

CMS 2010-11 School Assignment Options Eastover Community Input Meeting

Myers Park High School
October 20, 2009
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Purpose: to involve parents & community in the development of new school boundaries

Discussion: student assignment options for overcrowding relief at Eastover Elementary

Attendance: approximately 350 parents, school personnel and community members

Scott McCully, executive director of planning and student placement, welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed a special word of thanks to Myers Park High principal, Mr. Tom Spivey, and his staff for their hospitality in hosting three community input meetings.

Upon arrival, participants received a packet of information detailing the three revised discussion options created by the Planning Services Department and an individual input worksheet to be submitted at the conclusion of the meeting. Participants were also given the opportunity to provide their email address if they wish to be included on a distribution list for assignment update emails.

Tonight, CMS staff introduced three revised discussions options. The three revised options were created as a result of numerous phone calls and emails and from input received from participants who attended the previous community input meetings.

Tonight's meeting is the third meeting to discuss the overcrowding issue at Eastover Elementary. The first meeting was held on September 29th; the second was held on October 8th; all meetings were held at Myers Park High School.

The student assignment process timeline is as follows: public engagement meetings will be held in September and October. The staff recommendations will be presented in a report to the School Board on October 27th. A public hearing and the Board vote will take place on November 10th. The student assignment lottery process begins in January.

Mr. McCully introduced the CMS staff present:

- Molly Griffin, school board chairperson, District 5
- Joel Ritchie, area superintendent, Central Learning Community
- Hugh Hattabaugh, chief operating officer
- Christine Hamlett, planning specialist, Planning Services Dept.
- Dennis LaCaria, planning specialist, Planning and Project Management
- Tom Spivey, principal, Myers Park High School
- Cindy King, principal, Dilworth Elementary School
- Tisha Greene, principal, First Ward Elementary School
- Linda Mintz, principal, Selwyn Elementary School
- Cynthia Robbins Shah-Khan, media relations supervisor, Communications Dept.

The individual worksheet listed 9 criteria that CMS should consider when developing boundaries. The list was compiled from criteria that had been mentioned most often in previous boundary meetings. Mr. McCully asked participants to rank what they felt are the top 5 criteria – from 1 to 5 in order of importance. Current and historical enrollment data for Eastover Elementary was presented. The maps/data sheets for the revised discussion options packet were overviewed in the staff presentation. Clarification questions were answered.

After presentation from staff, participants were given 30 minutes to look over and discuss the options in small groups at their tables and to report back to attendees which option they preferred or what solution they would recommend. Staff was available to answer questions and address concerns. It was noted that no middle or high school boundaries are being affected by the elementary school boundary changes.

Comments from small groups are recorded below:

#1 – First Ward was present before the magnet program. First Ward Elementary is being asked to make a significant sacrifice. Its history, culture and neighborhood will be lost with any of these options. Its staff will be displaced. Current students don't have the option to remain at First Ward. CMS is not doing right by the staff and students at First Ward. Dilworth and First Ward staff and students should have the opportunity to choose the school they want.

#2 – A parent who lives in the community and whose child walks to school stated that the proposed changes will affect her family. Before and afterschool care is an issue and a long bus ride is an issue.

#3 – A teacher at First Ward made the comment that she has special training and chose to work at First Ward to be a help to the students there. She disagrees with the options because they split up the children and the staff. They are a partial magnet school that needs to keep its demographic makeup and needs to be in the uptown area so that students have access to uptown opportunities. She asks that CMS leave them at their current location.

#4 – The First Ward PTA president, we are in a lose/lose situation. There are options to accommodate everyone. Why are we being asked to sacrifice our school? Further, asked that CMS find an option so that First Ward students can stay where they are.

#5 – I would like planning staff to publish student achievement data for options B and C. The concern is that all students get the educational opportunities that they should. Also, a long term solution is needed, not just a quick fix.

#6 – An Eastover parent feels that none of the options offered give a long term solutions. The request was made for CMS to consider combining options B and C to come up with another option that would be a long term solution but would keep Eastover together and keep the Traditional programs.

