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'This is a huge improvement': QPS's new boundary plan draws favorable reviews



Lori Tuley, right, listens to Rachael Petty, a member of Quincy Public School's Boundary Advisory Task Force, as she review the northern attendance boundaries Tuesday during the district's public forum in the Mary Ellen Orr Auditorium at John Wood Community College. Tuley has two grandchildren attending Monroe School. | H-W Photo/Michael Kipley

**By Deborah Gertz Husar** Herald-Whig

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QUINCY -- The latest proposal from the Boundary Advisory Task Force earned more than a passing grade from Molly Terstegge.

"I give this an A-plus," the mom of two said, drawing the only applause Tuesday night at the first of two Quincy Public Schools forums on the potential new attendance boundaries for the district's new K-5 learning communities.

"This is a huge improvement," Terstegge said. "Thanks for hearing us and revamping it."

Compared with two earlier plans outlined in November, this latest one drew a largely favorable response from the crowd, which listened to a presentation before asking questions.

"It works out pretty well for us. According to where we live, our daughter will stay in the same school," said Ronda Kaelke, whose daughter is a third-grader at Monroe.

The only concern for Kaelke remains the transitions between school buildings. Her daughter will go to Baldwin for fourth grade, back to Monroe for fifth grade, and then to the junior high for sixth grade.

But "as far as how the lines are drawn, it's what I was envisioning. It seems a little more realistic to me, and I'm happy with that," Kaelke said.

Task force member Rachael Petty, one of the presenters at Tuesday's forum along with School Board and task force member Sheldon Bailey, was just as happy with the new boundary lines.

"One of the goals of everybody was to make the lines make sense and be something everybody else could understand," Petty said. "When people look at it, it's not only pleasing to the eye, but it makes sense."

The new plan shifts Gina Miller's son to a different school.

"I'm OK with that as long as we can make it work with our day care situation ... and transportation," Miller said.

The Harrison Street school site would be near her son's school, but "if we continue to keep the same day care, he'd go to 12th Street, or we have to find a way to make Harrison work," she said. "I don't know. We'll have to see."

Key to developing this plan -- and equalizing district demographics -- was knowing the last of the five school sites, something that wasn't known in November when the first still-in-progress plans were presented.

"It's hard to make boundaries not knowing where the site was," Petty said.

But the uncertainty still surrounding the fifth site on Harrison Street spurred questions.

"We hope we're not back here in three or four more months and doing this all over again" if that site were to change, said Jamie Terstegge, Molly Terstegge's husband. "I hope this is it."

The earliest the School Board could complete the Harrison Street site purchase would be the Feb. 22 meeting, School Board member Mike Troup said, but the district holds an option through March to buy up to 18 acres on the property at 40th and Harrison.

Lori Tuley, a grandmother of two students at Monroe School, said the new plan is "a lot better" than the original proposals.

"It just makes more sense for the children," said Tuley, who picks up her grandkids after school. "I think it will be all right. It is what it is. You just have to adjust. It's going to be for the overall good."

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