

**Facilities Strategic Planning Committee Meeting**  
**November 9, 2017 4:30-6:30**  
**Kent County Middle School Media Center**

Present: Richard Kalter, Joseph Harding, Francoise Sullivan, Dr. Jeff Grotzky, Dr. David Lever, and Dr. Karen Couch. Absent: Tracey Williams, Joseph Wheeler, Shelley Heller

Also in attendance: Pat Merritt, Trish McGee, Dr. Wendy Costa, Shelley Schofield, Nathan Schroyer

The meeting was called to order at 4:33. Dr. Grotzky stated members were presented with a planning document and this committee can either add, subtract, prioritize, and adjust timelines on the document. He added that the committee generally needs to come to consensus on what will be presented to the Board of Education at the November 13, 2017, Work Session.

Dr. Lever presented document highlights stating that since the October 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, the objective has been to reduce the overall costs while keeping to the goals, understanding this is the opportunity to rethink the educational program in the county. The major changes center around the Galena and the middle school project, with the Galena project having the highest priority. Some projects and funding requirements were extended, while others were significantly reduced. For instance, at Worton Elementary school we are proposing the minimum of what will be required to move the Board of Education offices into that facility. The changes also delay all renovation projects at the high school except improvements to the planetarium. The proposal also adds in the high school roof replacement as well as improvements to the tennis courts and track projects. Several of the high school projects will be completed with QZAB funding, i.e. the majority of the funding coming from the State. At Galena Elementary, we are recommending replacement of the roof and mechanical system while reducing the scope to address circulation, security issues, and improvements to daylighting in certain areas of the school.

The project list outlines the order of importance for a total \$63.3 million capital outlay extended to an 8-year period from the original proposed 6-year plan. Projects would begin in 2018 and extend through 2025. Four roofing projects (two in association with renovations) will be funded through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) program and will have a substantial impact on the maintenance operations and energy savings for the school system. Simply reducing the maintenance crew time and operational dollars needed to constantly patch school building roofs will significantly improve district efficiencies. With renovation of the Worton facility the Board of Education office will also be in a better location, more central to the county for better communication and community outreach. There will be a modest reduction in overall square footage to the district; however, keep in mind there will be plenty of opportunity to further reduce as we move forward with the plan.

Dr. Lever stated there are several considerations for the middle school including relocation of the middle school or renovation of the existing middle school. The total costs for these projects may seem high; however, given the age of the facilities in Kent County and the lack of investment over time, they are very reasonable. The roofs on the schools are beginning to show their age as reflected by roof leaks that are beginning to surface in areas of every school except Garnett Elementary, and they will eventually impact the educational programs. The school system is now approaching a point in time where investments are needed and are critical to the students in the district.

In the case of the current middle school, Dr. Lever looked at estimated costs for refurbishment, limited renovation, and full renovation. Refurbishment would involve upgrade or replacement of a few key building systems and renovation of targeted spaces. Limited renovation is a formal State project category and will require replacement and upgrade of at least five major systems as well as widespread architectural and educational improvements. The advantages are that the school will be allowed to come back and do further renovations in fifteen years with State support. The State will ask if the renovations will provide the school with the educational spaces and features that are characteristic of other middle schools in the state. Full renovation will address all educational requirements and leave the building in like-new condition. To meet the full programmatic requirements for a middle school, an addition would be needed. Dr. Lever detailed the differences in cost between all options for the middle school and reviewed the timelines for all projects outlined on the list. There is potential for further QZAB projects in the future if there is support from the community.

Dr. Couch spoke about the need to plan for declining enrollment and consider how our facilities can accommodate an increase in enrollment. She stated this exercise is incredibly helpful in planning for the future because the district has not really taken a proactive approach to long term facilities planning. She stated that she is trying to take a more proactive approach to facilities versus a reactive approach. She also wants to consider investments into district facilities that we may later regret if these discussions do not take place.