#7 – The Eastover PTA co-president believes that 573 is not a good capacity for Eastover. With that number, the school doesn't have music, art and science rooms. The auditorium must be used as a classroom. Capacity should be 480-500 to allow for special classrooms.

#8 – Can CMS delay making a decision about this? There has not been enough time to evaluate the options and get questions answered. We need to do what is best for the children.

#9 – Comment from a Myers Park resident, Eastover parent – we do not want to leave our school. We appreciate the fact that you are working on the overcrowding problem, but the community is not in favor of the options presented. CMS needs to come up with other options for consideration.

#10 – Comment from Myers Park Traditional – we believe that we are currently helping to relieve the overcrowding at Eastover. There are 155 students from the Eastover home school attendance area attending Myer Park. We are opposed to option A, creating a home school area for Myers Park. Every student is attending Myers Park Traditional by choice because they want to be in the traditional program. If a home school area is created and students are forced to attend Myers Park, they may not embrace the traditional program. In addition, we are concerned about Myers Park becoming overcrowded.

#11 – Comment from an Eastover parent who lives in Dilworth – Our small group really has no consensus on any option. However, we do believe that no matter what school your child attends, if the parents get to working together we can create a school just as good as Eastover.

12 – Comment from Selwyn and Chantilly neighborhood parent – we would like for option C to be dropped. Selwyn is not overcrowded and we are not an option to help Eastover. There is no need to disrupt any Selwyn students. There are no mobiles at Selwyn. Please withdraw option C.

#13 – Comment from Selwyn parent – We would also like to see option C deleted. CMS needs to do what is best for all of the students. This option disrupts the most students. Please consider recommending option A with some “tweaks.”

#14 – Comment from Selwyn parent – I don’t understand the Dilworth/First Ward magnet change, it should not be a complete swap. I don’t understand the talk about mobile units at Selwyn. There are no mobile units at Selwyn. Please explain how you come up with the 144% capacity.

#15 – The Dilworth PTA president stated that Dilworth wishes to embrace the First Ward family. Neither school wants to be involved in what is happening to them. But if we have to move, we want the boundary expanded so that students can walk to school. Also, what happens to the staff? How can you get the First Ward facility ready for the arts programs? We want it to be ready for the first day of school. First Ward teachers should be allowed to work there if they choose.

#16 – Comment from Eastover parent – I agree with the statement that another parent made. The 573 capacity is too high. It must be lowered or we will be in the same situation with overcrowding in a few years. The solution is to create a new home school in the area. With the parents involved and the right mix of students, this would provide a long term solution.

#17 – Comment from Selwyn parent – I believe that this is a flawed process. There are more options available that are not even on the table tonight. Option C has no merit. Skewed numbers in the report do not accurately reflect the situation at Selwyn. CMS staff needs to revise the report to correct the capacity/utilization at Selwyn. It seems that magnet schools are underutilized and regular schools are overcrowded. I would like to thank Molly Griffin for being here.

#18 – Comment from Selwyn parent – Option B and C would create an underutilized facility. There is not enough time to research the options. However, we will be glad to work with Eastover.

#19 – Comment from Selwyn parent – Option C does not reflect correct number for Selwyn. Selwyn is misrepresented. There needs to be more study using accurate data for making the decisions.

#20 – Comment from Selwyn parent – Selwyn was brought into this process under flawed rationale. This process needs to be studied further.

#21 – Comment from Eastover parent – The long term solution is a new home school in the area. Eastover parents are committed to this area; to creating one of the strongest home schools in CMS – a diverse school that includes students from First Ward, Myers Park, Selwyn and Eastover. That would make a fabulous school.

#22 – Comment from a Selwyn parent – The option chosen should impact the least amount of students possible. Why is Selwyn involved in the Eastover relief? We don't need just a quick fix.

#23 – Comment from Elizabeth community resident & Eastover parent – The Elizabeth community has backed the idea of a home school in the area for some time. We will be proud to go to school with any of the students in the area in a new home school that would work for everyone. Expanding the Traditional's is not a long term fix; we don't want a short term fix.