

KCPS Strategic Planning/Community Engagement Meeting
09/28/2017 6:30 p.m.
Rock Hall Elementary School

Mr. Grotsky, chair of the Strategic Planning Committee opened the meeting. The purpose of this community meeting is to discuss the future of Kent County Public Schools' facilities. The committee is here tonight to gather your ideas and suggestions. Mr. Grotsky introduced the committee. This is the last scheduled community input meeting. On Friday, Sept. 29th the committee will meet at 4:00 p.m. at KCMS to summarize what has been discussed at the community meetings. The September 29th meeting is open to public, but they are taking no public comments.

Dr. Couch spoke. These meetings are to help come up with a master plan on how best to utilize the buildings if student population decreases or if it should grow. Committee members are focused and have expertise in different areas. Dr. Couch then introduced Dr. Lever.

Dr. Lever presented a presentation on the KCPS facilities.

Topics for Discussion

School facilities & renovation needs

- 1) Dr. Costa: In the future thinks schools are going to be open longer and the acceptance of after-school programs because of students going home to empty homes. What kinds of facilities are needed to be open until possibly 6 p.m.? Also schools will be open for more activities than just "school". (Up to individual communities to decide what programs they want and how to use them.)
- 2) Dr Costa: Using schools for community college satellite classes?
- 3) Annette May: Where does the money come from? These changes are costly. Dr. Lever stated we are looking to implement cost savings among the schools and secure state funding with county match. Some of the suggested renovations may take many, many years, possibly decades to put in place, taking into account costs including the added costs of delayed renovations.
- 4) Francoise Sullivan: Is there a formula for breakdown of state/county percentage of financial help. Dr. Lever stated the State only funds up to utilization and not planning, etc.
- 5) Annette May: Will there be comparable funding?
- 6) Gretchen Stroh: State utilization of funding: High School: Is it based on classrooms or square footage? Dr. Lever stated it is based on the number of classrooms; some larger spaces are rated as two classrooms. For elementary schools it is based on the number of classrooms only. For consolidation, we had to designate all rooms that could be classrooms. It is not always what you would think, i.e. art space is required, but cannot be counted as classroom space.

Thoughts on relocating middle & high school students in the same or nearby structure. (Worton campus?)

- 1) Dr. Costa: Sees the advantage of having advanced middle school students able to take HS math courses not available in MS. Dr. Lever stated that some school districts have schools with students in grades 6-12 but maintain separate spaces so younger kids don't mix with older kids.
- 2) Dr C: Asked Dr. Lever to address the difficulty in using the current facility to separate high school and middle school populations. Dr. Lever stated it would not be easy without some major renovations. He added that building a new middle school on the high school campus would be very expensive. A newer facility would operate more efficiently but we need to consider what is best for education mixed with funding/costs.
- 3) Annette May: She knows of a HS/MS in New Jersey that are attached but separate buildings. They do have two of every type of staff, principals, custodians, etc. Dr. Lever stated there is also need to consider use of outdoor facilities – playing fields, etc. There are also mentoring possibilities of older kids with younger ones. Also advantage of co-location: if large 9th grade, but small 7th grade, some accommodations could be made.
- 4) Gretchen Stroh: Would it make sense to make a combined campus and use Worton Elementary School? 5/6 at WES and 7/8 to KCHS. Dr. Levedr stated there are some subjects and areas that cannot be combined – small Spanish and small French classes cannot be moved into a single classroom. He added that the weight room at the high school is so far away from gym. He noted if we are able to relocate it would make more sense to be in proximity to the gym.
- 5) Gretchen Stroh: Can see middle school parents not liking their children in with “horrible” high school students. She doesn't feel that way, but some parents might.
- 6) Dr. Costa: Is there a school district we could look to for ideas? Dr. Lever stated St. Michaels MS/HS works well in one location. The elementary school is also on same location in a different building. Rural situations can find many different alternatives. Garrett County is similar but bussing is more of an issue because of its terrain. Once you start looking at a design, you come up with many complications even though it may look good on paper. How do you convince parents when they see empty buildings? Dr. Lever stated one possible sell would be to share the offset cost reduction that could be gained by more efficient buildings.

How should the former elementary schools be utilized?

- 1) Elizabeth Profitt: Believes WES should be Central Office. MES: medical facility or day care center.
- 2) 2) Gretchen Stroh: Adult day care

- 3) Annette May: She believes Millington area is going to grow. Possibly lease the building for now and see what the future brings as the Route 301 corridor grows.
- 4) Becca Bigelow: Early childhood education – Head Start??
- 5) Big Brothers/Big Sisters facility
- 6) General question about timeframe for the Board to decide on these buildings? Some feel the county is looking at using them. Dr. Lever stated that buildings will deteriorate very quickly when not occupied. If after 5 years of non- instructional use the local jurisdiction takes over.
- 7) Dr. Couch: The building with largest debt: HHGES (1), KCMS (2), and Central Office (3). The building with the least amount of debt: WES (1) and MES (2).

Additional thoughts

- 1) Why is the Rock Hall learning center at the civic center and not at RHES? --- It is full of students and sometimes take students outside to work with them. They could use bigger, better building. All schools need facilities for after school programs – doesn't always work to move students from school to churches, etc. and students are often not doing the work if someone not there to help them. The Rock Hall program is its own nonprofit group.

TOUR:

Kris Hemstetter, Principal of RHES shared a map of the school. Layout is deceiving. Green section is newest section (built in late 70s) blue is gym area, orange is the cafeteria and early learning areas. School originally built as High School and then transformed to Middle School. School has lockers that students do not use. No open "pod" areas as newer elementary schools have. Students are in self contained classrooms up to grade 3. Grades 4/5 are departmentalized. The Cafeteria is small – 128 students use it at one time. Classes are rotated in every 5 minutes. Last year student population was 160. This year it is approximately 260. PreK students eat in their classrooms. Currently needs 14 general education classrooms, not including art, music. The school is filled. Title I tutors work in hallways.

The group toured the RHES building and could see how every room is being used. The one nice space is the old "shop" area. Currently a part is used as an office area for Infants and Toddlers and some storage. The book fair will be set up in there. The principal has other ideas for its use, but renovation work needed.