



Redistricting 2009-10 **UPDATE**

Feb. 18, 2010

Vol. 1

With the building of two new schools – J. Blaine Blayton Elementary School and Lois S. Hornsby Middle School – also comes the need to redistrict our school attendance areas to determine who will attend these new schools. Redistricting is always a difficult process, yet a necessary one as our area continues to grow and families relocate here to enjoy our excellent quality of life and our excellent school system. Since August of 2009, the redistricting process has included numerous Board discussions, two formal public forums and two special meetings including public comments to gather feedback on the process.

Several different versions of redistricting maps have emerged. As of February 18, 2010, the process has progressed to a single map each for elementary schools and middle schools; however, suggested changes are still being made. All these map improvements are necessary to ensure that the final maps provide equity among the schools, to provide long term stability by preventing future spot redistricting, and to provide long term efficiencies by ensuring the schools are properly utilized with appropriate capacities.

To assist the public in gaining a clear picture of how the process has progressed so far and what to expect in the coming weeks, the following chronology is offered:

■ **August, 2009** – A subcommittee of the WJC School Board meets to establish criteria that would be considered during the coming redistricting process. In no particular order, the subcommittee recommended the following:

❖ *Proximity*: Defined as Time vs. Distance with 30 minute transportation as the goal. Special Education, James River Elementary School (magnet school), and other special educational programs may constitute an exception.

❖ *Diversity*: Free and Reduced Lunch ratio at each school shall be between 7.5 and 10 percentage points of the district average as of October 1, 2009.

❖ *Capacity*: Population of each school will be between 85 to 88 percent of effective capacity. This is considered the most effective operating capacity of a school.

■ **October 6, 2009** – The School Board approves the criteria and agrees that each criterion would have equal weight. The Board also approves the contract to Education Logistics Inc. (Edulog) of Missoula, MT who is tasked to develop maps to meet the criteria.

■ **November 17, 2009** – Edulog delivers and presents a draft working set of redistricting maps. Three options are provided for the elementary schools and three options are provided for the middle schools. Each map provides a different approach for implementation and meeting the approved criteria. Draft maps are posted online for public inspection.

- **December 8-9, 2009** – Two public forums are held at two locations to provide the opportunity for public input. Hard copies of all six maps are displayed at the forums for public inspection.
- **December 15, 2009** – The Board requests three new maps for the elementary schools and for the middle schools. The Board agrees to maintain the original criteria but slightly modified. A.) Allow the James River District to remain as is; B.) allow Rawls Byrd and Matthew Whaley to go to maximum capacity of no more than 95 percent; C.) Try to keep neighborhoods intact and D.) if necessary to split a neighborhood, use a major thoroughfare or natural boundary.
- **January 12, 2010** – Second set of maps is released to the public and placed on school website for public view.
- **January 27, 2010** – Board members meet to discuss the second set of maps. Public comment is taken that evening. Board members make suggested changes, but determine that it is necessary to have Edulog available to determine impact to changes. Board announces the need for a special meeting on February 9, 2010.
- **February 9, 2010** – Working with Edulog via the internet, Board members suggest several more changes to elementary and middle school redistricting maps in order to meet the original criteria as modified by the meeting of December 15. Changes are necessary primarily due to concerns with low capacity in the elementary schools in the northern elementary schools and over capacity in the schools in the central area. Small capacity changes also are made to the middle school maps. Board members agree to allow Edulog to incorporate recommended changes and establish new baseline maps. The meeting is attended by members of the public and the local media. Public comment is heard prior to the meeting.

A third public forum is scheduled for **March 11 at 6:30 p.m.** in the James City County Government Complex, 101 Mounts Bay Road, Building F.

As of Feb. 18, EduLog has not yet completed the new maps. As soon as they are available, they will be posted for public inspection on the Division's home page, along with a neighborhood listing and a summary of the changes suggested by Board members at the Feb. 9 meeting.

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