

2016 Realignment Committee Notes*

February 3, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT

Bill Bays, Debbie Bendick, Barry Blagowsky, Scott Burger, Justin Coffelt, Jamila Crawford, Lisa Crosslin, Amy Downey, Brian Eccellente, Cordell Ehrich, Bryan Evans, Karen Flores, Kimberly Frank, Jason Galloway, Jason Hayes, Cindy Hogue, Sara Hudson, Cara Jernigan, Wendy Joseph, Kamla Knight, Kartina McDaniel, Eileen McGuire, Jessele Miller, Michele Milner, Keith Paulter, Shana Perry, Sara Pierce, Laura Rathke, Ruthie Riggs, Susie Schinnerer, Gabe Schmidt, Kristen Stahel, Tracy Stoddard, Miriam Teifke, Tara Warwick, Cassandra Weides, Scotti Wilson

PRELUDE

In a meeting that was held at 2 pm, one hour prior to the full realignment committee meeting, Associate Superintendents Debbie Bendick and Ruthie Riggs welcomed representatives from four elementary schools who had not been present in earlier meetings. The purpose of the “prelude meeting” was to bring the new committee members up-to-date on what had happened in the two meetings prior to their arrival.

Mr. Gardiner gave an overview of the demographic data that had been collected on the Edmond Public Schools region, plus current and forecasted trends in the schools.

He entertained several questions from the representatives to help them understand the depth and breadth of the conversations among their fellow citizen and administrative representatives during the two meetings prior.

INTRODUCTIONS

The newest members of the committee introduced themselves to the larger group. They included the following: Centennial – Jessele Miller & Cindy Hogue; Frontier - Cara Jernigan & Tracy Stoddard; Washington Irving – Kimberly Frank & Laura Rathke; West Field – Lisa Crosslin & Sara Pierce.

DISCUSSION

At the 3 pm meeting, Dr. Bendick and Mrs. Riggs opened discussion with a reminder that the committee’s goals are to create boundaries that will allow 2 middle schools to feed one high school, keep neighborhoods together, balance the student populations in the secondary schools, and develop a plan that will be viable for the next 5 years.

Clarification was sought on a topic that had come up in the #2 meeting; that is, the ideal population for each middle school. One of the middle school principals explained how many

students it takes in each grade to ensure a middle school team configuration versus a junior high grade level configuration. Mr. Gardiner of Templeton Demographics interjected that the goal for the afternoon, the final of 10 hours of committee work, would be to reach a consensus on a plan to have ready for the Community Forums and shortly thereafter the board.

Gardiner referred to the issue of transfers, to which Bendick shared that the district was maintaining a decision to suspend any new transfers after 2015-16, but consideration may still be given to unusual exceptions. One such exception might be the issue related to younger siblings following their older brother/sister when to do otherwise would be to have families split between two high schools. There is no objection to current high school students remaining in the school they are currently attending through graduation. The committee was reminded that the transfer issue is not a decision for which they will be responsible.

In addition to Map #2 and Map #3, which were the last maps discussed at the end of the Jan 28 meeting, Gardiner explained that TD had put together an additional configuration in an attempt to balance out all of the secondary schools to a degree that neither #2 nor #3 had accomplished. He shared Map #5 and explained that the significant difference was that it defied one of the guidelines by splitting Central Middle School among all three high schools. Gardiner shared Map #5 with the committee and explained the rationale for splitting Central, comparing the middle and high school numbers that plan elicited. Initial reaction was opposed, including that from at least one committee member who had supported the idea in the January 21 meeting.

After the Map #5 discussion, Maps #2 and #3 were briefly reviewed and compared. Groups were formed and each of the plans was studied by table groups of 5 to 6 committee members; then a written poll was taken. Maps #2 and #3 had the majority of the votes. Map #5 was discarded.

Discussion ensued among the entire committee over the pros and cons of Map #2 and Map #3. The boundaries of Map #2 were adjusted to allow for adequate enrollment for Cimarron Middle School. Also, it was established that Memorial High School would be able to accommodate the increased student count that would occur using Map #2 as the district had agreed that the gym renovation could be postponed until summer 2017, allowing for larger student numbers to accommodate still-present transfers and new boundary freshmen.

