Portland Public Schools  
Fernwood Facilitated Conversations Re: School Reconfiguration  
Minutes: June 22, 2006

**Schools involved:** Alameda, Beaumont, Fernwood, Hollyrood, Laurelhurst, Rose City Park

**Attendees:**  
School Representatives  
Alameda: Maria Peyerwold, Christine Purvis, Titia Quinton  
Beaumont: Otto Schell, Scott Overton, Jane Geason  
Fernwood: Holly Burton, Martha Struxness, Leslie Comnes  
Hollyrood: Craig Williams, Dana Foley, Prashant Dubey  
Laurelhurst: Meg Stern, Nancy Parker  
Rose City Park: Anne Laufe, Sarah Robertson, Eric Dunlap

Central NE Neighbors/ NE Coalition of Neighbors:  
Tonie Esteban

**PPS Staff:**  
Sara Allen

**Facilitator:**  
Carol Turner, *Leadership for Action*  
Kyle Bray, Note Taker

**Minutes:**  

**Welcome and Review:**

Brief introduction of new representatives. Carol Turner restates charge and reviews material from previous meeting.

Dana Foley – Our charge, therefore, is focused on Rose City Park, so we can leave the Fernwood/Hollyrood reconfiguration issues for later?

Carol Turner – That is correct.

Holly Burton – Is the charge specifically related to numbers issues around Fernwood?

Sara Allen – It is not for us to comment on logistics and planning between Hollyrood and Fernwood. That is something separate that I recommend beginning to investigate on your own.

Carol Turner – Any comments on last meeting’s minutes? (No comments)
Anne Laufe – We also want to talk about transfers for Rose City Park as well.

Prashant Dubey – The notes (group emails) sent around after the last meeting, did those present a new option?

Scott Overton – We just wanted to put our opinion out up front. We are willing to do what the Rose City Park kids want to do.

Carol Turner – There are no new options at this point. Let’s dive into the data that Sara Allen has provided.

**Data Discussion and Options:**

(Discussion focuses primarily on Options 4 and 5)

Sara Allen – Capture rates to consider when reviewing options. We would never use a 100 percent capture rate. What capture rate should we assume? One option is to take the maximum that attends Rose City Park plus the additional newcomers. Are there any questions on the data? We started with neighborhood population and boundaries, then applied capture rate to get an incoming number for Kindergarten.

Meg Stern – Is it fair to say that this data is a snapshot of right now, so would it have any bearing on five years from now?

Sara Allen – It comes down to choices and population. Growth is kind of a wild card.

Meg Stern – I’m thinking that as we cycle through any boundary change, we have a few years “in play,” and then will have some solid numbers after that.

Sara Allen – We have data showing trends for the past eight years, and the declining enrollment over the past 20 years. We may have unpredictable pockets. Other questions?

Eric Dunlap – If we assume the district is correct that enrollment continues to decline, all of this becomes irrelevant, as we’ll automatically have space down the line.

Sara Allen – The decline in enrollment is supposed to stabilize by around 2010, 2015, with no dramatic decline from there.

Scott Overton – These numbers assume that all kids at Laurelhurst continue through Grade 8?
Sara Allen – Yes.

Scott Overton – If the boundaries change, and someone is living in the Laurelhurst area, do they have a choice as to where their kids go?

Sara Allen – They’d have to apply for transfer.

Scott Overton – Can the family move before the student gets to Grade 8?

Sara Allen – Yes, you have the right to return. People usually stick with the school that they’re in. You can choose the neighborhood school or return to your previous school.

Craig Williams – Let’s jump to the Option 5 numbers. For 2006-07 numbers, you show 65 kids for Rose City Park, while the other scenarios use lower numbers, just wanted to point that out.

Sara Allen – Option 5 (trifurcated option) – This one seems doable, the Laurelhurst concern seems minimal.

Meg Stern – As of yesterday, 71 kids in Kindergarten were signed up, and we typically gain more students over the summer. No way to predict, though. So, this is higher than the numbers in the data packet. There are five transfers in those numbers. When you look at the capacity of the building, especially over the next five years, we have a problem. That’s the main Laurelhurst concern.

