

**Facility Committee Meeting**  
**Wednesday, October 1, 2014**  
**Ray Bjork Learning Center**  
**1:00 p.m.**

**Attendees:** Libbi Lovshin, Aidan Myhre, Dr. Kent Kultgen, John Carter

**Absent:** Terry Beaver

**Guests:** Marika Ademek, Ella Vonada, Emily Brand, Jon Rush, Thomas Judge, Deidra Kloberdanz, Amy Heuiser, Kaja Elia, Jenny Bloomquist, Alexander Deedy, Sarah Sullivan, Mark Robertson, Jason Egeline, Don Platisha, Libby Goldes

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Ms. Lovshin called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Ms. Lovshin reminded the committee and guests of the committee's focus and parameters which are:

1. Create a Successful Bond
2. Provide Optimal Learning Environments for Students
3. Maintain High Standards of Financial Stewardship

Status quo is not acceptable.

Dr. Kultgen said the committee still needs to have more discussion and should wait until Terry returns to set a timeline.

Ms. Myhre said she prefers not to set a timeline, but if we decide that we need to build a school then we would need to set timeline for when the bond would run and then work backwards.

Dr. Kultgen said that Don Platisha could help us with a timeline like this. Mr. Platisha said it takes about 20 months to build a school keeping in mind the weather.

Ms. Myhre said she is not fond of setting a date to make a decision, but the committee could set a goal.

Ms. Lovshin asked if there is anything left to discuss about Jim Darcy and Warren. Can we agree that these two should be in the bond?

Ms. Myhre said there are some absolutes which are a 450 student school at Jim Darcy and then we need to do something in town – maybe make Smith a larger school. She said she has a desire to look at buying land for a new middle school. But not certain as to on what side of town it should be.

Dr. Kultgen asked whether or not we are trying to do everything in one bond?

Mr. Myhre said she felt they shouldn't do it all in one bond, but we need to hear from community before making a decision.

Dr. Kultgen summarized what he was hearing from the committee which was this: A new Jim Darcy, renovated Warren, possibly expand Jefferson, purchase land, and possibly expand Smith. Dr. Kultgen reminded the committee that our main goal was to take care of displaced students and put technology in the buildings.

Ms. Myhre said most of our campuses are big enough to build or add to except for C.R. Anderson.

Ms. Myhre asked where would the Four Georgians students attend should the school become overloaded. Dr. Kultgen said we don't want to push them to Jim Darcy or Rossiter nor do we want to make Four Georgians any bigger.

Mr. Carter talked a little about boundaries. Boundaries are based on tradition. Boundaries have not been touched for a long time. Adjusting boundaries can be done, but then it interferes with high schools enrollments. Mr. Carter said our main focus should be whether or not a school meets educational adequacy. When changes are made, it's not going to happen overnight. It would take Transportation about 5-6 years to get everyone back in their right schools.

Ms. Myhre suggested we expand Jefferson to a 350 student school which would give a lot more balance.

Mr. Carter said that the Lincoln site was determined not an optimal site. He also added that many of our sites are not optimal. Lincoln and Bryant are right up against the Four Georgians boundary line. The tree streets are in the Helena Middle School attendance area. Four Georgians' boundary line is set up in a way that the students could have the choice of going to either middle school, but because most of their friends go to C.R. Anderson that's where most of them choose to go.

Ms. Myhre said she doesn't see Lincoln as an option for a school.

Dr. Kultgen said that boundaries can be redrawn but won't happen overnight. If they were redrawn, there would be a transition period because no child would be forced to change schools. What happens to the Central students?

Ms. Lovshin said that Bryant is not adequate school. We need to improve it if we're not closing it.

Ms. Myhre said that maybe the community groups can help with this solution.

Dr. Kultgen said the community groups are ready to meet. They are the architects, preservationists, and the city commissioners. He added he doesn't want the city to just talk about Central but rather traffic patterns, parking, growth, etc.

The committee suggested asking the guests at this meeting for feedback on what the committee discussed thus far. Ms. Myhre said she hoped they would bring enthusiasm and constructive feedback.

