

Facility Committee Meeting
Friday, September 26, 2014
Ray Bjork Learning Center

Attendees: Terry Beaver, Aidan Myhre, Libbi Lovshin, John Carter, Kent Kultgen, Diane Neff

Guests: Chuck Butler, Michael O'Neil, Jon Rush, Danna Jackson, Quintan Kujela, Alexander Deedy, Chere Juisto, Ms. B. Oliver, Don Platisha

Mr. Beaver called the meeting to order at 7:00 a.m.

Mr. Beaver said the committee will continue the facility discussion. Last meeting it was agreed the committee would invite groups such as historical preservationists, architects and the City and also listen to public. They also talked about running a survey.

Dr. Kultgen said they have two bids from survey companies and are ready to run the survey. A survey would be helpful especially in valley and city.

Ms. Myhre echoed Kent's thoughts, but is hesitant of pushing go on running the survey.

Mr. Beaver asked what we hope to accomplish with doing the survey.

Ms. Myhre said we need to put some definition around what we are asking for. We could have many results and not know what they mean.

Ms. Lovshin said she thinks we should do the surveys sooner than later. Maybe survey specific groups, such as parent groups.

Dr. Kultgen said we have the capabilities to do a community survey and then smaller surveys of parents or other groups.

Mr. Beaver said he has never taken a survey in which he can answer questions definitively. How do you ask the community about neighborhood schools? Will Jim Darcy want neighborhood schools? The neighborhood school concept has changed. He said he really struggles with doing surveys.

Dr. Kultgen said he will continue to gather background info and proceed when we think necessary.

Mr. Beaver said the committee also talked about various modifications at the last meeting.

Dr. Kultgen said he talked to City about meeting with the committee. He suggested that when the committee meets with the City to not just talk about Central but rather the other buildings along with traffic, demographics; there's a wide variety of things they can discuss. The groups are ready to meet.

Dr. Kultgen talked about a diagram which showed East and West side schools and the enrollments in each. The population varies greatly. Enrollments fluctuate daily. Districtwide enrollment increased 67 students in just a couple of weeks.

Mr. Beaver said that last meeting we talked about purchasing land for Helena High. He said he thinks we should say we want to build a high school, but we shouldn't say where. Dr. Kultgen suggested we contact Cropper and see where the students are.

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

Mr. Beaver said he feels we can get in trouble when we say we want to build a new high school. It's okay to mention that we have problems with the high schools and the middle schools, but at this time we need to stay focused on the elementary schools. He said it may be best to acquire some land and not determine what will go there. To state at this time what school will go there, he doesn't feel we're ready for that. We need to stay focused on the problems at hand. Should we proceed with land acquisition?

Ms. Myhre said yes for high school and middle school. Ms. Lovshin said she agreed with Mr. Beaver.

Ms. Myhre said she didn't have much appetite for just buying land and not designating what it will be used for. For instance if CRA would be a good site for an elementary school then we'd need land for a middle school.

Mr. Beaver said other communities have found it to be advantageous to buy land. We could learn from them. I don't see how we could go wrong with buying real estate.

Mr. Carter said there is land available. Maybe this could be a survey question. That's info you want before putting it on a bond. We haven't done a full investigation of available land so there may be land out there that we don't know about.

Dr. Kultgen said that's why we could turn this over to Cropper and they can determine land available and all the things needed for building schools such as water, sewer, fire suppression etc.

Ms. Lovshin said we need to look at all the sites and see what the minimal and maximum size is and start with that.

Ms. Myhre said we should look at deficiencies and good things at each site. Kessler may be a good size, but is it in the right location? Dr. Kultgen said this was all part of the Operational Plan that came out in April. Ms. Myhre said we could grade each school/location. Coming up with a rubric for each location would be helpful and then tackle the most needed locations.

Mr. Beaver said we have to solve the problem of displaced student first otherwise we're just creating new ones. Is it safe to say that we are in agreement that two high schools are sufficient, two middle schools are sufficient and having 11 elementary schools is where the problem lies? How do we address displaced students?

Ms. Myhre said we have displaced Central students. We are busing students from Jim Darcy and Warren. Would you consider the PAL students displaced? Not really, they come from all over the district anyway so they just moved locations. Four Georgians has displaced students. Most of these students are bused/enrolled at Broadwater.

Four Georgians students go all over town. To get them back to Four Georgians could be corrected by changing boundaries. And there will continue to be more students in the Four Georgians boundary as there is a new development being built nearby.

