

Middle School Building Committee

Minutes

Tuesday, August 15, 2017

5:30 P.M.

Elm Street School

Members Present: Alan Kuniholm, Jack Wiseman, Steve Bolduc, John Hawley, Tony Bennett, Gary Purington, Norm Davis, Shawn Vincent, Lisa Cesare, Tina Meserve, Mary Martin, Cari Medd, Stan Tetenman

Members Absent: Nick Konstantoulakis, Rick Jones, Bill Eldridge

Others Present: Alan Kuniholm, Architect, Gary Purington

John asked if there were any changes to the May 31st meeting notes. There were none and they were approved.

John told the group that this was the meeting in which a design needed to be settled upon and forwarded to the school board for them to vote on whether to send the plan to referendum. We discussed the two proposals that we have been working on (\$8.5m and \$5.7m) and John then said that there has been some push for eliminating the shared entrance. A third proposal has been looked at that would only add the classrooms and ancillary spaces at a cost of \$4.4 million. This would essentially eliminate all the renovations planned for the existing building and remove the shared

The time line for the voting process was outlined. The committee will make their final recommendation tonight, the school board will hear the presentation and vote to send a proposal to referendum at their meeting on August 28th. The wording of the question for the referendum must be at each town office by September 8th. A public forum will be planned for late September, early October.

Jack asked if we knew the financial impacts and John stated they had not been calculated at this point as we were waiting to choose the final proposal. John said he would have them ready for the school board meeting. Norm stated that his quick calculations, without interest on the \$5.7M project would be about \$360,000 annually and \$270,000 for the \$4.4M.

Cari reminded folks about the retiring debit that would help offset the new expense. John said those numbers would be ready for the school board meeting as well.

Steve stated that the \$4.4M project does not address the secured entrance that was one of the key components of this project. He did not want us to consider a project that would not allow for the shared entrance to happen.

Norm said it was still going to be necessary to tell people that we could do the \$4.4M project and make internal improvements to the high school entrance to enhance security. There is not a lot of public support for the scope of proposed renovations. He wondered what the cost to make improvements would be. Alan stated that because we had not asked for a concept plan to show those types of renovations, it is difficult to put a price tag on it at this point.

Lisa commented that it only makes sense to do it now why the school is under construction. John said that school security and school construction has changed a lot in the past 20 years since the building was constructed and security issues will only become more problematic not less. If the shared entrance is not constructed now while we are putting on an addition, a future project just to build a shared entrance when we definitely have a problem would not be supported. Tina said it was tough to ignore all the recommendations that school have one, secure entry point. This concept is endorsed and supported by our public safety officials and the department of education.

Stan asked if the high school entrance could be considered as the shared entrance. Alan stated that under the current conditions, there is not line-of-site from the office to the high school entrance. The lack of visibility is a security issue. Tony stated that the entrance can sometimes be quite crowded because the commons is used for daily student activity. Students are polite and will often open the building doors and let people in. All those people also minimize visibility from the building.

Cari said that in all her years as principal at the high school, there greatest security threats have come during the day when agitated and hostile parents, some with projection orders, have approached the building. These are always people we know. One of our shortfalls is that with two entrances, the secretaries manning those entrances have to be in constant contact as to who should and should not be permitted in the building. The secretaries are very good at knowing who should be restricted

for their specific school but it becomes a problem when a middle school parent comes to the high school door and the high school staff does not know who they are. This further compounds the issue when we have to use substitutes at the secretaries' desks. There is a human communication gap that unfortunately sometimes occurs between the two locations. The shared entrance allows both sets of secretaries to see who is coming in, can prevent students from letting people in, and give a full-body view of the person entering the building before granting access.

Stan asked if both secretaries could be at the same entrance in the current configuration?

Shawn said that the secretary's also serve as the administrative assistants to the principal and need to be geographically located near each other because of work duties. If his secretary was to be moved to the high school entrance, he would have to move with her which takes him and the secretary out of the middle school all together. Each administrator needs to be centrally located in their respective ends of the building.

Cari said that when the high school and middle school was originally constructed, it was made very clear by the parent and community that the two schools should remain separate with their own identifies. The current lay out of the school has overlaps already that should be addresses. The nurse, co-curricular director and special ed team leader are located in the office that is primarily used by the high school. middle schoolers need to pass through the high school to obtain these services. The shared entrance is designed with still keeping them separated. Although there is a single entry door, the foyer immediately sends students into two separate directions. We have worked hard to maintain those two identities and a shared entrance at the high school entrance would now have middle school students passing through the lobby, which is the morning gathering spot of all high schoolers.

