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To: David Fleishman, Superintendent
School Committee

From: Joe Russo, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education

Date: February 6, 2014

Re: Elementary Buffer Zones, Bowen School

In response to the January 13 Enrollment Planning and Class Size Report and at the request of the School Committee, a review of current buffer zones was undertaken to determine if expanding or adding new buffer zones would assist in the balance of school and class sizes for the upcoming school year. The Enrollment Planning and Class Size Report indicated the most significant strain on class and school size is at the Bowen School. Upon careful inspection, four areas surrounding Bowen are being presented for possible expansion or newly proposed buffer zones. At Monday's meeting, these options will be presented to the School Committee. A parent meeting will then be held at Bowen on Tuesday, February 25 to gather additional feedback from the community. Final recommendations will be presented to the School Committee at the next scheduled business meeting.

In addition to the use of the two existing buffer zones, the four buffer zone options under review include:

- 1.) Create a new Bowen/Memorial-Spaulling Buffer Zone - This buffer zone would cover the area of Bowen south of Boylston St. There is one development currently districted to Memorial-Spaulling in this area, and the development would remain districted to only Memorial-Spaulling. The rest of the area could become the new buffer zone. Only residences on the south side of Boylston Street are included. The north side will remain districted to Bowen. According to the data, approximately 13 students reside in this area per year and attend Bowen. For the current year, there was a particularly large cohort of 19 kindergarten students. There are a small amount of private school students and out-of-assigned district placements which are not included. Based on this information, an average of 13 students per year could potentially be districted to Memorial-Spaulling instead of Bowen. There is already a bus stop in the area for Memorial-Spaulling due to the complex mentioned above. Due to this, transportation should not be an issue. Bowen and Memorial-Spaulling attend the same middle and high schools.

- 2.) Extend the current Bowen/Mason-Rice Buffer Zone - The current buffer zone in the Newton Center area has approximately 8 students per grade. By extending the buffer zone, another 6 students per grade could be added and sent to Mason-Rice. There are a small number of private school students which are not included. The proposed extension would add the areas west of the current buffer zone and north of Paul St. The extension would also include Ripley St., Bartlett, Westminster and Stiles, all either to the south or east of the current buffer zone. There are already bus stops in the area for current buffer zone students. Mason-Rice does attend a different middle school, Brown, but the same high school.
- 3.) Create a new Bowen/Mason-Rice Buffer Zone north of Boylston St. - This buffer zone would cover the triangular area of Bowen south and west of Clark St., east of Centre St., and north of Boylston. Based on current students, approximately 8 students reside in this area for any given year and could be districted to Mason-Rice instead of Bowen. There are a small amount of private school students and out-of-assigned district placements which are not included. There are a number of bus stops in the Mason-Rice area west of Centre St. These routes should be able to accommodate additional stops in the proposed new buffer zone. Mason-Rice does attend a different middle school, Brown, but the same high school.
- 4.) Create a new Bowen/Ward Buffer Zone east of Hammond Pond Parkway - This buffer zone would cover the large area currently in the Bowen district east of the Hammond Pond Parkway. Based on current students, this area includes approximately 4 students per grade in any year. This is mutually exclusive of private school students, which are approximately 4 in any given year. Therefore, only about half of the students in this area attend Newton Public Schools. Transportation may be an issue for this optional zone. Currently, Ward district only has one bus, which is shared with Bigelow and Underwood. Due to the size of the proposed district and the shared bus, students may need to be on the bus for up to one hour unless another bus can be used for the new optional zone. Additionally, students at Ward attend both Bigelow and North High, while students at Bowen attend Oak Hill and South. This zone would affect the North-South high school split, having an impact of 16 students in total.

To summarize the four options, below are the number of students which could be added and potentially sent to another district instead of Bowen, for each option above:

- Option 1 - New Bowen/Memorial-Spaulding - 13 students
- Option 2 - Extend Current Bowen/Mason-Rice - 6 students
- Option 3 - New Bowen/Mason-Rice Triangle - 8 students
- Option 4 - New Bowen/Ward - 4 students (transportation may be an issue plus North-South split)
- Total All 4 Options - 31 students per grade