

Consolidation Advisory Committee Meeting
April 9, 2009
Minutes

Two schools being considered for consolidation:

- John Greene Elementary
- Warwick Neck Elementary

Receiving schools for John Greene

- Sherman Elementary
- Warwick Neck Elementary

Receiving schools for Warwick Neck

- Sherman
- Oakland Beach
- Greene

Mr. Bushell estimated the projected and weighted enrollment to Oakland Beach, Sherman and Greene Elementary Schools if Warwick Neck Elementary School were to be consolidated and estimated the projected and weighted enrollment to Sherman and Warwick Neck Elementary Schools if Greene Elementary School were to close. Weighted for special needs is 1 ½ for supportive students (least restrictive services) and 2 for intensive needs students (increased level of services), language students are not weighted. Mr. Bushell provided the number of students, by grade, currently residing on the streets which would be impacted and showed maps depicting boundaries for redistricting.

- Greene to Warwick Neck: Estimated enrollment: 322
- Greene to Sherman: Estimated enrollment: 432
- Warwick Neck to Greene: Estimated enrollment: 299
- Warwick Neck to Oakland Beach: Estimated enrollment: 417
- Warwick Neck to Sherman: Estimated enrollment: 429

Dr. D'Agostino provided the current enrollment status of special needs students at each receiving school and estimated the status of the enrollment of special needs students, supportive, intensive and language only to the receiving schools from Greene and Warwick Neck Elementary Schools for the 2009-2010 SY. Dr. D'Agostino said it is required that every student with an IEP continue to receive their services. Supportive students receive not more than 2 hours of service per week and intensive students receive up to 5 hours a day.

- Greene to Warwick Neck: 17 supportive; 19 intensive; 1 language
 - Greene to Sherman: 34 supportive; 11 intensive; 5 language
 - Warwick Neck to Greene: 15 supportive; 8 intensive; 2 language
 - Warwick Neck to Oakland Beach: 33 supportive; 8 intensive; 3 language
 - Warwick Neck to Sherman: 36 supportive; 14 intensive; 11 language
- Itinerant rooms will be converted to regular classrooms at each receiving school; however, some will be reclaimed after one year.
 - Can move the integrated K program from Greene to Sherman
 - Without consolidation the enrollment for K at Sherman would require another teacher
 - Oakland Beach has a full day K, pre-K and the only school with a Parent Center.
 - Lunch aides will be assigned to receiving schools. (Servers are from Chartwells,. Chartwells has reduced the number of servers.)
 - Either closing scenario would be educationally sound for displaced students
 - Maintain the ELL program at Park because the entire staff is trained to work with this population of students, but could not be transferred together to a new school. No other school facility can accommodate all elementary students entitled to ELL services.

Dr. D'Agostino provided the numbers of administrative transfer students who need to be placed at other schools.

- Warwick Neck placement: 6 students; 2 supportive, 4 intensive
- Greene placement: 1 program in Intensive K; 7 integrated K to home schools/remaining with integrated teacher at Sherman Elementary
- Grade 5- 1 intensive (would go to Park or Oakland Beach) self-contained

Mr. O'Haire displayed maps which depicted the attendance boundary expansion from the closure of either John Greene or Warwick Neck schools. His main goal is to keep students on buses for as little time possible, with the most efficient bus route for the driver to get students to school. He said 2 additional buses would be needed from the closure of either school.

Principals Lynn Dambruch and Nancy Plumb, both receiving schools from last years consolidation, said they experienced a very positive and smooth transition for both the students and parents. Ms. Dambruch said that keeping the displaced students together as much as possible is an important factor when considering consolidation.

With the potential of Rocky Point and Seaview being developed, Mr. Bushell voiced concern if Warwick Neck Elementary were to close. Mark Hayward, RI District Director, SBA, replied to an inquiry from Mr. Testa about the likelihood of either a private developer or the City of Warwick purchasing the Rocky Point property. Mr. Hayward replied, that the objective is to sell the property under the terms set forth in prior orders of the court. "This would mean that it would be marketed for residential development."

Mr. Testa also inquired with the Warwick Police Department as to which school, Greene or Warwick Neck, based on their geographical location, would be more prone to vandalism. The police department responded that based on the locations of each school Greene would be marginally easier to monitor.

Dr. Horoschak suggested the committee consider what a closed school might be used for. Concerns from neighbors about the safety of an empty building and the level of upkeep of the grounds and buildings.. He thought it would be less likely to find an alternative use for the Warwick Neck school building, unless a school wanted to lease it. Greene sits on a campus. Looking at possible redistricting and consolidation at the junior high school level, Greene could be available. Also, the Central Administration older building has serious health concerns which must be addressed, possibly allowing some central office departments to be moved to the Greene facility.

Mr. Flood reported, from an update he received from Caroylyn Dias of RIDE, that the district needs to be prepared for declining state revenue support. Even with federal stimulus monies, restrictions on how these funds can be used and the fact there is no clear answer to state aid for FY 2010, the school department cannot avoid reducing personnel expenses. The City of Warwick has been cut back by the State as well. Dr. Horoschak said the school department is doing its very best to cut expenses and reduce the demand on local property taxes. Redistricting of the entire district needs to be examined now and the Superintendent is considering naming a panel which would consider the closing of a junior and/or senior high school, due to the anticipated continuing decline in enrollment. He will recommend to the school committee that a long range plan for redistricting within the school department be examined during the 2009/2010 school year.

Mr. Testa noted that Mr. Friel, Chairman of the School Committee, has responded to comments on the Public Forum and encouraged people to voice their opinion at the appropriate school committee meetings during public comment. While he stated that he was provided valid data and had all his questions answered, he acknowledged that responses to questions on the public forum were not responded to on a timely basis.

The Advisory Committee voted by paper ballot on the closure of either John Greene or Warwick Neck Elementary Schools.

The vote tallied: 6 for the closure of John Greene
1 for the closure of Warwick Neck Elementary School

The Superintendent will report to the School Committee and await their scheduling of a presentation from the Consolidation Advisory Committee.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

