JOINT CITY OF HAMILTON AND HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (HWDSB) LIAISON COMMITTEE

MOU Update Report

On-going Relationships and Accomplishments

OVERVIEW

The City of Hamilton (COH) and Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) have been working closely to improve communication and collaboration between the two organizations through the COH/HWDSB Liaison Committee. On June 18, 2009, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was approved outlining the principles, general approach and areas of focus for working together in a collaborative fashion. Verbal updates in regards to on-going working relationships have been given to the Liaison Committee at its meetings on October 1, 2009 and February 4, 2010. This is the first written report to highlight progress made as well as next steps.

By having staff from both organizations coordinate efforts, joint initiatives and partnerships will align with Hamilton’s goal of ensuring the city is the “Best Place to Raise a Child.” Furthermore, the work is leading to the identification of coordinated short, medium and long-term planning priorities, improved working relationships, effective public communications, greater joint ventures and opportunity for financial and facility efficiencies for both City of Hamilton and Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board as well as the greater community.

Principles outlined in the MOU include the following:

- Priority commitment to success
- A collaborative and timely approach in areas of mutual interest
- Understand and respect the unique contribution that each organization contributes to the community
- Joint initiatives and outcomes are publicly viewed as integrated and collaborative

In addition, there has also been a recent focus on the importance of our community’s neighbourhoods to the overall success and prosperity of Hamilton. Neighbourhoods are the foundation of our city and changes within them, particularly as it relates to schools, their programs, the use of their lands and the surrounding environment, impacts their vitality and success. Hamilton is uniquely positioned to move forward with a more focused and integrated approach to strengthening neighbourhoods and supporting community development, and the school board is a key stakeholder in this plan. The accomplishments to date and next steps help to strengthen this commitment as strong community and neighbourhood partners.
ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Since the approval of the MOU, staff has been working on a detailed work plan that identifies specific issues/projects, roles, assigned resources, timelines and accountabilities. There has also been a shift to focus on neighbourhoods as well as the infrastructure within those communities and the overall health of the community. Below is a list of some of the accomplishments achieved over the past 15 months:

- **Terms of Reference**
  Terms of Reference for the COH/HWDSB Liaison committee were finalized which clarified the role of the committee.

- **Westmount recreation centre agreement finalized.**
  Completed land lease and field use agreement with Westmount Recreation Centre Project.

- **Best Start/Full Day Learning**
  The COH and HWDSB continue to collaborate through the Best Start initiative to empower communities to offer comprehensive, flexible, integrated and seamless services for all children and parents at familiar neighbourhood locations. Both organizations worked closely to share information on the impact of the implementation of Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten on childcare operators in the City. Continued collaboration on this program and the reform of the Early Years system will take place in 2011.

- **Cathy Weaver Community Association at Sanford Ave agreement.**
  The COH and HWDSB have entered into an agreement in regards to the use of Sanford Avenue School (use of gym) until the COH can renovate Pinky Lewis Recreation Centre for the ultimate benefit of the Cathy Weaver Community Association.

- **Informal agreement to jointly plan development of the Pinky Lewis expansion.**
  Staff have committed to working together to plan the future use of the site including the recreation centre expansion and a potential playing field for the school and community.

- **Collaboration around the City’s Outdoor Recreation study.**
  COH and HWDSB were partners in the Indoor Recreation Study. This was a successful process and resulted in mutually beneficial relationships and understanding between the two parties. The same process will be followed for the Outdoor Recreation study, as there was good collaboration between all departments within the COH. In addition, a strategy to replace the tennis courts and other amenities on board property is also being worked on between the COH and HWDSB.

- **Initial discussions on joint field use planning.**
  Staff has had preliminary conversations about developing a joint field use strategy. The idea involves pooling our resources to allow for more equitable and improved access to fields for community groups, School Board activities and overall neighbourhood needs. This is closely tied in with the Outdoor Recreation Study mentioned above.

- **Initial discussions on a school lands acquisition protocol.**
  A new Property Disposition Protocol has been put in place between HWDSB and COH that helps facilitate dialogue about the future of HWDSB properties. This discussion will continue to take place between the two organizations to address the disposition of lands as it relates to good neighbourhoods (overall community needs) as well as other issues that need to be addressed, such as prioritization and costs. The COH is also developing internal land acquisition strategies for HWDSB’s surplus lands, which should assist the city in prioritization. As HWDSB moves through its Secondary Accommodation Review, COH will be looking to ensure surplus properties.
are vetted through the new internal process as there could be significant impact within
neighbourhoods, particularly those where the COH operates joint facilities. The COH is also
interested in exploring strategies to help finance the acquisition of these lands, which would
include further partnerships with HWDSB and/or the Province of Ontario.