Ms. Lovshin said it's important to talk about the size of the schools. Jim Darcy, Warren and Smith could be 4/3 schools. Jefferson could be larger than it is but not a 500 student school. She said she is comfortable in saying that not all our schools would be 500 student schools. Ms. Myhre agreed.

Ms. Myhre believes we need to have a long term investment in all our schools. Having larger schools means we can employ full time specialists at the larger schools.

Dr. Kultgen said we have to be careful with that. With certain sizes (around 300-350 students) you can get a specialist working 2/3s time which is a whole other problem.

Ms. Lovshin thought that at the next meeting the committee should ask a group of specialists to come talk to the committee. Dr. Kultgen said he would ask the architects.

The committee opened the meeting up to the General Public:

Jenny Bloomquist asked what exactly is on the table. Ms. Lovshin said that based on the meetings so far the committee has come to the conclusion that two high schools are appropriate, two middle schools are appropriate, and now we're talking about the appropriate number of elementary schools. Everything is on the table with focus on areas of displaced students, technology and running a successful bond. She asked for comments on the proposal thus far. Is the committee missing anything?

Ms. Myhre said it seems we agree that Jim Darcy and Warren need expanded; it's the other schools that raise the question.

Ella Vonada thanked the committee for sharing this. The center of the city is the dilemma. She likes the idea of the Jefferson expansion. It's a wonderful campus that can bridge an area that can accommodate more students. Jefferson and Hawthorne can draw in Central students. She said she thought the Jefferson parents would be interested in hearing more about adding on to Jefferson. She said she lives in Smith area.

Dr. Kultgen said only students within their school's boundary can enroll in that school. Then one week prior to school starting, if there is room, students outside the school boundary can enroll. The district is maintaining this practice which is why we want to be careful not to build a school too small.

Sarah Sullivan said she feels the community will support Jim Darcy and Warren as long as there is money left for the city. She said she is all for buying land for the future. Smith would be great as a 4/3 school. It's important to balance the valley with the city. Central School would be a good administration building.

Ms. Myhre said that Kessler is a large campus but there are alternatives that we need to explore.

Marika Adamek said we need to think outside the box. The middle school element is huge. C.R. Anderson is bad. It's time to make a decision because the community is losing faith. Just knock out a plan and let the community vote. Why do both middle schools have to be in town? Helena High is in a hole. She said she concurs with Sarah to turn Central into an administration building or maybe a learning center. What district properties make sense to sell - Kessler? May Butler Center? The Seventh Avenue gym is bad. The students need more and better learning spaces. My kids are going to graduate before anything is done. Don't stop with fear; continue with excitement.

Dr. Kultgen asked if she thought a middle school of 1000 could be designed that's not too big?

Ms. Adamek said yes. She added that schools in other cities she has visited have performance center, have added new wings, new gyms, etc. They're great.

Could Central school become the Montessori location or even the PEAK location?

Ms. Myhre said nothing is off the table.

Dr. Kultgen said that Montessori brings great things to a traditional school. It's best to keep that program in the schools. He added that C. R. Anderson is not in a crisis. Can't build another school because of money but we could build on a different campus.

Emily Brand – She said she is a Central mom and would like to see Central be a school. We need a downtown school – either at Central or Hawthorne. Central seems to be the obvious. She feels most people would say yes to Jim Darcy and Warren, but we need something for town. A bigger school is fine – it's beneficial to a lot of kids. How do we build excitement in town with those people who don't have children? Her desire is to see a strong downtown area school. Jefferson is a nice area but still leaves a hole in downtown.

Jenny Bloomquist – She said she appreciates the time of the trustees. The community is exhausted. There is no reason why there can't be one or two or three proposals. The community is losing faith and losing support. The community is ready. You will never make everyone happy with any one proposal. You're not going to get everyone to agree.

Ms. Lovshin asked what happens if we put a proposal out and it goes to a vote and it fails?

Dr. Kultgen said we want to put best our best foot forward.

Ms. Bloomquist suggested creating three proposals using administrative staff. They know what is best. She recently came from a meeting and all the people are saying they just want something.

Ms. Myhre asked what the group thought of making Smith a 500 student school.

Ms. Sullivan said she feels we still have to say what school will close.

Ms. Myhre asked what the group thought about Jefferson and Central becoming a 350 student schools?

