

Facilities Strategic Planning Committee
Meeting No. 4
October 26, 2017
4:00 p.m. Kent County High School Media Center

Present: Dr. Jeff Grotsky, Richard Kalter, Francoise Sullivan, Tracey Williams, Joe Wheeler, and Dr. Karen Couch. Absent: Shelley Heller

Also in attendance: KCHS Principal Nick Keckley and KCHS Assistant Principals Matt Moore and Mark Buckel, and David Lever, consultant.

Dr. Jeff Grotsky called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. The meeting began with a tour of Worton Elementary. The committee toured the major portions of the building including the large spaces; media and multi-purpose room. The roof will need to be replaced in the future and the bathrooms will likely need to be upgraded. It is uncertain at this time if the HVAC system is adequate; there is evidence of relatively high humidity, but there may be other causes than a poorly functioning mechanical system.

At approximately 4:40 p.m., the committee returned to the KCHS media center. The committee began their discussion of the draft report noting multiple options under consideration. Dr. Lever began by reviewing the goals of the committee; to establish a stable long-term facility plan that will improve the learning environment, align the buildings with student enrollment, and provide a more financially sustainable support infrastructure.

Dr. Lever stated he made some assumptions based on the last meeting that he wanted to review. The assumptions were as follows:

- The three existing elementary schools, Rock Hall Elementary, Garnet Elementary, and Galena Elementary, would remain.
- K-8 schools would not be considered for several reasons:
 - Difficulty staffing K-8 schools and ability to maintain equity of program would be problematic.
 - Cost and time for constructing three equivalent K-8 facilities, particularly because one site is extremely constrained for expansion.
 - There is still a potential for declining enrollments. It would be very expensive to complete renovations and construct additions onto the facilities. Once these projects are completed, what happens if declining enrollment results in closing another school? Therefore, investment into K-8 facilities may be backing yourself into a corner.
- In looking at the middle school and the possibilities for co-location, it seems like this is the best option for consideration. It is also important to keep in mind that if the middle school is co-located at the Worton campus, the reduction in square footage is also a benefit to the operational budget due to the closure of the school in Chestertown. Now

we can talk about the possibility of moving Garnet Elementary to the middle school; however, this would be a distant possibility and the Board and community will have more time to make that decision. It does not have to be decided by this committee and certainly you would need to take more time to make sure it is a viable consideration. But in either case, you will still be able to surplus one of the schools if this is an option.

There are four basic options for the middle school:

- The first is a stand-alone option (separate facility).
- Two options involve an addition onto the high school.
- Major renovation of a portion of the high school that will still require an addition.

The consultants are working with the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) on enrollment projections and factoring in for both future development and without development. Under each of those scenarios you will have sufficient capacity under any of the middle school options. As a note, we are also taking into effect the Dixon Valve project that is underway, including the housing project for that development in Chestertown. One of the purposes for obtaining the data from MDP was to demonstrate the level of State funding that is likely under any of these scenarios. It is a rather complicated method of funding that is tied to student enrollments.

The thinking is driven by concurrent priorities making it particularly difficult with regard to a master plan. Galena Elementary has to be within the scope due to the condition of the roof that needs to be replaced. The second urgent issue is to reduce size of the school plant in relation to the operational budget, and relocating the middle school to the Worton campus offers the best possibility.

Construction Costs were discussed:

State construction costs is used as basis:

- \$302/sf for new work that bids July 2018
- Projected to mid-point of construction @ 4% per year escalation

Sitework:

- New- 19% of construction
- Renovation- 5% of construction

Contingency:

- Total Project- 5% of combined building and sitework
- State funding- 2.5% of combined building and sitework

Project Cost:

- Soft costs @ 15% of the total project costs

State funding participation:

- For major projects, based on projected 7-year student enrollments. Costs right now for Kent County are 50% of eligible costs so when you look at the figure, subtract out the eligible costs such as furniture and ineligible square footage.
- For smaller projects, based on estimated cost, time of bid
- No deduct made for previously funded work
- For Galena Elementary, no consideration of capacity in adjacent elementary schools

Factors that will affect costs

Scope of Projects

- Program size, based on educational specifications
- Complexity of design

Unforeseen conditions-building and site

Timing

- Market conditions at time of bid
- Delay impacts construction cost escalation
- Relation to other projects bidding in the region

Location

- Kent County is considered remote from major contractors
- Lack of trade contractors in the county or nearby
- Fear of the unknown- no major school project in county for decades

Mitigating Factors

Project delivery method

Quality of bid documents

Quality of project management

Dr. Lever stated the overall best combination when balancing educational objectives is as follows:

Kent County Middle School: addition to KCHS

- Shared use of gymnasium
- Share use of auditorium
- Shared use of music room and planetarium

Kent County High School

- Programmatic renovations and roof replacement
- Vacate and renovate #600 wing for central office functions
- Concession stand/Stadium Restrooms/ Ticket Booth facility - QZAB funds

Galena- review of the Feasibility Study completed by Noelker and Hull

- Limited renovation with geothermal heating/cooling system
- Recapture former locker rooms and shop area as classrooms
- Master planned for possible future expansion of cafeteria and classrooms

Former Worton Elementary School

- Board meeting room and other central office functions

Rock Hall Elementary School

- Targeted renovations and roof replacement

Dr. Lever stated this is a conceptual list of projects and is a very tentative list. There are a lot of possibilities within the list of projects that could be different, i.e. a few of these projects could be peeled off and a few projects could be added. There are also adjustments of scope possible within each of the projects. Timing is also a very important part of this discussion. The purpose of our discussion is to have a realistic discussion of where we want to go with this list of projects. The timeline is very important and we are trying to be realistic about the timing of these projects.

