

Facilities Strategic Planning Meeting  
November 27, 2017 4:30 p.m.  
Kent County High School Media Center

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

**Also in attendance:** Joe Goetz, Wendy Costa, Trish McGee and Pat Merritt.

The meeting was called to order at 4:35 p.m. Dr. Grotzky stated that tonight the objective is to review the list of projects with the hope of reaching consensus. He noted a vote will be taken if the committee cannot reach consensus. He stated that a community input meeting will be held followed by a final presentation to the Board of Education.

Mr. Harding noted that the committee's work and assumptions are not included in the summary document and are important points. He stated it is important to outline where we began and the all the issues we struggled with to arrive at our final recommendations. He added he wants to ensure everyone knows that we considered various aspects of enrollment, i.e. declining enrollment, flat enrollment, etc. Mrs. Heller stated the most recent Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) was fairly vague; however, the previous CIP included specific estimated costs for the roofs. Dr. Couch stated Aramark completed a Facilities Assessment Report that included these estimates; however, Gipe provided recent estimates for the Garnet and Galena projects.

Mr. Kalter stated he did not know why the committee was even talking about roofs and he was mystified by the conversation. He stated if the roof needed to be replaced then the school system should just make a request to the County. He thought the committee should only be looking for cost savings and discretionary funds. Mrs. Heller added there should not be any question about roof replacements; however, we should not be considering roof replacement in buildings that will be abandoned. Mrs. Williams said originally the committee was talking about projects that were somewhat of a wish list; however, now we are talking about roofs simply because some members were not in agreement with the original list. Dr. Lever said that it was very appropriate for the committee to consider and prioritize roofing projects in a capital plan. He added that the detailed report was provided at the last meeting and tonight he only included the motion.

Dr. Lever said he separated projects into three different baskets. The first basket contains projects that are urgent. The roofs were in this basket because if assets are not protected then everything is at risk. Mrs. Merritt stated that prior to moving the Board of Education into Worton Elementary, it would seem that the roof should be inspected. Dr. Couch stated last year, in 2016 the State conducted a maintenance inspection of the school. Although the roof is well beyond the 20-year life cycle and at some point should be replaced, it was not currently ranked as needing immediate attention. Mr. Harding added while that was a good question, it is another example of information that the committee has already discussed and settled. He said this committee already decided that keeping Worton available to the school system is a high priority

and giving it away would likely kill what we are trying to do in our recommendation. We decided that we should close, i.e. surplus, schools as fast we can and completing the least amount of work that is needed to keep Worton Elementary on the books. He stated the rationale for keeping Worton is based on enrollment because the school system needs to have this campus available intact in the event further consolidation needs to be proposed to the Worton campus.

Mrs. Heller asked whether funding for the renovation of Worton Elementary would only be funded from local sources. Dr. Lever stated the State only participates in funding renovations for educational buildings. He added that the projects contained in the second basket pertain to the middle school. He noted the recommendations outlined in this basket will assist the school system in determining whether the middle school should be renovated or relocated. He stated that the scope of work needed in both scenarios will provide useful information. The recommendation includes completing the educational specifications which will include stakeholders at the middle school. He stated a feasibility study should also be completed to drive the decisions for the school. In addition, high school projects are simply noted to acknowledge ways to improve the educational program. Most of these recommendations are conceptual and there is no money involved and no obligation. They are simply noted so as to not lose sight of those projects. The third basket includes the QZAB bond program and those projects are the concession stand/restroom/ticket booth facility, planetarium, tennis courts, and track renovations.

Mr. Kalter stated he was on a completely different wavelength. He stated the schools were mediocre at best and he can't believe this is how the school district would choose to spend their money. He said looking at the statistics, the schools are doing horribly. He said he can't believe we would spend funds on the buildings and to hell with the kids. He stated he doesn't understand why the school district is even considering anything beyond what is needed. He stated we have the highest tax rate on the Eastern Shore and he does not believe the community will support these recommendations. Mr. Harding asked Mr. Kalter to define three things he would support. Mr. Kalter stated he would support closing, i.e. surplus, the schools; however, he thought we should take a hard look at whether the Board of Education building in Rock Hall should be closed. Mr. Harding stated we already discussed moving the central office staff into the guidance wing at the high school; however, he advocated we are not closing any doors by moving central office staff into Worton Elementary. He thought moving the Board of Education into Worton and closing Rock Hall makes much more sense because he doesn't believe there will be a need in the immediate future to open another school in Rock Hall. He added moving the Board of Education into Worton with a bare bones budget buys the school district more time to make a long term decision about the building. Dr. Couch added that in every scenario, the committee agreed that we need more time to determine where the Board of Education offices will ultimately need to be located and that surplus, Worton would be a huge mistake.

Mrs. Williams stated that as a school system there is a need for a strategic plan that has four or five big prongs to it, one is instruction, one is communication, and one is facilities. This committee is addressing one of the strategic objectives which is facilities. She stated we cannot ignore the buildings and we obviously cannot ignore instruction. She noted that when the school

system goes to the Commissioners for a budget, that's when we include our instructional needs but to her this is a separate piece. Mr. Kalter stated he believes this committee needs to consider everything because there is still only one pot of money. He said he is unwilling to adopt a program that increases taxes. Mr. Harding asked Mr. Kalter whether he proposed we spend nothing and fix nothing. Mr. Kalter stated he thought the committee had the charge to figure out given steady declining enrollment, what was the best way to put more money into education and less money into facilities. He said closing Millington is an obvious choice and the money saved can be used by the district. Mr. Kalter said it sounds as though we will recommend closing the Rock Hall Board of Education building and that will also provide more money for the students in the district. He said we can recommend all of those things; however, he felt we needed to spend a little more time thinking about whether the Board of Education needs to move into the old Worton Elementary school. He still feels that the roofs should not be part of this discussion because if they need to be replaced they will be replaced.