A member requested consideration to be given to move the Fenwick boundary from Summit's attendance area to Heartland. The student population in the area was reviewed; by a show of hands, the committee rejected the request. Several other suggestions regarding partial and whole neighborhoods were made and voted on by a show of hands. Any time an option seemed incongruous with surrounding contiguous areas, it was

considered regarding an appearance of or, in fact, indication of gerrymandering, and, if so, rejected.

Centennial Elementary representatives sought to amend the maps to allow all of the elementary to stay together and all attend Sequoyah. The Sequoyah delegate explained that Sequoyah currently has 4 traveling teachers and 2 portables, which indicates they do not have adequate classroom space to accommodate those implied numbers. An alternate to that suggestion, accomplishing the same goal, was for all Centennial students to attend Central. TD mapped that suggestion into Map #2, and Central's low student numbers were amended, which also allowed for Cimarron's to be adjusted to appropriate sizes.

Conversation continued as representatives from the different parts of town clarified what Map #2 would mean to their constituents. Also, care was taken to ensure that concerns submitted via email over the past week or so were brought up at this time if they had not already been before. Issues illuminated in the final hour of the committee's deliberations included the following:

- The safety concerns that result from significantly overpopulated schools.
- Increased class sizes that have already resulted from burgeoning school sizes.
- The difference between drawing north-south lines along major thoroughfares versus a mile or two east or west.
- The distance that residents from the Centennial area would have to travel to get to Central and later Memorial.
- Similarly, distances traveled in other areas.
- Traffic challenges in all parts of Edmond during school hours and at other times.
- The cost for district transportation.
- The potential of splitting up siblings if high schoolers and eighth graders are allowed to stay at their present schools, but not others.
- The problems inherent in the three high schools being located so close together.
- The fact/fiction of how many kids walk to school each day and from how far.
- Patron misunderstanding that school boundaries are static versus dynamic.
- Patron perception that their families being rezoned from an A+ school to a B school, would compromise their children's educational opportunities.
- A perception that home values would be diminished by being in one attendance zone over another.
- An opinion that our children are resilient and with sensitive nurturing and encouragement from both home and school, the transitions required of a district realignment can be made with minimal disruption.
- A reminder that realignment decisions are not to be based on socio-economic factors.
- The fact that the pre-alignment boundaries for North and Sequoyah include almost 50% of the district's total landmass.

After considering a variety of pros and cons, the committee decided to vote between Map #2 and Map #3. Mr. Gardiner first reminded them that they could send two options forward, but a short discussion revealed that unresolved shortcomings still existed with Map #3. One of the committee members suggested that a vote between the two seemed unnecessary as #3 was inadequate. To that Gardiner asked the group to raise their hands if they objected with the proposal to eliminate #3. There was no objection.

At that, Gardiner asked the group to raise their hands if they would vote to propose Map #2 for consideration as the district's new boundary lines.

A unanimous show of hands responded in support of Map #2 as the committee's recommendation for boundary lines to address the growing number of children whose families have chosen Edmond Public Schools. The vote was followed by a spontaneous and resounding applause!

Dr. Bendick and Mrs. Riggs thanked all of those who have graciously and selflessly donated their time to this protracted, exhausting, and important exercise. The effort of the group to think as patrons of the state's most consistently highest performing district that includes over 24,000 students versus patrons of just one of the schools within the 129 sq miles of the district boundaries was also complimented. The work of Templeton Demographics was recognized for its role in helping the committee make informed decisions that would not have been possible without their data collection and software.

With a reminder of the upcoming Community Forums, which could potentially result in some changes from the recommended Map #2 to the final board approved plan, the 2016 District Realignment Committee was dismissed.

(* These notes represent as nearly as possible the comments, exchanges, and activities of the committee's work, considering the possibility for error or omission given the various small group conversations, table talk, work group efforts, and all-group discussions.)