It is absolutely critical that we take a look at the funding. If Galena and the middle school were to run concurrently, the burden would be great; therefore, it will need to be planned accordingly. In most cases, the State will pay for construction up front and the local government pays at the end of construction. There is a great deal of complexity and it will depend upon Kent County's bonding capacity, how much debt are they willing to bond, and how much this will impact their bond rating.

Questions were raised about the operating costs for the middle school and whether that will be enough cost savings to warrant the expenditure/investment from the County. The age of existing school buildings, the need to modernize the buildings, replace systems and the cost to the taxpayer was discussed. Mr. Harding stated there are parts to a school that are wearing out and at some point, it will no longer be cost effective to renovate the school. He advocated schools are beginning to show their age and will become more expensive to maintain. He stated he doesn't have any kids in school but understands somebody in 1952 through 1966 wrote a check to build the schools he attended. He stated that all of us have to understand that if we don't invest in these buildings, we will keep renovating, renovating, and renovating until they just fall down. Ultimately, we will never improve the educational system we have in this county if we are not willing to invest into our facilities.

Mrs. Williams stated in her mind we are never going to be able to afford renovating buildings that are underutilized. Moving the middle school to the high school will at least allow us to afford the renovations needed in this building. Again, I realize this is an old framework but at least we can complete some type of modernization that is needed. Mr. Kalter stated he doesn't see the County Commissioners even considering the issuance of Bonds since they have not availed themselves of that in the past. He added it would be a quantum leap for them to consider doing so in the future.

Dr. Grotzky stated we are trying to do something that perhaps we should not be trying to do. We are assuming the County Commissioners will not fund an educational facilities plan and it's irresponsible for us not to ask on the behalf of the students in this county. They may agree with all of it, they may not agree with any of it, or they may say you can have this but you can't have that. I would suggest looking at the priorities and the options so that we can reach consensus. Let's let somebody who is above our paygrade make that decision and let's come up with a plan that we believe is in the best interest of our students.

Mr. Kalter stated he cannot see this group of County Commissioners, or even the next group of Commissioners, substantially raising taxes. This group needs to come up with something that is realistic and defensible. He was not saying that he can't be convinced but does think we have to justify our recommendations. Dr. Couch stated, "Let me try to come at it from a different perspective." She stated, how will we address declining enrollment when faced with the possibility of becoming a single campus school system? At what point will we consider whether it is cost effective to continue putting money into an underutilized building? She said we need to be mindful of what the district may need to look like if we continue to lose student enrollments and whether it makes sense to bring both the middle school and high school populations together. When will it make sense to merge the populations, when the buildings are at 20% capacity? She stated that her goal is to come up with a blueprint, a plan for the future. Maybe all of this cannot be done right away but we need to have a plan, a blueprint for the district, especially if we continue to lose enrollment. Does it make sense to consider moving the central office to the Worton complex if potentially a good part of our student population will also be on that campus? If it does, then when do we consider prioritizing our funds to make it happen? She advocated for developing a plan.

Dr. Lever and Dr. Couch stated there would be long term educational benefits to having the middle school students on the high school campus. Middle school students would have exposure to CTE programs, access to music programs, access to the community center for after school programming, and opportunities to accelerate students into higher level courses. Dr. Couch noted there is also value to surplus buildings that may not be factored into the equation. She stated perhaps there would be no value in these buildings; however, it should not be discounted. Mr. Harding noted these buildings could also fulfill a County need if they had plans to build another building in the future. He added at some point it comes down to whether or not you are willing to invest in the educational system.

Mrs. Sullivan stated as a parent she advocates we will never see the educational benefits that can be realized by centralizing the middle school with the high school by keeping the status quo. She asked whether we would be happy seeing our tax dollars going towards a facility that is actually going to improve the educational quality of the students in this county. Mr. Kalter stated this is not the question, the question should be how many additional tax dollars is it going to take to complete all these options. Dr. Lever stated the information he presented is very tentative and it could be dramatically reduced based on what this committee recommends. Some projects may be eliminated and the scope of other projects could be reduced. For instance, we might say it would be nice to complete all the renovations at the high school; however, it is much too costly

for consideration. We have the ability to evaluate the list and determine what we think is possible.

Dr. Lever stated that if this is too much for the County, then let the County tell us what is reasonable. We could ask them to provide us with the potential bonding capacity, and then we can go back to the drawing board to develop a plan that works. Dr. Lever stated that the beauty of what we have for consideration is that every facility will be touched and improved. Mr. Harding asked whether anyone thinks centralizing the school system to the Worton campus makes sense. Dr. Lever stated he was looking for broad acceptance for some of the options and will look toward developing modifications.

Dr. Grotsky asked everyone to bring their best recommendation and one alternative for discussion at the next meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.