Stan commented that substitute secretaries should be required to know who is who was concerned that the additional expense of the shared entrance and renovations would prevent future school budgets to allow money to trickle down to the students.

Norm pointed out that the cost of just the entrance represents 24% of the cost of the project.

Tina asked how strongly the committee felt about the existing plan (with the renovations and shared entrance).

Stan felt that we could make due with the existing entrances and just make improvements to the high school entrance to improve visibility.

Shawn said the young middle school students may be intimidated by having to use a shared entrance at the high school and have to walk through high school students in the lobby to get to the middle school.

Lisa asked if we just vote and John said yes, we need to have a recommendation.

Cari wanted to remind folks that the renovations were also intended to bring the shared services closer to the middle school students and what we have proposed for a plan does that and give both schools easy access.

Jack asked if the \$4.4M project eliminates all renovations. John clarified that the \$4.4M will only cover renovation to make the connector to the new addition.

Stan asked what renovations would cost to modify the high school entrance. Alan said renovation costs are running around 480 to \$100 per square foot but because a formal concept has not been drafted a cost can not be estimated. Stan asked about how many square feet are impacted by renovations and Alan estimated 12,000.

Cari reiterated that not renovating does not solve any issues that have been realized of the years of use.

Tony expressed concern about the \$4.4M proposal's lack of storage and mechanic areas. The middle school is already deficient in storage space for cleaning supplies and equipment. He would hate for us to have to go back and ask for additional renovations because we short-sighted this project.

John called for a vote. Six voted in favor of the \$5.7M plan, two were opposed and there were three member absent. John stated that although he did not vote in order to break a tie, he was in favor of the \$5.7 and Cari and Shawn, who are ex-officio, both stated they were in favor of the \$5.7M project. John said he would move the \$5.7M recommendation forward to the school board.

Norm wanted to point out that he is not opposed to the plan but he thinks it will be a tough sell.

Tina responded that we need to recommend what we, as educators, feel is the best scenario for our kids and staff and let the voters decide.

Jack said that it didn't make sense for us not to recommend a full project now and then have to possibly come back in the future for modifications again.

Tina asked for the committee member to plan to attend the school board meeting so that they could answer any questions regarding the recommendation.

Mary said it would be important to have all the financial information ready and John said it would be.

Norm asked if we should mention the \$4.4M project and Alan said to make the proposal as simple as possible.

Stan disagreed and said with all the controversy surrounding the schools district right now the committee should be transparent and make sure we mention the \$4.4M option.

John said it will be part of the presentation to show all of the options so that we can be upfront about looking at all possibilities. We will be able to justify why we are recommending on option over the others. Cari said that she and Shawn can easily create a list of the short comings of the \$4.4M project.

Shawn thought we should present the chronological order of our process so there is full understanding of how we arrived and our conclusion.

John said he would also prepare the financial impact of a 20 year note versus a 15. Lisa thought that people may be willing to pay less interest with the 15 year bond and accept the higher annual payment. Jack said we should include the expiring bonds as well to show funding that is going to lessen the impact.

Tina asked who would be presenting to the school board and John said he would take the lead with Alan as his support.

Alan handed around some sample pamphlets that his office produced and asked which one the group liked best. He also said he would need to know how we would be distributing them.

Shawn said it would be important the we do not make parents feel that their kids are unsafe when we talk about security improvements.

Stan asked when we could possibly make the State funding list for a project such as ours. Alan said the timeline for the existing application period is now closed and the State will take a year to evaluate the applications. Then in the late spring of next year, they will announce who will receive funding in the four years following. John said that the scope of our project would surely make the initial cut list because of the small number of students that are being impacted and the current condition and age of our school.

Shawn asked what other forms of communication will we use to promote the project and Alan suggested using our social medial pages, our website, student's backpacks, and local access television stations.

Alan said that when the State funds a project, the do a straw vote to get a sense if the public is going to support a State funded project. John said there have been instances where communities have turned down the funding. Norm said that communities that have voted the schools down did not want the burned on the operational costs.

John said the public forum will be scheduled for late September or early October.

The school board meeting will be on Monday, August 28th and John will send a reminder notice to the committee.

There was no public comment and the meeting adjourned at 6:35.