Mr. Harding stated there was a flaw in Mr. Kalter's logic because as he stated there is only one can of money. He told Mr. Kalter roofs cannot be taken out of the equation because there isn't a mystery pot of money designated for those projects. There is a capital improvement budget and the roofs cannot be separated into a mysterious budget because it is part of the capital improvement process and funding. Mr. Harding said it's a bit of stretch to think instructional salaries and operating budget money are the same as capital improvement money. He informed Mr. Kalter he is getting caught up in thinking that if every single project is not funded it will automatically go into the school system's operating budget. Mr. Kalter argued if this list is recommended, taxes are automatically going up.

Mr. Harding told Mr. Kalter he is assuming a role that he doesn't have in this process. He stated that the committee is here to review information, provide some public input to that information and distill it down into something we believe is reasonable. It's up to others to decide whether it is something that will raise taxes and it's not our job to make that decision. He stated we've reduced the list of projects from \$80 million to \$6 million. He added no one is asking the County to write a check for \$6 million next Tuesday because capital funds take longer to get and longer to pay back. Mr. Harding stated we are asking to spend money on structural failures that need to be addressed, projects that have strong justifications. It is not this committee's role to make the final decision, that is why we have elected officials to make those decisions.

Mrs. Heller said she thought the object of this group was to determine which schools should be surplus and where the Board of Education offices should be located. Mrs. Heller stated short term, we are recommending spending \$300,000 to move the Board of Education offices into Worton Elementary; however, long term, the question is whether the building should be surplus. Dr. Couch stated the committee already discussed this issue and everyone was in agreement, including Mr. Kalter, that long term, surplus Worton Elementary would be a big mistake. She added that retaining the integrity of the Worton campus will provide future options for addressing enrollment changes. Mrs. Heller stated if the Board determined that another school was needed after Worton had been surplus and repurposed by the County, then the Board could present a request to the Commissioners. She also expressed concern that keeping

Worton may obligate the County to roof and HVAC replacement. Mr. Harding questioned whether there was enough land to support a repurposed building and a new school. Dr. Couch added that the Board has already given quite a bit of land to the County for the solar project and the community center and the district should retain ownership of the property to satisfy future needs.

Mr. Kalter agreed that the school system should keep Worton Elementary; however, he questioned whether it should be occupied by the Board of Education. He stated it could be shut down, minimizing heating and cooling costs until a decision is made about the future of the school. The merits of moving into the high school were discussed including renovation costs to relocate high school programs into other areas if the Board of Education was moved into the school. Dr. Couch added that either way, money would have to be allocated for renovations to move the Board of Education into the high school or a portion of Worton Elementary.

Dr. Grotsky stated he would prefer to go through the list to determine if we have consensus to bring closure to all these discussions. He stated the first item for consideration is housing the Board of Education and other central office functions at Worton Elementary. He asked whether everyone can support that recommendation. Committee members continued to review the pros and cons for moving central office into the high school, including renovations that will be required to maintain security for the students. Dr. Lever stated in order to do this efficiently, you should be cautious not to make decisions that impact the future of your high school programs. All committee members finally agreed that provided no more than \$300,000 was spent on renovations, it was wise to surplus the Rock Hall building and move the Board of Education into Worton Elementary. Dr. Couch added the school district will probably realize additional efficiency savings by moving the board offices to a more centralized location. Everyone agreed that it would be important to outline these rationales in the final report.

The committee reached consensus on replacement of the Rock Hall Elementary roof, noting future building renovations were noted for future consideration should enrollments increase. Everyone agree on roof replacement for Kent County High School. The committee reviewed recommendations for Galena Elementary which included roof replacement and enhanced mechanical system. Dr. Lever noted there are three additional items for consideration that included a security vestibule, ADA accessibility, and a small addition to address cafeteria congestion that could also be considered a safety issue. Mr. Kalter raised a question about the interior daylighting at Galena. Dr. Lever stated he would ask the architect to provide additional cost estimates for interior lighting recommendations.

Long term recommendations were discussed noting there were no budget or monetary recommendations. The proposal includes a recommendation to complete the educational specifications for the middle school, a method involving stakeholders in the review of middle school programming and desirable instructional spaces, will provide more information for the Board. The committee briefly discussed QZAB projects and whether they should be in the final report or a supplement to the report. It was finally decided that QZAB projects rest with the Board not the committee.

Mr. Schroyer, a parent, expressed his concerns about the final recommendations from the committee. He stated he was originally concerned about the astronomical costs being proposed by the committee; however, it has been whittled down to the most basic things we need for our system, lacking vision. He said he views QZAB funding as a good way for the district to leverage their money to do more for the school system. He also thought moving the Board of Education to Worton and preserving that building was a good decision. He stated there is nothing in the plan for Garnet or the middle school. His overarching concern is that in the next 7 years the committee is only recommending the most basic things and not fully endorsing QZAB funding which is a great way to leverage money for the school system. He added he believes the committee is afraid to ask because they do not think they can ask for more. He encouraged the committee to broadcast these meetings to engage more of the community. Dr. Grotsky stated the committee had to make choices. He informed Mr. Schroyer that the committee listened to the community and analyzed information in order to make the best decisions based on the resources they thought would be available to the school system. He added that when they are finished, the recommendation will be handed off to the Board and it's up to them to decide whether they want to accept it or not.

Before the meeting concluded, the committee agreed to schedule the last community input meeting on at 6:00 p.m. on January 10<sup>th</sup> at the auditorium at Kent County High School.

Meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.