Sara Allen – That makes sense, but those numbers are pretty astounding. That is an unprecedented growth rates. Make sure to double check your enrollment addresses.

Meg Stern – I met yesterday with the principal and secretary, and these are the current numbers. Even if you subtract transfers for Kindergarten projections over the next four years, it still impacts capacity.

Craig Williams – Those are confirmed numbers?

Meg Stern – Yes, confirmed as of yesterday.

Sara Allen – And none of those people have transfers out that they may exercise?

Craig Williams – We are looking at about 73 for Kindergarten at Hollyrood.

Meg Stern – Can you say that you are enrolled in more than one school at a time?
Sara Allen – There is a date by which you have to choose a school, and that date has passed. This means that your capture rate has gone up dramatically.

Sarah Robertson – Rose City Park’s incoming Kindergarten projection is not 45 as you have, but closer to 65.

Sara Allen – The district may not have given the updated info to the schools. The constraining factor is not just class size, but actual classrooms.

Meg Stern – The concern is that as we add on 6th, 7th, and 8th grades to Laurelhurst, we have some classrooms that are used for other purposes besides general classes, such as special education. Without even considering the boundary change, we are already making tough choices. We have a community that has already been told that their Kindergartners can’t come to Laurelhurst. We are looking at what we’ll look like as a K-8 school.

Prashant Dubey – I have an observation. One possibility is that capture rates are increasing, another is that the school is in an area where the boundary just shrunk.

Meg Stern – We aren’t counting those kids.

Prashant Dubey – Last year there was a larger boundary, with 66 Kindergarteners. Next year, there is a smaller boundary, with 71 Kindergarteners. So, I observe that perhaps more people with young kids have moved into the neighborhood. So, should we use that information? It might not be a capture rate increase.

Maria Peverwold – There is also another option, the option of removing Laurelhurst from the decision (this is the same as Option #5, but without the inclusion of Laurelhurst). (This becomes known as Option #6).

Holly Burton – Can we get rid of Option #3? Option 3 represents a decision bigger than our charge.

Christi – We determined that speaking specifically about Rose City Park is the charge, so Option #3 isn’t appropriate. We’ve all come up with more sensible options

Sarah Robertson – Rose City Park wants no part of Option #3.

Carol – Do we have consensus to remove Option #3 and add Option #6? (Group achieves consensus, Option #3 eliminated as a choice and Option #6 added to discussion).
Christi – Given Meg’s concerns, can we use the data we have and look at Option #6?

Eric Dunlap – My big concern is boundaries that make sense. To send a kid that lives five blocks from Laurelhurst all the way to Alameda, even if there is room at Alameda to take them, it doesn’t make sense.

Tonie Esteban– Coming from a neighborhood standpoint, I agree with that. Traffic and safety concerns are key. To send a kid to a school in a different neighborhood seems odd.

Scott Overton – Those kids would go to Fernwood, not Alameda.

Christi – Let’s look at Option #6.

Sara Allen – Given that we have the charge to integrate Rose City Park, should we be looking at the original boundaries given, or should we look at what the ideal boundary is? Right now we are just tweaking the boundaries.

Carol Turner - This seems to be where the conversation is going.

Eric Dunlap – We are charged with making our own decisions, and it’s going to be painful for every school. Laurelhurst has concerns, Hollyrood, etc., but if we don’t decide, the district will decide for us, and they could easily change the boundaries at whim.

Carol Turner – Are there any more data questions for Sara?

Holly Burton – For Hollyrood and Fernwood, the boundaries are changing this year (because of Irvington) and next year (for Rose City Park). The numbers don’t reflect the increase in school population properly. It shows 65 Kindergarteners in 2006-07, and 65 1st Graders in 2007-08, which is the same number.

Sara Allen – This is the “zero change” scenario, which assumes that all students at Rose City Park stay at Rose City Park.

Prashant Dubey – Our friends at Rose City Park have made it clear that options taking all Rose City Park students to one school just doesn’t make sense. Since this charge is how to accommodate Rose City Park kids, we should respect that. So, does it make sense to look at the options now as a group and take out those options that dump Rose City Park students in one school?

