendance Boundary Community Conversations: **Plan C** Comments

- This amendment reiterates continuous neighborhoods and cohort percentages and provides equally transparent information to current and future residents
- Swap W64 and W61 (6)
 - W64 goes to LMS to increase cohort numbers (3)
 - W61 not developed yet (2)
 - Swap to maintain contiguous boundaries and allow future residents for W61 to purchase their homes with full knowledge of school boundaries
- Can SI stay at CGMS (6)
- Why is SI a priority over others? Feeder for it is “less important” due to being together with SI (2)
- Provide ability for affected students to move to a new school early if space is available
- Priority for open enrollment or IDT given to current residents with low cohort numbers
- Make SI program K-8
- North of Lake and west of Woodbury Drive should go to WMS and WHS
- Consider bringing in new community members for future boundary work
- Many students attend private school or charter schools from Woodbury. Without that being considered, numbers in neighborhoods are skewed
- W64 is closer to LMS than OMS – this cohort is not related to the community in any way
- A1 isn’t part of a community yet – consider CGMS
- Farmland (W62) is used to make contiguous boundary to W64
- The use of “normal” is significant – should be 5% not 2% based on accepted scientific methodology

Questions:

- Why only one community meeting in Woodbury and two meetings in Cottage Grove?
- Will district provide transportation for sports to other middle schools (such as wrestling)?
- If growth in Woodbury is three times that of Cottage Grove, why are you moving SI to WMS?
- Why are boundaries being decided AFTER construction of OMS? Seems like a very backwards way to do business. Detailed explanation is requested.
- Can we get bus service and ability to transfer to new assigned school in 2017?

Middle School Attendance Boundary Community Conversations: **Plan S** Comments

Positive aspects:

- Impacts the fewest number of students (23)
- Lowest impact on transportation/bussing (17)
- Consistent boundaries (Bailey Road) (11)
- Boundaries that maintains communities/neighborhoods (11)
- Same cohort from elementary to high school (6)
- Pure feeder from MS to HS (5)
- Sustainable functionality until 2021 (3)
- The first year LMS will be over capacity by 2.5% then under every year thereafter (3)
- New development in west CG go to OMS minimizing distribution from other areas
- W25a/W25 will follow WMS
- Created by Task Force, not school administration
- C4 goes to OMS

Concerns:

- Not a strong feeder system. Two elementary schools will split three different ways (28)
- Largest number of small cohort numbers (27)
- Priority given to SI/choice program (15)
- Longest transportation time (10)
- CGMS will exceed capacity (8)
- Splits community/neighborhood (8)
- Will have to re-boundary in near future/doesn't anticipate future growth (6)
- Many new homes built (W61 - W64) get the worst cohort scores from elementary to middle school (5)
- No new development in LMS (2)
- Doesn't utilize new school (2)
- Current homes should take priority over empty fields (2)
- W60 paying Woodbury taxes but going to a CG school
 - Largest chunk of Woodbury will be sent to Cottage Grove (2)
 - W64 does not want to be sent to Cottage Grove
- Does not follow Guiding Change Document
- Kids in W10 – W12 have gone through boundary changes every year
- Does not make sense that W40 and A1 are even a consideration
- Unsafe road conditions for walking students @ 55 mph
- Cottage Grove is over stepping into Woodbury
- Impacts home value

Considerations:

- Grandfather current students (14)
- Split W64 into 2 sections - W64a and W64b (4)
- Send W61, W63 and W64 to LMS (3)
- Keep SI at CGMS then transfer to it to PHS (3)

Middle School Attendance Boundary Community Conversations: **Plan S** Comments

- Let the two LRES kids choose where they want to go
- Offer support for students losing friends when moved
- It seems like the district does not talk to cities before development
- Current students should get priority for open enrollment/IDT
- Long term planning document should remain flexible
- Dr. Jacobus said strategic vision should be agile – this is the most un-flexible process – we are relying on a long-term document from 2013
- Assess number of out of district transfer students
- Develop plans for additional schools
- With population growth in Woodbury, why not consider adding on or building in Woodbury rather than CG
- Consider Military Road and Woodbury Drive as boundaries rather than Bailey
- Provide ability to transition to new school so there is room
- Neighborhood/communities are important

Questions:

- Why is SI moving to WMS if the growth is in Woodbury? (3)
 - Not part of referendum based on MDE documents
 - LTFP – invalid reason (CGMS needs space)
- What is different between design and functional capacity? (2)
- Will students who are moved to CGMS feed back to WHS?
- What happens with IDT students?
 - Will there be after-school programs for IDT middle school students?
- How are recommendations weighted? Is steering committee stronger than public? Do individuals have own input such as Vogel and Johnson
- How much effort is put into standardizing curriculum, culture, homework expectations, etc. across middle schools? It is well known that there are great differences.
- What are the specifics for grandfathered students?
- In a student size of 4,000+, what factors are considered important to a sub-1% student walking to the bus?
- How are 8th graders being considered for popular sports (track, cross-country, skiing, etc.)? Will two 8th graders in the same class be on different teams?

