

My name is Krista Kitchen, I am the Parent Council Chair and Elgin parent. I have been very involved in the Elgin community since 2002. My 2 sons attended Elgin Ave Public School from JK- grade 8, both are proud Elgin graduates. My oldest is enrolled at Wilfred Laurier University and my younger son is a Grade 10 student at Simcoe Composite School. My daughter is currently in Grade 6 at Elgin. Wev are a proud Elgin Family. The students at Elgin are passionate about their school, they encourage each other to succeed in every aspect and always support each other. Unfortunately, Elgin still continues to be tainted by an out dated reputation....but the Eagles Soar above this.

Closing a school is never easy. One school community will be disrupted no matter what the reason for the closure. A neighbourhood will feel like it has lost it`s identity, Past students will feel that a piece of their childhood has been taken away. Present students will need to adjust to a new environment. So if we are going to go down this road, and fight the political fights that school closing plans create, then we need to ensure we are closing schools for the right reasons.

I have many concerns with the Senior Administrations` recent change in their recommendation to now close Elgin Ave Public School and acquire additional land to expand West Lynn Public School, and to split the French Immersion Program between Walsh and Lakewood.

The original recommendation was to close West Lynn, renovate and expand Elgin Ave, and to reassign the existing boundaries among the other schools involved in the ARC process. Time and money has already been invested in this plan. The proposed plan for the renovated Elgin Ave has been examined, drafted and submitted to the Ministry of Education for approval. The estimated cost of the renewal of Elgin was reported at \$5,663,052.00. A safe and effective plan for a larger parking lot, a designated busing area, and a parent pick up and drop off has been established. Transportation costs have been studied and determined. The report stated there would be no changes in cost to bus the West Lynn students to Elgin. The school is positioned on 7.9 acres – with 5.9 acres of greenspace. Due to the multi level building and large existing parking lot, even after the renovation Elgin will still have a similar amount (approx. 5 acres) of greenspace and surfaced outdoor play area. The second largest greenspace in all schools under the ARC review next to Lakewood, and quite possibly one of the largest in all Norfolk County schools. With the large site area of Elgin there is still more room to grow in the future if needed.

With the new recommendation to close Elgin, purchase land and expand West Lynn and split the French Immersion program between Walsh and Lakewood - we are challenged with a lot of unknown circumstances:

What is the cost of the proposed land adjacent to West Lynn that the School board is required to purchase to expand West Lynn? -UNKNOWN

Have any soils tests or environmental analysis` been completed to ensure the safety of the proposed land? UNKNOWN

Have the current owners applied for and been approved for a severance to sever the residential house from the parcel of land? How long will this process take? UNKNOWN

How long will the zoning amendment application take? UNKNOWN

Is there any grading that needs to be done to the subject land to make it sufficient for the school area? UNKNOWN

Has a cost been determined to implement required services to the proposed land? UNKNOWN

Has the plan of the renovation required to expand West Lynn school (number of classrooms etc.) been determined and prepared- draft of plans? UNKNOWN

Has a cost been established for the renovation and expansion of West Lynn? UNKNOWN

After the addition to West Lynn, and a new parking lot and busing area added, what will be the amount of greenspace and playground area left? UNKNOWN

What will the busing cost be to bus Elgin students to West Lynn? UNKNOWN

Will the acquired land and the addition to West Lynn be enough capacity to accommodate growth in our community over the next 10 years? New developments in Westwood Acres & Harvest Glen both in the new West Lynn boundaries. Would there be more room on the property to build on? UNKNOWN

The 5-year projection shows West Lynn at 99% Utilization, this is well above the targeted 85%. What will the classroom sizes be like?

With the French immersion being split to Lakewood, the 10-year projected enrollment at Lakewood is 99.8% utilization. This is also well above the targeted 85% utilization. This recommendation puts Lakewood at risk for being over capacity. Will Lakewood have to expand to accommodate the FI program, will all students in the English program be able to remain at the school?