Dana Foley – I agree with that. We need to fine tune these numbers. Do these include capture rates and transfers?
Sara Allen – We assume that you won’t be taking in many transfers, except for Alameda, because they still have room.

Dana Foley - What to do with transfers is a huge unknown, so we have to understand where they fit in. We think that the Grant cluster numbers are moving up, so when we move ahead, we need to pay attention to the fine number issues.

Sara Allen– Regarding the demographics of the Grant cluster, I talked to the PSU demographer and the city planners, and we can get meetings set up with them, perhaps together. When we come back from the break, the summer numbers will have settled and we’ll have better numbers for fall enrollment. That will help us decide how to balance the boundaries.

Scott Overton – Yeah, when it’s time to set the exact boundaries, we’ll need the fine numbers. But for now, for picking the general option, do we need the fine numbers?

Carol Turner – Is there consensus to remove the options that send Rose City Park to one school (Option #3 and #4 [Option 3 removed previously in the evening])? (Yes, consensus to remove.)

Craig Williams – How much fine tuning does there need to be? Waiting until September for numbers is okay, but what about years from now? Once the neighborhood schools solidify, capture rates will likely go up, as there are less options for transfer. For Hollyrood, our transfer numbers used to be significant, but they have gone down and we aren’t really taking in transfers.

Sara Allen – Look at the last four years, you had 40 kids choose Hollyrood each year. You took about 10 transfers last year according to our system. Be careful not to make personal observations.

Craig Williams – I think your numbers are great, but maybe the district needs to spend more money. It seems like we have stale numbers.

Sara Allen – We haven’t seen the trend that you are suggesting. This area has very high capture rates compared to other areas.

Dana Foley – When people see this notion that we will have stability in the schools, I think the capture rate will go up. Laurelhurst and Hollyrood are both overcrowded. Can we have a promise that if we are adding numbers and guessing over the next few years, that we can accommodate extra kids regardless, through portable classrooms, things like that? We can’t pare down anymore. We need a guarantee that we can accommodate the students.
Sara Allen – Part of the planning with Fernwood is to determine how to best use the two buildings. Think about that as part of the planning. If the schools get too crowded, we would look at portables and other options. We have ongoing dialogue about that.

Scott Overton – We are beyond our charge again. Reel it in.

Tonie Esteban – I would like to hear discussion about Option #5 and Option #6. I’d like to stay away from numbers and focus on criteria like neighborhood impact, safety, etc. It seems like proximity seems to make sense for our kids. We don't Rose City Park to be disrupted, having to contend with traffic on Fremont, etc.

Carol Turner – So safety and neighborhood impact are important criteria. Should we take time to reflect on parameters?

Tonie Esteban – Yes, but let’s relate them to Options #5 and #6.

Carol Turner – We could weight the parameters, but I’m not sure if we want to go there yet.

Prashant Dubey – I second what Tonie said. At the end of the day, numbers are just numbers.

Sara Allen – Numbers will always be a moving target, it's impossible to target one set of numbers.

Eric Dunlap – We keep coming back to this, talking about boundaries that make sense, proximity, etc., and then we get right back on the numbers again and I’m frustrated. Let’s look at sensible boundaries that keep our kids close to home. The numbers will be the numbers, and we can’t honestly project five years from now. Step back, draw sensible boundaries, and years from now, if we need to look at portables, etc., we’ll look at that then. Right now, just make sure that there is room at each school for the kids.

Anne Laufe – I find it ironic that we are talking about overcrowding when we are considering closing a school. I want to talk about pre-approved transfers, we are asking that for anyone between 47th Avenue and 57th Avenue who wants their kids to go to Rose City Park, they should have pre-approved transfer status, and not have to go through the lottery. This seems doable.

Carol Turner – Is the concept clear to everyone? (No questions)

Holly Burton – Are you proposing that indefinitely?
Anne Laufe – We’d ask for a review in five years, we think that’s a reasonable amount of time to allow the changes to settle and schools develop.

Prashant Dubey – Does something like that have to go to board vote?

Sara Allen – Yes, but the district is generally supportive of this idea. We don’t see space issues at Gregory Heights and Rose City Park. We should bring this forward separately from this process.