Middle School Attendance Boundary Community Conversations: **Plan G** Comments

Positive aspects:

- No school exceeds its functional capacity (10)
- Highest cohort group from ES to HS (6)
- Balances enrollment in all middle schools (4)
- Balance between multiple neighborhoods (4)
- Lowest number of schools with less than 30% cohort (4)
- Keeps W60 and W64 kids together with already established friendships (4)
- Least amount of variation between all three plans
- Leaves most room for growth within schools
- Cleanest boundary lines
- Keeps largest portions of Woodbury in Woodbury schools
- W63 goes to LMS
- Less bus time for W10-12

Concerns:

- Breaking up communities/neighborhoods (29)
- Impacts the most students (29)
- Increased distance to proposed MS (19)
- Low cohort groupings (17)
- Priority given to SI/choice program (13)
- More bussing needed (9)
- Priority to undeveloped areas rather than established neighborhoods (8)
- Does not follow the Guiding Change Document (7)
- Splitting kids up during middle school/moving kids multiple times (7)
- OMS will exceed functional capacity in 4 years (6)
- Moving cohorts to non-neighborhood schools (5)
- W40 isolated from the rest of Cottage Grove (4)
- Doesn't make sense for W10-12 go to LMS then WHS (4)
- Earlier bus times means less sleep (4)
- Geographically Cottage Grove area is very large (3)
- Live in Woodbury and want to attend Woodbury schools (2)
- CGMS to ERHS doesn't make sense (2)
- Creates unnatural/ "unclean" boundaries (2)
- Less parent involvement due to distance (2)
- Impacts home values
- Over corrects for LMS – leaves too many kids displaced
- Ultimately kids moved to OMS would move to PHS rather than stay at ERHS
- CGMS will exceed capacity with new development. Doesn't make sense for W40 to go to CGMS if they will attend ERHS
- Unsafe road conditions for walkers and bikers @ 55 mph
- This is the only plan that divides a neighborhood

Middle School Attendance Boundary Community Conversations: **Plan G** Comments

- Created by school administration, not task force
- Paying taxes for Woodbury schools, not Cottage Grove schools
- “My grandchildren will not be able to ride the bus to my home after school”

Considerations:

- Grandfather current MS students (13)
- W64 to LMS (7)
- Bailey would be a clean boundary line (4)
- Split W64 into 2 sections - W64a and W64b (3)
- Switch W61 to LMS (2)
- W62 to LMS (2)
- W40 and A1 to LMS (2)
- Keep SI at CGMS (2)
- Open enrollment priority giving to current residents (2)
- We want to stress the risk involved with forcing kids to transition from LMS to CGMS during their 3 years of middle school. “Phase in,” is important (2)
- This plan is a “business case” if only considering numbers. It doesn’t adequately balance the social/developmental/community building aspects of keeping neighborhoods together
- Current Woodbury growth is similar to that in the late 90’s – put a hold on all residential building until the community and schools can manage it (like in the past)
- W62 and 64 to CGMS
- W27, W29 and W10-12 to WMS
- C40 to OMS
- Not a true feeder system. Set yourself up now for success. Designate the school with the most space for elective programs (SI and Gateway).
- Unnatural equity spread across the district perhaps to increase test scores and economics
- W64 should be with LMS. Flip with W61 or C10-13. This reduces busing, increases walking/biking, keeps cohort and maintains strong communities
- Weak MS to HS feeder system – example W10 going to LMS then to WHS and W40 attending CGMS and then to ERHS
- Move undeveloped areas (W61 or W65) rather than established areas (W63-64)
- “I believe you are artificially moving economic and culture blessings from Woodbury to Cottage Grove, similar to what happened in Eden Prairie. The outcome for Eden Prairie was not favorable. Please consider this.”
- There should be a fourth plan

Questions:

- How many open enrollments from outside 833 attend the schools? How can this be allowed to impact communities?

Middle School Attendance Boundary Community Conversations: **Plan G** Comments

- Why are C11-13 not considered for OMS even though they are so close?
- What is the increase in bus time per plan?
- Why move SI to an already overcrowded school?
- Why are kids being moved out of their community school to a school that will be over its capacity while the community school will be under?