Can Grand Erie District School Board sustain 2 K-8 dual track FI programs? Staffing? Resources?

There are a lot of 'unknowns' in the West Lynn Option.

Busing of the Elgin students will be an additional expense that will be incurred. Nearly 100% of the Elgin students will need to be bused to West Lynn. If you look at attached map of the Elgin Catchment boundaries, I have labelled the distance from the closest points of the boundary to West Lynn Public School. All students, aside from a small area downtown by Dean St, are more than 1.6 km away and therefore will need to be bused to school. This will be a significant cost over the next 5-10 years.

There has been information provided by Norfolk County regarding a storm drain in need of repair on the North side of Norfolk St. This drain flows to the property located beside the property that the School Board will need to purchase. Until this drain is repaired, the land in the surrounding area including the proposed parcel of land is at risk of flooding.

In a recent press release it was quoted that "repurposing Elgin property would present more revenue generating possibilities" has the focus shifted to revenue generating or are we still considering the best interests of the students?

Additional concerns I have with the new recommendation is the fact that Elgin is located in the hub of Simcoe – it is in close proximity and in walking distance to many venues: Norfolk General Hospital and Nursing Home, Food Basics Grocery Store, Talbot Gardens, First Baptist Church, Simcoe Splash Pad, Kinsmen Park and Pavilion, Strand Theatre, Norfolk County Public Library Simcoe Branch, Simcoe Panorama, Annaleise Carr Aquatic Centre, Simcoe Recreation Arena and Simcoe Farmers Market, Norfolk Arts Centre, Eva Brook Donly Museum, Young Theatre Players, Fire Station, Simcoe Composite

School, Memorial Park for Cross Country, Lion's Park and White Horse Bowling via Lynn Valley Trail. Just to name a few.

Currently, 99% of Elgin students walk to school, several Elgin families are financially challenged with no means of transportation. Many of these families live in the north and west end of Simcoe and currently walk their children to school. By moving the children to West Lynn the majority of the students will be bussed to school, but what about the parents – if their child is sick and they have to walk 45 minutes to pick them up or if they want to attend any extra curricular activities after school hours-they will have to walk a far distance. Without being able to access the school easily, this will force parents to disengage from their children's education and discourage the students from getting involved in school activities. This is certainly not considering the best interest of the students. As an Elgin parent I was also disappointed that not one of the ARC meetings were held at Elgin in the spring. Again, due to the lack of transportation for many of the parents, this alienated them from being involved in the ARC process.

I'll be honest, I was quite surprised to see the recommendation had shifted to option #7. Not because I thought the Elgin option was a secured "done deal" ...but because it appears this new recommendation was made by the Senior Administration to the Trustees with no specific plan, no commitment from the Grand Erie District School Board to purchase land required for the plan to be implemented, no official financial data to support it, no proposed costs of building, no projected cost of busing. It is based on a lot of uncertainties and assumptions. I was alarmed that they had recommended an option to the Trustees that seems so unstructured.

There are many Professionals involved in this recommendation and decision-making process with close ties to the community, and specifically to the schools involved. I want to thank you in advance for being unbiased and for basing your conclusions on the best interest of ALL the children involved. The students and staff at Elgin and West Lynn are all wonderful and dedicated to their school community. Regardless of the outcome I trust the Parents, Staff and Senior Administration will all work together to make this a smooth transition for everyone involved. To conclude I will quote one of the lines from the Role of the Board of trustees: it states their role is *"To assess and make decisions that consider students first in the decision making process."* Please consider the students first when making this difficult decision.

Thank you for your time.

