

Facility Strategic Planning Committee Minutes for Meeting No. 2

Garnet Elementary

320 Calvert St., Chestertown, MD 21620

September 14, 2017

Committee members in attendance: Tracey Williams, Joe Harding, Shelley Heller, Richard Kalter, Francoise Sullivan, Jeff Grotsky, David Lever, and Karen Couch. Community members in attendance: Hope Clark, Shelley Schofield, Larry Samuels and Nathan Shroyer.

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m.

Introductions - Dr. Grotsky, Committee Chair, afforded time for committee members, including community members who were in attendance, to introduce themselves. Dr. Grotsky noted that although public comment was listed as IV. on the agenda, questions and comments could be raised throughout the meeting.

I. Roles and Responsibilities of the Committee

Dr. Grotsky stated this item was on the agenda to ensure everyone was on the same page regarding the role of individual members of the committee and the committee at large so that members conducted themselves appropriately throughout the process. Dr. Grotsky added he thought it would be a good idea to bring the group back together to make certain everyone was on the same page prior to the Community Input meetings. He reviewed the handout provided to committee during the first meeting outlining the purpose of the committee and the role of committee members. He added the strategic plan is really about facilities; however, it goes hand in hand with educational programs. He stated that as we look at programs, we need to ensure they are in sync with our facilities.

The role of this committee is to listen to the community and listen to the public regarding their interests. He added we are interested in their concerns, including what suggestions they might have about right-sizing the district in an appropriate manner that is in the best interest of our children. The community will have their opportunity to share information and this information will be used by the consultants to provide a report for the committee to review. He added that after the committee receives this report, we will have our work cut out for us. He stated the committee will be discussing whether to accept or modify the recommendations that will be eventually be presented to the Board of Education.

Dr. Grosky added that on October 26th, the committee will begin dissecting the report and really looking at the facilities to make our final recommendation. In a nutshell, he added we will be doing quite a bit of work and it may ultimately require more meetings than are currently noted on the schedule. Depending upon the magnitude of the capital improvements, timelines may also need to be developed. He stated the committee will continue to meet publicly as we are currently doing.

Mr. Harding stated he has been to many public hearings and questioned how these meetings were going to be handled. Dr. Lever noted he plans to begin the meeting with a review of general information presented to the committee and the Board of Education. He also plans to outline why a strategic plan is needed and will provide time for the community to weigh in on these data. There will be opportunities for the community to ask questions or simply submit written questions. He plans to complete the presentation and have it posted on the website as soon as it has been finalized. Mrs. Schofield stated it would be wise to note the district is simply master planning for the future. Mr. Harding also stated it will be important to determine the expected timeframe or term for the strategic plan. Mr. Samuels stated ADA came into effect in 1992, yet Garnet Elementary and Kent County Middle School still do not have elevators. Twenty-five years later, where was the will to provide for disabled students or cafeteria workers who are required to transport breakfast upstairs to the students? He concluded funding is not the only issue as there needs to be the will to address the problems.

The timing for public participation was discussed, several noting this is the perfect opportunity to seek input from the community, and a forum for parents to articulate facility or deferred maintenance concerns. Dr. Lever added a Facility Needs Assessment was completed five years ago, outlining deferred maintenance projects. He stated those costs need to be updated; however, they are a good starting point. There are very important moving pieces because the rooftop units at Galena elementary need to be replaced along with replacement of the roof. Dr. Lever stated due to increased student enrollment, the district should consider upgrading building ventilation requirements at Galena, as well as reviewing classroom spaces to provide more natural light. He added the Board of Education approved a consultant to carry out a Feasibility Study for Galena Elementary, focusing on three or four options with associated costs. Dr. Lever stated this committee will review estimated costs for the projects and all will have to be weighed in relation to the options outlined through the Strategic Plan. The County government will also be involved in this process because its capacity to fund along with the State's capacity to fund will be critical in determining what can be done, including timelines for completion.

Mrs. Sullivan questioned timelines for receiving state funding awards for facilities. Dr. Lever stated in the district Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for FY 2019 there is a sequencing of projects; however, it is a very fluid plan. The current CIP has quite a few "To Be Determined" (TBD) items, because there are things we will not know until the Strategic Plan options and the Galena scope of work are determined. He added seven (7) years is probably a good estimate to forecast district needs. For instance, there are several small renovations at the elementary schools because they have been repurposed from former high schools to elementary schools and that should be addressed. There is also some work at the high school that needs to be considered, such as seating in the auditorium and a restroom/concession stand facility at the football field.

