

Committee on Refining the Criteria for Redistricting Minutes from the September 15, 2009 Meeting

The Committee on Refining the Criteria for Redistricting met on Tuesday, September 15, 2009 in Room C in the James City/Williamsburg Community Center. Present were committee members Dr. John Alewynse, Ms. Denise Koch, and Mr. James Nickols. Also present were Dr. Robert T. Becker, Jr., Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Ms. Jane Haley, Child Nutrition Services Supervisor, Mr. Earl Tyler, Director of Transportation, Ms. Janet Cerza, Deputy Clerk of the Board, citizens and the press.

Call to Order – Mr. Nickols called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. The purpose of the meeting was stated: Defining the three criteria for redistricting, of which Proximity was defined at the first meeting on August 25, 2009. The meeting today addresses the remaining two criteria: Diversity and Capacity.

Dr. Alewynse made a motion to approve the agenda; Ms. Koch seconded the motion, which carried 3:0.

Dr. Alewynse asked that the minutes be amended to include the following at the end of the fourth paragraph: “A neighborhood should not be defined as such because a developer called it a neighborhood; or, because it has a swimming pool, it does not make it a community.”

Ms. Koch made a motion to approve the minutes, as amended. Mr. Nickols seconded the motion, which carried 3:0.

Public Comment – Ms. Deborah Huckins suggested that when setting criteria for dividing neighborhoods, that a percentage of the students in the neighborhood be used verses the miles (distance).

Defining Diversity – Members agreed that the free and/or reduced lunch data and the census data should be used. Ms. Koch noted that the NCLB article stated that the census information was more accurate than the free and/or reduced lunch data. There was discussion on how the census data could be obtained. Dr. Alewynse stated that the contractor (mapmaker) should be able to get this information. Mr. Nickols added that the Virginia Department of Education would be another source.

The free and/or reduced lunch application was discussed (families should list all members on the application.)

The committee discussed how they would define the different levels of census data – who would set the cut off? It was decided that the range would be 7.5 – 10 points difference +/- from the school division’s current average for free and/or reduced lunch in October. Dr. Becker noted that the mapmakers will provide three options for the two school levels (elementary and middle). It was also noted that the School Board would be able to make corrections three times to the mapmaker’s options. It was decided that the free and/or reduced lunch ratio, without PreK, would be used (24.62%.)

Defining Capacity – capacity must be defined for each building. The effective capacity would be the number of students at the upper level recommended in the building. Dr. Becker stated that the state gives a capacity number, but room needed to be left to accommodate growth. It was decided that 85% - 88% would be the effective capacity for each school.

Possible program shifts include moving the autistic children and moving to four PreK sites from six.

The last scheduled committee meeting for September 29, 2009 was canceled. The committee will present their findings to the School Board in writing tonight. The Board will vote on the criteria definitions at their October 6, 2009 meeting.

Public Comment – There were no further comments.

Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.