Leslie Comnes – I would like to see that in our recommendation package.

Scott Overton – I agree.

Sarah Robertson – This already exists at Skyline and Sabin.

Sara Allen – The board is considering general policy around this as well.

Dana Foley – How would that affect the numbers?

Eric Dunlap – Generally, it would lower the number of kids in the Grant cluster. I think a lot of the kids currently at Rose City Park will follow their teachers, friends, etc. New students, however, will fall off over time. I think Sara accounted for that in her numbers.

Sara Allen – Actually, I only counted existing Rose City Park students, assuming that all incoming Kindergarteners would move into Grant cluster.

Maria Perwold – When we talked about splitting it three ways, it sounded like that wasn’t a good option for Laurelhurst.

Meg Stern – I think that’s right. We are mindful of what Rose City Park is going through, as well as what was traditionally the Laurelhurst community. For us, that option doesn’t feel feasible.

Carol Turner – Are there any objections to Rose City Park students having pre-approved transfer status? (No objections, group reaches consensus to include this request in the recommendation package).

Dana Foley – Option #6 is Option #5 without Laurelhurst? Doesn’t Laurelhurst already have some Rose City Park kids?

Meg Stern – Our assumption is that there will be no transfer spaces at all, but we did have some this year.
Holly Burton – I love Laurelhurst. Rose City Park is closing, Fernwood is losing nine teachers, Hollyrood is losing a grade, so we are all losing something here. What about this weird triangle boundary by Sandy/Halsey. Doesn’t make sense for kids going to the closest school.

(Building use argument for Laurelhurst – extended discussion, primarily between Meg and Leslie, as to the impact on available classrooms at Laurelhurst. Leslie feels that the impact isn’t really visible, Meg says there is a direct impact. Question arises as to the relevancy of this to the current charge).

Dana Foley – We understand the space crunch at Laurelhurst, but we are losing our library, for instance. We wish we had special education or music facilities like Laurelhurst. We all have to share in the negative outcomes from whatever decision we make.

Holly Burton – This is a combined issue.

Scott Overton – We are back on the number issue again. We are spending tons of time saying the same thing here. Can’t we make the decision and then work with the numbers?

Meg Stern – I agree with Holly, this is a combined issue, related to numbers but also to educational impact, neighborhood impact, etc. So much of this overlaps.

Scott Overton – I would really like to talk about it, though, from the perspective of the eight general criteria and not how many classrooms there are at Laurelhurst.

(Group Takes a Break)

General Criteria Discussion:

Carol Turner – The momentum at the end of the last meeting seemed to push for Option #5. Now we see that there are still deep issues. But, I think you have agreed, you have easily eliminated options, agreed on transfer policy, coming together to make decisions (talks about consensus, presents the “five finger model”). Definitely eliminated a lot. Down to the details now, with Option #5 and Option #6 left. What can we do to make one of these options work for most?

Sarah Robertson – I want to know why Laurelhurst took so many Rose City Park transfers this year if there is already a concern about space.

Meg Stern – We took them before this proposal came to the table, when we were operating under the model that we wouldn’t be involved in this discussion. Those we took were mostly siblings. We took five altogether in Kindergarten, but I don’t know what school they came from. I don’t think we took any in the upper grades.
Carol Turner – Let’s come back to the general criteria. Which do you think should have the most weight in the decision? Is there a good way to weigh them, or are some self-evident and should be at the top?

Scott Overton – Academic achievement is what we are in business for, so educational impact has to be first, with safety second.

Carol Turner – What does safety include?

Scott Overton - I see that as getting there safe, being safe there, and getting home safe, all areas.

Otto Schell – Can we hear from Rose City Park about geographical proximity and neighborhood schools?

Sarah Robertson – We are definitely concerned with that. Gregory Heights would be a closer school. We want to increase the neighborhood feeling.

Otto Schell – Talk to us about the anxiety that people seem to have about certain places that people want to go. How many folks from Rose City Park really want to go to Laurelhurst and how many want to stay?

Eric Dunlap – It really comes down to proximity as the big issue. Generally, people north of the ridge feel ties with Alameda and Beaumont, people south of Halsey feel ties to Laurelhurst, and people south of the ridge to Fernwood and Hollyrood. No one seems to think that we should all go as one big group to the same school. There are strong geographical boundaries in our area that we don't cross.