Dr. Grotsky stated in most cases, you develop a plan and have the community react to that plan. In this case, we don't have a plan but are asking for the community to help us develop a plan for facility upgrades. Mrs. Clark believes it is a very good idea to involve the community in the process. She added that reviewing the data as to why it's needed will be appreciated by the community. Mrs. Sullivan stated she is constantly asked what the district is doing with all the

money they saved from consolidation. She added it's hard for the community to understand that we didn't really save any money from consolidation, it's that we actually saved money we didn't really have to spend during this budget cycle.

Mr. Harding stated he thought the committee was onto something. He said you need a champion for any government project to get anywhere. Usually the champions are the people who come and say they don't want their taxes to be increased and the political powers are very in tune to that group of people. However, if you have a motivated community that comes out and we succeed in educating them to the facts that these buildings need to be fixed, it can be very powerful. Mr. Harding added, if it takes six years, it takes six years, but if we are clever about getting grants and state money, and the community is motivated and willing to put up whatever it takes to succeed, it can be powerful. He added he has never seen a project that didn't at some point have a champion, sometimes it's a small group and sometimes it's a large group but they need to convince the powers that be that the investment is worth it to the community. Here you've got the entire district that has issues with its facilities, every building has issues. It should be possible to motivate the public, especially the parents to get behind this even if it has to be fine-tuned. Mr. Harding said instead of just saying oh well this is Kent County, we haven't fixed a building in 40 years, we have an opportunity to change Kent County. This is an opportunity to raise public sentiment so that the people who are in charge can see there is a will to do whatever it takes.

Mrs. Schofield stated, I'm glad to hear you say this is an opportunity because we do have an opportunity to find out what people really want in this community. If we had a magic wand and could do anything we wanted, we don't really know collectively what this community wants and this is our opportunity to find out. If we can gather the top three things then we could work around them but first, we need to find out what they are.

Mrs. Sullivan indicated perhaps we should develop a paper survey to obtain additional information from the community. Mr. Shroyer indicated there seems to be a public participation deficit, adding public engagement meetings need to be presented in a way that does not appear that decisions have already been decided. Mrs. Sullivan noted, however, that there is also a sentiment that some committees become gridlocked and never even reach resolution. She stated maybe the timelines could be adjusted so it doesn't seem as though there is a hard and fast deadline for action. Mr. Harding added, we could also just go home; however, he stated we are here allowing everyone in this room to have a voice, even those who are not on this committee. He said we have to do something and this meeting stands as an example of a very open process. He stated this process was designed to allow anyone who attends to be given an opportunity to say whatever it is they want to say. Mr. Harding added we can complain about why nobody is here tonight and complain that nobody cares about what we are doing. But we do, we care, we are here, and we are trying to do something about it.

Mrs. Williams stated she seems to be hearing that some are talking about a process that is moving too fast and yet another person is talking about a process that deliberates before bringing forward a plan of action. She added that perhaps we just need to be clear that in Phase I, we are

only gathering input and Phase II is where we will be putting together a plan for consideration. Dr. Couch noted that we also need to consider the disposition of school buildings that are currently vacant. She noted these buildings are not presently used for educational purposes; however, they could be if there is a district need. Mrs. Sullivan noted it is important to emphasize that no decisions have been made and we are asking for community input as to how those buildings should be repurposed. Committee members and those in attendance discussed methodology for maximizing community input. Dr. Lever stated the whole purpose of these meetings is to elicit ideas on facilities and we need to ensure the community stays focused on these issue as there are budget implications. He added we can translate community input into dollars and cents and it can also help us consider redirecting funding into other areas of need. Essentially, it's all about using what you have and using it very efficiently. The reason for scheduling multiple community input meetings will be to provide ample opportunities for the public to participate.

Dr. Lever reviewed the draft PowerPoint presentation for the community engagement meetings and obtained feedback from the committee to modify and revise the presentation. Dr. Lever stated he would send a revised presentation for review prior to the community engagement meetings.

Mr. Kalter motioned to adjourn and seconded by Mrs. Heller. Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.