Dr. Kultgen suggested they discuss these four schools. Four Georgians could be corrected by adjusting the boundary lines. It would still need work such as adding a gym and Functional Life Skills. Jim Darcy has approximately 920 students within its boundary. This could be balanced with Rossiter to about 450 students in each school.

Dr. Kultgen said there are four acres next to Jim Darcy for purchase. The land is in a spot that makes sense for the school. Mr. Carter said there are four commercial lots and three private lots priced at \$900,000. That's all we know – we haven't pursued it any further.

Ms. Myhre asked if this is really the perfect location for a Jim Darcy school in terms of Lincoln Road vs. where the kids actually live.

Mr. Beaver said it may not be the perfect location but it is the most viable location. The acreage 14 miles north is perfect based on where the students live, but there is no water. The current location doesn't allow many students to walk to school which is probably good considering Lincoln Road is right there. The current site is best on what we want.

Mr. Carter explained the challenges of buying property – water rights, septic, fire suppression, etc. The land next to Jim Darcy has all the water needed. Mr. Carter also pointed out that if we purchase these four acres the district will be landlocked. We are making decisions that will affect the district for the next 30 years. Jim Darcy is currently on 6.82 acres with the possibility of adding four more. There is also a park close by which is another 1.3. Mr. Carter would have to talk to the County about the possibilities for this land.

Dr. Kultgen said he knows there are serious water problems in the valley but where Jim Darcy sits is not an issue and that's a huge plus.

Mr. Beaver added that if we build a new Jim Darcy, the students could remain in the building while construction was taking place.

Ms. Myhre said we will fill the schools in the valley, so what about schools in town?

Mr. Beaver said he doesn't think most families will move their children; they will leave their kids where they are to complete their years at their current school.

Dr. Kultgen said Warren has about 390 students within its boundary area. Because it's nearly full 60-70 transfer out with most going to Smith.

Ms. Myhre asked if we convinced that we need to build at Warren? Is it in the right spot? Dr. Kultgen said the area is growing.

Ms. Lovshin said we should we look at boundaries too. Adjusting boundaries will make a difference with enrollments.

Mr. Beaver said that with any school we build we have to plan accordingly. Pre-K is coming. It's planned to add Pre-K to all our schools. When we build the schools we're still two – three years out. By that time Pre-K will be here. We need to be proactive.

Dr. Kultgen added that our special needs population is growing so we need to build accordingly.

Mr. Carter said that when the models were drawn up they planned for 4-3 schools that included expansion rooms Functional Life Skills, special needs, and flex space.

Mr. Beaver said at Warren, we would most likely demo the smaller building. That will free up more acreage at Warren. Mr. Carter added that there's also a parcel of land west and six acres north of the school. Mr. Beaver asked what water availability and sewer situation for that land is.

Mr. Beaver asked the committee what their concerns were with Warren.

Ms. Myhre said we need a middle school that will accommodate these students. We need to build something in town. Where does it make sense to build in town?

Mr. Beaver said we have to use our current facilities to optimal use. We need to keep all schools open at the present time. For expansion purposes we need all the space we have. That type of bond may pass. Maintaining neighborhood schools is a message we are hearing loud and clear. If we maintain current spaces, Central students are still displaced.

Ms. Myhre said if we build a Jim Darcy, Warren and Four Georgians that would free up space at Smith. Dr. Kultgen said that Jefferson is almost as full as is Hawthorne. On the east side, Smith is the only one that could be expanded.

Ms. Lovshin said that eventually we'll let enrollment tell the story.

Dr. Kultgen said we should take care of displaced students and let the board have discussions on what size school is too large or too small.

Mr. Beaver said he feels we should keep all our schools open but we need a 4-3 schools in the city. Our numbers tell us we can get by with three 4-3 schools south of the railroad tracks.

Ms. Lovshin said she could go along with making Smith a 4-3 school. The site size is viable. But Central and Bryant students are still displaced. How do we get the right mix of expansion and still have flexibility?

Dr. Kultgen said it's okay to have a 350 student school. We want to take care of our neighborhood schools and allow room for students to move around (parent choice).

Ms. Myhre asked how many students Jefferson can hold. About 290, but this doesn't accommodate Central. Could we build on at Jefferson to accommodate students and shift boundaries? Maybe shift Montessori to Hawthorne.

Mr. Carter said anything can be done, but at what criteria are you looking? Jefferson could be a 350 school or a 400 school. But long term, is the site viable? You need to look at the long term. Are we looking at what's a good investment or should we be more concerned about what is best for kids down the road? The gymnasium is deficient for current population at Jefferson. The site itself has challenges such as the loading zones, parking, etc. We need to focus on the educational needs.