- **Collaboration around the Fruitland-Winona Secondary Plan.**
  Staff have worked closely throughout the development of the new Secondary plan to ensure that
  long-term School Board needs are identified and incorporated into the plan. This on-going
  collaboration has resulted in buy-in with respect to the location of a proposed elementary school
  site and recreation centre within the secondary planning area. An exciting element of this plan is
  a potential joint site with one or two new elementary schools and recreation facilities.

- **Expansion of Health Promoting Schools model**
The Health Promoting Schools approach has been used in Hamilton for several years, as an
evidence-based means of improving the health of students. Within this model, a Health Action
Team is formed, including school staff, students and parents, and supported by the Public Health
Nurse working with the school. The Health Action Team identifies issues of concern to the school
and puts strategies in place to address them. This model is now used in 18 secondary schools
and 29 elementary schools within the HWDSB, including almost all high and medium risk schools.
In addition to the Health Promoting School approach, a variety of services are offered to all
schools by Public Health Services including dental screening, immunization, outbreak control and
tobacco control. There has been some successful collaboration on policy initiatives, such as the
food policy, but there is potential to work together more in the area of policy development.

- **Improvements in regards to communications between COH and HWDSB.**
COH Planning & Economic Development Department has dedicated Planning staff to deal with
school related planning applications (e.g. site plans). This has allowed for one point of contact for
building issues and has streamlined the process. HWDSB is also engaged earlier in discussions
as it relates to the Secondary Planning Process, such as the collaboration around the Fruitland-
Winona Secondary Plan (above). Representatives from COH Community Services (Recreation),
meet regularly with HWDSB staff in regards to site specific matters, in addition to the points of
contact noted throughout this report in regards to other on-going initiatives.

- **Identified existing agreements and gaps - started work on filling the gaps.**
One of the primary agreements being worked on between COH staff and HWDSB staff is the
reciprocal agreement for facilities and outdoor sports fields. The current facilities agreement is
 outdated and is being rolled over month to month until such time a new agreement can be
finalized. COH issues of interest including maximizing use of all available sports fields (COH and
HWDSB), use of all building facilities (COH and HWDSB), rates and costs i.e. move towards
revenue neutral, maintenance of fields/parks from non permitted activities as well as ground litter
controls outside of physical school buildings abutting park lands

**NEXT STEPS**

While processes continue to be put in place, there is a strong commitment by both organizations to
ensuring Hamilton is the “Best Place to Raise a Child.” Moving forward, both COH and HWDSB will
develop a work plan for the upcoming year that includes a multi-disciplinary staff team to support the work
of the COH/HWDSB Liaison Committee. This team will work on creating structures and processes that
allow the organizations to work together more effectively as well as to ensure issues are addressed
proactively and not on an “as needs” basis. There will also be a move to share each organization’s
strategic plans, annual operating plans and department plans in areas such as recreation, health and
child care in order to look for alignment and areas where plans intersect. Further efforts will include a
refined reporting process to the Committee and regular and purposeful meetings between staff to ensure continued progress.

Initiatives that both organizations would like to bring forward for discussion in 2011, as involvement would be beneficial include the following:

- Sharing of strategic plans of the City and HWDSB and the identification of areas of alignment and common priorities
- Identify activities to help decision makers better understand each other’s organizations
- Identify opportunities for HWDSB involvement in the COH’s new Neighbourhoods Initiative such as sponsorship of 40 hour volunteer requirement for students gained by involvement with city programs
- Explore other partnership opportunities to encourage HWDSB to become involved in COH outreach programs such as EcoSchools and recycling/waste programs offered through COH
- Completion of a new reciprocal agreement in 2011
- Ongoing involvement of HWDSB in the next phase of the Human Services Plan Initiative
- Review the existing MOU as it relates to the new term of Council and COH/HWDSB Liaison Committee members, to ensure on-going collaboration and alignment of priorities

Chris Murray  
City Manager, City of Hamilton

John Malloy  
Director of Education, HWDSB