Sarah Robertson – Not everyone likes the three-pronged approach. Most do, but some really don't want to be split up again. We want it to work for everyone.

Anne Laufe – People with upper grade kids will likely move to the new school, but that’s just my sense of it.

Carol – I’ve added proximity as a ninth criterion.

Scott Overton - The kids that would have to cross Sandy Boulevard to get to Hollyrood and Fernwood, is there a bus that goes out there that they could use?

Sara Allen – District policy is to have a bus for any student in the neighborhood boundary farther than one mile from the school.

Scott Overton – Does that apply here?

Sara Allen – Once we get the rough boundaries decided, I'll find that out.
Holly Burton – Capacity has a direct relationship to educational impact, so it should be placed near educational impact and safety.

Dana Foley – Are we trying to use these parameters to decide between Option #5 and Option #6?

Carol Turner – Yes, but if there are other ideas on how to meet the charge, we still need to get those on board.

Holly Burton - What about trading out the odd triangle between Sandy/Halsey and 47th/39th Avenues with the rectangle below Halsey?

Scott Overton – So would that be a new option or an amendment to Option #5?

Holly Burton – Because we don’t have the numbers, I would like to find out about that. In terms of making proximity the issue, it looks like this would form a more regular boundary. It’s Laurelhurst that we are hung up on, it’s the only difference between Option #5 and Option #6. Fernwood should be able to absorb the kids.

Meg Stern – That is worth exploring. It addresses some of our concerns.

Christi – That should be another scenario within Option #5 then.

Dana Foley – Hollyrood is thinking about Kindergarten, 1st Grade and 2nd Grade at Hollyrood, with the rest going to Fernwood. Once you start filling Hollyrood, we can’t fit three classes per grade at K-2 there. When we talk about any kids going to Fernwood, we are talking about walking up eight blocks to 33rd Avenue, which is a safety concern.

Scott Overton – There will be disruption over time, we are already disrupting, so we should try to minimize disruption by doing most of the changes at once.

Tonie Esteban – The new scenario makes sense in the long term.

Carol Tuner – Any effect here on socio-economic status?

(Several members of the group feel that this is no longer an issue, has already been affected with previous changes).

Anne Laufe – I think that Tonie is correct, this seems logical based on neighborhood boundaries.

Eric Dunlap – I think the areas involved are fairly similar as far as socio-economic status.
Sarah Robertson – I’m glad that we are looking at these issues; they weren’t brought up in previous changes.

Scott Overton – If we are thinking about safety, can we include in our recommendation that a bus line be included, beyond the normal policy?

Prashant Dubey – Some of these are philosophical factors, some are tactical. Philosophy should lead tactics. Things like financial impact are what they are, they will result from what decision we make. The philosophy of strong neighborhood schools should drive us, and it’s up to the district to provide the funds needed.

Scott Overton – Move financial impact to the bottom. We don’t care what it costs them.

Holly Burton – Can we come to a “consensus w/ reservations” for the new scenario? We still need more information before we can make a complete consensus.

Dana Foley – I’d like to propose that, in that case, can we reach consensus on Option #5 with multiple scenarios?

Craig Williams – I thought we weren’t going to discuss boundary changes because it’s up to the board.

Sara Allen – The purpose of this is to get your opinion on logical boundaries.

Craig Williams – That’s not how I see it. We determine where to send kids, then the district approves the boundaries.

Sara Allen – You are fully within your rights to give boundary recommendations. It is board approved, but we want your recommendations.

Meg Stern – We have to talk to our community about the new scenario, so we aren’t ready to say that Option #5 is the way to go, and we’re not ready to remove Option #6.

Holly Burton – Can we explore pre-approved transfer status for that as well?

Sarah Robertson – Regardless of what option we choose, we have consensus to include the pre-approved transfer status in our recommendation.

Prashant Dubey – I think it’s important to optimize the whole, look at this holistically. Option #5 makes sense from a variety of these factors and optimizes the whole. From that point, I would like to drive for a consensus on Option #5.
Carol Turner – Let’s try that, with the caveat for exploring the new scenario with Option #5 with any new data.

