

## School Boundary Change Creates Serious Inequity in Happy Valley

The North Clackamas School District is in the process of changing school boundaries in the Happy Valley area. A District committee was formed last spring and held meetings to announce where these new boundaries would be located. The School Board will hear a detailed report of the committee's recommendation at their September 18<sup>th</sup> board meeting. This meeting will be open to the public.

There will be opportunities for public comment at the Board meeting on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, with a vote on the boundary recommendation scheduled for the October 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

If you live in the area east of SE 145<sup>th</sup> Avenue and north of the southern boundary of Jackson Hills subdivision, then you are affected by the new Happy Valley school boundary. This area has been termed the "panhandle".

If the current Proposal is enacted then children in this area will no longer be able to attend the school in their community, Happy Valley Elementary School. Children from the "panhandle" will be bused to within several hundred feet of the new Happy Valley School and then they will continue up, over and around Scouters' Mt. to a different school in Pleasant Valley.

For many students in the "panhandle" this will mean trips of approximately 3 ½ miles each way to the new school in Pleasant Valley. That is a total of SEVEN miles EVERY DAY!

### **THIS IS AN EXTREMELY DRASTIC AND INEQUITABLE BURDEN FOR THESE STUDENTS!**

There is no other area in the North Clackamas School District that is being singled out for this type of dramatic change. In most attendance areas students live within 1 mile of their school and there are few if any that live over 2 miles from their school!

Not only are the "panhandle" students being burdened with a 7 mile daily round trip, that trip will be made on steep, narrow, poorly developed and poorly maintained roads. Some of these roads are so poor that the county has banned vehicles over 9,999 lbs. GVW. Most students in the panhandle live at an elevation of between 500 and 730 feet above sea level (ASL). On their trip to the new Pleasant Valley School they will be bused to the bottom of the Happy Valley Bowl (about 500 ft. ASL), then up the side of Scouters' Mt. on SE 147<sup>th</sup> to a summit of 746 ft. ASL. They will end up in the bottom of Pleasant Valley which is about 410 ft ASL. This makes for minimum of about 860 feet and maximum of about 1,100 feet of total elevation changes for students to get to the new school. And this is only 1 way. Some students will be making a total DAILY elevation change of 2,200 feet. Compare this to a student who lives on top of Mt. Scott (1,050 ft ASL) and travels to the new Happy Valley Elementary School. Their elevation change would be only about 650 feet one way.

### **THE "PANHANDLE" CREATES A SEPARATE AND ISOLATED ISLAND!**

Matt Utterback, the District employee in charge of the boundary change Proposal, stated, "We are not interested in creating/maintaining situations like we have now where Lincoln Heights is its own separate island within another attendance area." But this is exactly what the Proposal does

in the case of the "panhandle". The "panhandle" is a separate and isolated island within the Happy Valley Elementary School attendance area. The perimeter of the "panhandle" is approximately 14,000 feet, but only about 1,200 feet is connected to the rest of the attendance area for the new school in Pleasant Valley. That is only about 8% of common boundary with the Pleasant Valley attendance area. And that 1,200 feet is located on top of Scouters' Mt. right in the middle of a heavily forest on a volcanic butte. There are no homes for 1/3 of a mile to either the north or the south of this connection to the Pleasant Valley attendance area. The closest neighborhood to homes located in the "panhandle" (that will be attending the same school) is over three-quarters of a mile away! If the "panhandle" is not a "separate island", then what is?

### **"PANHANDLE" STUDENTS WILL MISS MORE DAYS IN SCHOOL DUE TO WEATHER!**

The extreme transportation nightmare from the "panhandle" to the new school in Pleasant Valley will undoubtedly cause these students to miss more than their fair-share of school days due to inclement weather or "snow days".

### **HOME PRICES WILL BE AFFECTED!**

Prices of homes in the "panhandle" area will be negatively affected. Several recent listings of homes for sale in areas OUTSIDE the "panhandle" state selling points as follows: "Stays in Happy Valley elem school boundary" and "...in sought after Happy Valley school! This home is walking distance to the new Elementary..." Why would a home seller put such statements in his ad unless he felt that they were positive points that would either make his house sell for more money or sell faster (or both)? Ask yourself this question: "If I had the choice between to equivalent homes across the street from each other, one that was ½ mile walking distance to a school and the other that was 3 ½ miles (with no sidewalks) to a school: Which one would I buy?" If for this reason alone, the School Board has an obligation to NOT inequitably burden the hard-working, tax-paying homeowners of the "panhandle" with diminished home values compared to their neighbors west of 145th.

### **CHANGE IS INEVITABLE; BUT IT DOES NOT NEED TO BE INEQUITABLE!**

Happy Valley Elementary School currently has over 900 students. The new Happy Valley Elementary School building was designed for approximately 600 students. There obviously needs to be a lowering of the attendance levels at Happy Valley Elementary School. This inevitably means that some current Happy Valley Elementary School students will need to move to other schools. While this change is inevitable, it does not need to be unfair, inconsistent, and inequitable.

### **IF WE DON'T STAND-UP FOR OURSELVES, WHO WILL?**

Some people may feel that there is no use in speaking out about this unfair and inequitable boundary change. They may feel that the School Board will not listen to their concerns about students being transported a total of seven miles to and from school every day. Some may feel that they are too new to the area to have any influence. Others may feel that they do not have the abilities in speaking, writing or language to voice their opinion effectively. These attitudes are wrong! This is America and one of the rights we have is to speak out against public

representatives, laws or decisions that we believe to be wrong. We have the right to stand-up and voice our opinions to those who are our public servants. If we do not stand against inequity in our own back-yard, then who will? People who live in other areas of Happy Valley will not speak out to rectify this flawed boundary change. It does not affect them and they will not care what happens to those of us in the "panhandle". Those who serve on the School Board may not feel compelled to step-in and protect those in the "panhandle" from this unfair change. After all, they will probably figure that if nobody feels strongly enough about this inequity to speak-out, then maybe it is an acceptable change. If we, the citizens and taxpayers living in the "panhandle" do not have the time or determination to voice our opinions, then we will only have ourselves to blame.

### **WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?**

You can take action! The more people that speak-up, the more chance that this unfair decision will get noticed and resolved by the School Board.

**Write a letter to the School Board and /or Superintendent.**

**Attend a (or all) School Board meetings.**

**Write a letter to the Principal of Happy Valley School.**

**Put up a sign on your house or in your yard.**

**Talk to your neighbors.**

Here is some contact info that may be helpful:

Superintendent Ron Naso  
Email: [naso@nclack.k12.or.us](mailto:naso@nclack.k12.or.us)

School Board  
C/o North Clackamas School District  
4444 SE Lake Road  
Milwaukie, OR 97222

General Switchboard: (503) 353-6000

District website: <http://www.nclack.k12.or.us>  
Contact info: <http://www.nclack.k12.or.us/about.us/Contact.Us.htm>

Shelly Reggiani, Principal  
Happy Valley Elementary School  
13865 SE King Road  
Happy Valley, OR 97086

Ms. Reggiani's Email: [reggianis@nclack.k12.or.us](mailto:reggianis@nclack.k12.or.us)

This letter is provided by, and opinions offered are those of Erik R. Gustafsson, a resident of the "panhandle".  
Erik's email: [erik@happy-valley.us](mailto:erik@happy-valley.us)