Mr. Beaver said we could build a new gym at Jefferson and turn the current gym into a cafeteria and classrooms. We could do the same with Broadwater. If a gym was built at Broadwater, that would open up classrooms.

Mr. Carter said the gym at Broadwater is good. If we add additional programs additional space is needed. There are concerns with the library. There is no on-site parking. The site is very limited because it's surrounded by residential.

Mr. Beaver said that neither Broadwater nor Jefferson would be good 4-3 sites. But we want to keep in mind the thought of having three 4-3 sites south of the railroad tracks. And the addition at Jefferson and Broadwater still doesn't resolve the displaced students of Central.

Ms. Myhre said that maybe if we shift boundaries we would resolve issue.

Mr. Beaver asked what three locations are ideal for south of tracks. Is Smith one? We still need a school in the middle of town.

Ms. Myhre said she was leaning toward Jefferson or Central.

Mr. Beaver said Jefferson won't accommodate a 4-3 school. And there is no parking.

Ms. Myhre said we could build Jefferson to a 350 student school. Aidan added she doesn't see Central as being a 4-3 school, but she could see a 350 student school. Possibly make the town schools 350 student schools and the valley 4-3 schools.

Mr. Beaver said we could build a larger school at Central, get rid of HMS and find a new home for HMS. But do we want to tackle this with the first bond? It's a lot to look at when our first priority is looking at displaced students. We know we can't look at the Lincoln campus because there are too many obstacles.

Dr. Kultgen asked what happens to the Central site.

Ms. Myhre said Central could become a new school as a 350 school.

Mr. Beaver said if we rebuilt Central where do we build it. Do we renovate the current Central by putting \$2 million into and then do we sell the property? Can we get our money out of it? If someone buys it now they would have to restore it. These questions are for the realtors and architects to answer. If we demo the building and rebuild it, would someone want to buy it? If we rebuild it, are we stuck with it for 100 years? If we restore it, we have to live with it for 100 years.

Ms. Lovshin asked if we could turn it into office spaces.

Mr. Carter said building codes are stricter for schools than office spaces. We could potentially get money out of the building. We aren't looking at future investment but rather educating kids. When we renovated Front Street, we renovated to fit the needs of the students. It by no means added to the value.

Ms. Lovshin asked if Central could become an administration building. Dr. Kultgen said this doesn't do anything for displaced students.

Mr. Carter added that he has only looked at it as a school site. He has never pursued other uses.

Dr. Kultgen said that we need a minimum of three schools on the east side.

Ms. Myhre suggested they focus on the east side at the next meeting.

Ms. Lovshin said they should look at Central and possibly shift Montessori to a different school. That would leave approximately 200 students.

General Public Comment:

Chere Juisto – She thanked the committee and the work of the committee. She requested to allow outside input during the meeting and allow the public the opportunity to give their perspective during the meeting. She suggested that before decisions are made, the committee should invite professionals to the meetings to provide answers to some of the questions asked.

Ms. Myhre suggested giving ½ of the meeting time to discussion with the public.

Dr. Kultgen said we can bring professional groups in any time.

Mr. Beaver agreed that the committee needed input from the public.

Chere – Currently the way the meetings are set up there is no time to give input during the meeting.

Ms. B. Oliver – As a community member, she thanked the committee for listening. She doesn't like to think that Pre-K will be in the same building with 5th grades. She asked the committee to consider placing all Pre-K in one building. She added that she has seen other states doing good things to older buildings.

Danna Jackson – If you want to promote outside groups coming in she can help get the word out. She has made it a point to get the info out. She said she's not sure that in town people are sold on 4-3 schools. She is a Hawthorne parent – and just learned recently the committee believes that status quo is not okay. There is a crisis situation. She believes that a new Jim Darcy and Warren would sell – anything else is uncomfortable for the community. She feels another crisis is our overcrowding in the junior highs. Could Jim Darcy be a K-8 school? It sure would relieve pressure in the middle schools.

Chuck Butler – He thanks the committee for their work. New folks are hearing and appreciating what you are doing. Researchers should be invited and should attend these meetings. They would then have a better understanding of things when putting together their research. They should interview each trustee individually.

Dr. Kultgen said that no meetings with professionals are set up at this time.

Next meeting date is Wednesday, October 1st at 1:00 p.m. at Ray Bjork Learning Center. The meeting adjourned at 8:44 a.m.