Dr. Grosky stated the bottom line is that student enrollment is declining, the data is there. He added that obviously, there could be something magical that happens to increase enrollment; however, the data is not there now. Mr. Harding stated the County should maintain the integrity of the block of land in Worton because it is a pristine block of land that has sewer and water. He stated it would be foolish to give up one foot of land even if you allowed someone to use it or lease a portion of the building. He noted that he would not give up anything there because there may be a day in which you need to move everyone to the Worton campus and you will regret the decision you've made to surplus that facility.

Dr. Lever stated it could definitely be less expensive to renovate the existing middle school facility. You can approach it with a smaller design knowing that these numbers are going to be changing and the design can reflect those numbers at that time of design. The educational specs committee will be a major component in deciding what is needed. It is important to note that

with high risk and high poverty populations, the need for more resource rooms will be an issue and are not included in the state rated capacity numbers.

Mr. Kalter stated he feels like Alice in Wonderland, noting it was unrealistic to consider borrowing \$40M when Kent County has the highest tax rate on the Eastern Shore. Due to declining enrollment, he thought we should only consider what is really needed. He stated that as a taxpayer, he is not going to vote to increase his taxes. He added that most of the people in this community do not have kids in the schools and he questioned whether they are going to want to increase their taxes. This group needs to go in and ask for what is really needed. Mr. Kalter emphasized that he cannot believe if the County were to offer \$2.1M per year in additional funding that the system would really want to put that into a building. Mr. Kalter stated that other jurisdictions use their older middle schools and do not see the need to renovate or replace them. Dr. Lever disagreed, stating there are school construction projects across the state and counties are investing large amounts of funding into these projects. He stated that the State will ask if the renovations will provide the school with the educational spaces and features that are characteristic of other middle schools in our jurisdictions.

Mrs. Sullivan countered it is not about choosing between this or that because funding applied to construction would not be applied to a recurring budget. She added that the County is not going to give money to hire more teachers because of declining enrollment; therefore, the improvements we can make are structural and they will improve the learning environment for our students. She stated we have an obligation to our students and families, something that has not been done for more than twenty years in this county. Mrs. Sullivan stated that while she does see his point, there are also plenty of those who have a different opinion, adding that she doesn't know that a tax increase needs to happen because there may be room within the budget. She stated that by only asking for the least amount makes this committee pointless. Mr. Kalter stated he does think there are ways the County can help the school system. For instance, if the district closes a couple of buildings, you will save money. He stated the County has not asked for the district to return that money and if it is spending money to maintain Millington and Worton, this will be more money in the budget. Dr. Lever pointed out that no other jurisdiction in the state of Maryland has done as little as Kent County. Mrs. Sullivan pointed out we are the only county that has one middle school and one high school.

Dr. Couch noted that the new timeline is reflective of the immediate needs in our schools and decisions about the middle school have been extended allowing for more data. She also stated QZAB projects should not be counted into the overall obligations because they are largely funded by the State and outside organizations. Dr. Couch added that although QZAB projects should be part of the plan, they should be placed into a different category than the CIP projects. Dr. Lever stated we can all agree that we need to keep current elementary schools in place for as long as we can because busing of these students would be extremely difficult for this population. He added making a capital investment into those schools will not result in money wasted and that declining enrollment will not result in an overabundance of space since they are already being used to a greater capacity. Dr. Lever stated that if we are thinking about planning for increased enrollment, you need to hang onto the middle school because right now Garnet is land locked

and there is no space to construct an addition. He added if the school system were to grow, you may be faced with building a new elementary school and making a decision on where would that school should be positioned to address the population. Mrs. Sullivan noted that the current location for Garnet is not working, so at some point we may need to talk about building a new middle school or a new elementary school. Dr. Grotsky noted we certainly need to think about the immediate needs; however, we should also keep the door open for future needs. He added that the discussion is important because we are trying to figure out what needs to be completed immediately and what needs to be completed down the road.