Deidra Kloberdanz said she felt we need a school downtown which could be Central. We've had so many proposals and we're right back to where we were.

Ms. Vonado suggested doing a couple of options with Central being a 350 vs 500 student school.

Ms. Brand asked if we know how many elementary schools need to close. Dr. Kultgen said our priority is to get resources to kids and get specialists in the schools. Nine elementary schools would be ideal. He said he is not a proponent of building a 500 student school and putting 500 in it. 400 – 425 would be ideal. Then this allows room for expansion.

Ms. Vonada said looking at parking and playground spaces are important but it's more important to get a proposal.

Ms. Sullivan said that cost is a reality. We only have so much bonding capacity.

Dr. Kultgen said we don't want to put out a plan that's not viable.

Ms. Brand said she thinks we need to know which schools are going to close.

Dr. Kultgen said he believes that we can't pass a bond and close a school at the same time.

Ms. Adamek said she feels the Central site is too small for a 4/3 school. Maybe we turn C.R. Anderson into an elementary school and build a new middle school.

Mark Robinson said it's difficult to build a school and close one. Has anyone established a minimum enrollment of a school before closing it? Dr. Kultgen said this has not been established. By doing this the emotion is removed. And if it's set in advance, it becomes a trigger point. We just need to have something in place that tells the community we're not here to close your school. Ms. Myhre said that Mr. Beaver brought this up at the last meeting. Can we get to this in the next month? Dr. Kultgen said anything is possible.

Ms. Myhre said we're hearing all over the state that we should build larger schools. Dr. Kultgen said the enrollment in those communities is growing – ours are not.

Jason Egeline said he is with CWG Architects. He looked at the State Standards and he looked at the Wyoming web page. He said it contains good information. Have we ever looked at this site? Dr. Kultgen said we looked at every school site and applied the Wyoming specs. It puts concrete evidence behind why are we doing what we are doing. We need to be good stewards of our buildings.

Jon Rush said he was driving down the street and a fire truck stopped in front of Hawthorne which made him wonder who has the power to close a school. Dr. Kultgen said the board of trustees makes that decision. There is board policy and steps they have to go through in order to close a school. We've closed schools in the past. It's not an easy decision. It does not require a bond vote.

Dr. Kultgen said that redrawing boundaries is tough. It's better to place the school in a location and then the boundaries are redrawn. Kids will be grandfathered in which means they could complete their educational career at the school.

Ms. Bloomquist asked where land is available for a middle school.

Mr. Carter said there is land available on the west side of McHugh. He feels strongly that the property must have city services. Ms. Bloomquist said these properties are going quickly. Mr. Carter said that we need at least 10 acres for an elementary school and then one acre/100 kids. Twenty acres are needed for a middle school. The district would not be making a mistake in buying that amount of land. At the K-8 loading and unloading becomes a big concern.

Ms. Sullivan asked how big the Rossiter campus is. It is 31 acres; Smith is 11 acres.

Are there different acreage requirements for urban vs. rural?

In the elementary schools how do kids get to school? Dr. Kultgen said we recently did a survey on this. He will provide the results.

Amy Heuser said that parking is of least concern at Central. The walking community helped create the school culture. If you take that away, you become less connected. There are things about Central that have continued at Lincoln. Ms. Heuser said she fears losing that.

Ms. Myhre said that Bryant needs to be on the list. We need to have a survey or focus group. We should look at facilities that might not be ideal kid space. Front Street could have other uses that could be more valuable. Not necessarily sell but use differently. Bryant is another building that comes to mind.

Ms. Myhre asked if you build Central would you expand Smith. No.

There are 900 kids on the east side.

Ms. Sullivan said that we can't spend all the money on new schools; we need to do something for ALL schools.

Dr. Kultgen said we need to show that all kids are taken care of. We have a bond limit of \$73 million

Ms. Sullivan added that we should update a school unless it's a safety issue.

At the next meeting can we have a proposal? What funds are needed to address the existing Central as a 450 student school or expand Jefferson to a 350 student school? The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 13, 2014 at 8:00 a.m. at the Ray Bjork Learning Center.

Libby Goldes reminded the committee to not forget about the technology centers and phone system.

The meeting adjourned at 2:26 p.m.