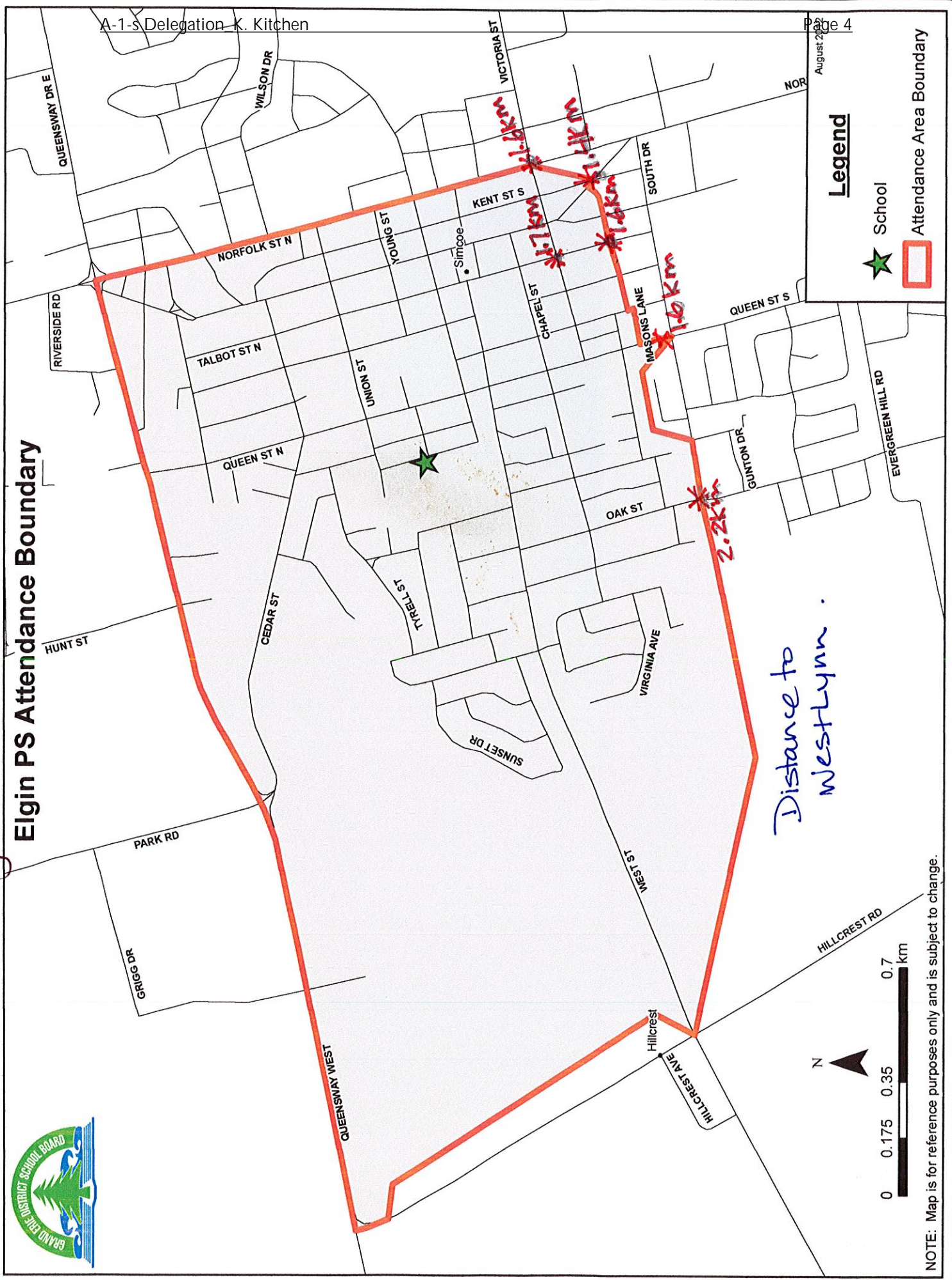
Krista Kitchen

Elgin Ave Public School

Krista Kitcher-Delegation

Elgin PS Attendance Boundary

A-1-s Delegation - K. Kitcher



Legend

- School
- Attendance Area Boundary

Distance to WestLynn.



NOTE: Map is for reference purposes only and is subject to change.