Dr. Lever stated we should definitely prioritize; however, why would you consider putting money into a building that could be surplussed or repurposed into something else in the future? Mr. Harding stated perhaps we need to come up with two different recommendations; one being the items that are needed right away and another that requires further study. Dr. Couch stated that the Capital Improvement Plan is always a fluid plan that is subject to adjustments based on data and needs identified in the future. Mr. Harding stated there are some obvious things that need to be fixed and others that need more data; therefore, we should compile the first round of recommendations and the second round can wait until we have more information. Mr. Kalter stated the school district will know in two to three years whether the fiber project will bring new families into the county. It's not here yet so we can't predict because you could be looking at building a new elementary school instead a middle school, we just don't know. He also asked whether the school system would be using the entire Worton building. Dr. Couch stated the district will not need the entire facility; however, once determined the district could lease space to other entities. Mr. Kalter stated the district should also consider using the high school auditorium for board meetings and the County Commissioners' room for district level meetings.

Dr. Lever stated, we are working on needs and they are very valid needs. The whole question on whether it's good to move the middle school to the high school really needs further consideration. He stated that's a discussion that really needs to happen, there are some exciting educational synergies that could happen with the move; however, Dr. Couch had a conversation with the middle school principal who really likes the current location of the school. Dr. Lever stated that these are discussions that need to happen in order to determine what is best for the school system.

Mrs. Sullivan stated there is also a perception that if we are not planning for something like this then we will be in a position of being reactive. Dr. Couch stated this discussion brings us full circle. During consolidation, the Board and I stated we did not want to find ourselves in another situation of having to being reactive, so let's plan for all future possibilities like increased enrollment and declining enrollment. Unfortunately, they are diverse and competing ideas; however, we have to plan because in the absence of these discussions, we will stand to make mistakes. The purpose of this committee is to consider the district footprint in both of these scenarios and make recommendations for how we can address these scenarios in the future. She added two consistent ideas shared at the community input meetings were that central office needs to be more centrally located and they want us to surplus two buildings.

Dr. Lever stated perhaps the district needs to consider undertaking a feasibility study for the renovation options of the middle school and the associated costs for relocation. He added that transportation costs should be factored into the discussion because there could be considerable savings if half your students can be bused to the same location. The committee also discussed the presentation to the Board and it was determined that engaging the Board and seeking their input was important at this stage of the process. Dr. Lever noted discussions need to begin happening so that everyone will be on the same page. It was determined that the committee should plan on three separate recommendations; QZAB projects, pressing needs, and a discussion about the future and recommendations on how those decisions should be addressed in the future. Dr. Lever stated that there was still a great deal of consensus on many items; Rock Hall's roof replacement, Galena with a reduced scope to include the roof and HVAC as well as targeted renovations, high school roof replacement, and QZAB projects. Mr. Kalter asked for a breakdown of costs for Galena. Dr. Lever added that there is a question on the middle school roof replacement and wondered if there were still questions about the Worton relocation for the board office.

Dr. Grotsky asked whether everyone supported moving the central office to Worton and it was unanimous. It was determined that the community input meeting scheduled for the week of November 27<sup>th</sup> would be delayed and instead a meeting of the committee should be scheduled on November 27<sup>th</sup> at 4:30. Pat Merritt added that she attended the meeting to represent Shelley and heard there was a lot of discussion on the economic climate of the County. She stated she could share a couple of things; revenue comes to the county from property taxes and income tax. Unfortunately, Ms. Merritt stated the projections from the assessor's office were flat. She added that our unemployment is at an all-time low, noting virtually everyone who wants to work is working. Therefore, the projections from the state aren't calling for any growth but that's not to say borrowing is not an option.

Dr. Lever was asked to summarize the decisions of the committee for presentation to the Board of Education in the work session of November 13, 2017.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:53 p.m.