Group does 5-finger indication of strength of support/non-support (5 is really likes it, 4 likes it, 3 neutral- but can live with it, 2 does not like it, 1- opposes it). Need everyone with 3 or above to reach consensus. Group does not reach consensus under this criteria.

**Final Thoughts and Next Steps:**

Carol Turner – So now you decide, do we come back in the fall for additional meetings or submit a recommendation as we have it now without consensus? You have until Oct 15.

Scott Overton – If we meet again, what is the likelihood that consensus will be gained?

Meg Stern – Our reservation is that we need more information.

Sarah Robertson – How soon could you get us that data for Laurelhurst?

Meg Stern - Most of our community is gone for the summer, so we couldn't bring it to the community till September.

Sara Allen – We can have information for you over the summer.

Scott Overton – Let’s include the request for extra bus lines if needed for safety.

Prashant Dubey – I am not convinced that the level of impact at Laurelhurst is that significant, especially compared with some of the other schools. Your stance seems disproportionate to the impact.

Carol Turner – The school board wants consensus, but doesn’t require it. If consensus is not reached, the superintendent will made the decision.

Jane – To Nancy and Meg, if the numbers work out that the new scenario is a total wash, would that change your vote?

Meg Stern – We represent our community, so it’s hard for me to say without going back and talking to the community.

Jane – The majority of your concerns expressed so far are about capacity. So, if boundary changes turn out not to be an issue, would you still vote as you did?
Anne Laufe – Is there anything that would change your vote from a “two” to a “three” tonight?

Meg Stern – It’s only fair to go back to our community and talk about what has come up tonight, that’s our job as community/school representatives.

Scott Overton – The hope was that we’d reach consensus tonight, but we would be willing to meet again in the fall, if there is potential to reach consensus then.

Carol Turner – Is there any disagreement with meeting in the fall?

Tonie Esteban – We are representatives, but I represent over 20 neighborhoods. I feel like you (Meg) are passing the buck.

Carol Turner – The proposal was to meet in the fall.

Eric Dunlap – I feel like everyone and every school has given and suffered. I don’t mean to insult, but I don’t feel like Laurelhurst is being flexible here. One extra child per class isn’t going to change the makeup of your school.

Carol Turner – There is a lot of interest in Option #5, and Meg is willing to discuss it with her community, but can not that tonight. So, let’s pull out calendars and choose a date for the fall.

Holly Burton – Remember, this is a recommendation, not a decision.

Maria Peyerwold – Is there a way to do consensus by email, after Meg is able to go to the community (avoid another big meeting)?

Carol Turner – I can’t recommend that as a facilitator.

Maria Peyerwold – But if Laurelhurst changes their vote, we’d have consensus.

Carol Turner – Meg said that she doesn’t see having that happening until the fall. Laurelhurst came to the table late, they weren’t originally included.

Craig Williams – Given that, does that alter the fact that we need consensus? Can’t we give our recommendation and say that we didn’t reach consensus because Laurelhurst didn’t have as much time to prepare?

Sara Allen – I am optimistic that you can come back and reach a consensus.

Holly Burton – Let’s give Laurelhurst the chance to catch up.

Meg Stern – And this isn’t even catching up, this is a new idea we are discussing.
Dana Foley - Laurelhurst came into this as “untouchable,” and that was hard for all the other schools to handle.

Leslie Comnes – The original charge, we have a lot of work to do before October and this is just one small piece.

Carol Turner – I assume that some of that work can go ahead without the larger group. (Most of the group nods yes).

Prashant Dubey– How about a web-based survey or some other way to accelerate the process for Laurelhurst?

Meg Stern – I’d have to look into that.

Scott - Suggests September 7th as the fall meeting date.

Carol Turner – Any disagreements with September 7, 2006 as the date?

Holly Burton – The information won’t be used until October 15th, correct, so is there any other reason to move quickly?

Scott Overton – Back-to-school nights and other specific school functions.

Carol Turner – How about September 12th or 13th?

Group chooses to meet at 6:30 p.m. on September 12th, 2006.

Meeting adjourned.