

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mexico Facilities Study Advisory Committee

FROM: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of January 9, 2017

DATE: January 13, 2017

Attendance:

Committee Members: Sadie Blauvelt, Bob Briggs, Lisa Buske, Kelly Cullen, Heather Donath, Donna Herrmann, Sue Hewitt, Andrew MacDonald, Charlee Mathia, Tammie Nipper, Mark Norton, Jessica Parker, Peggy Scorzelli, Susan Teifke, and Kevin Upcraft

Consultants: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

Observers: Sean Bruno, Darlene Upcraft, Amy Shaw, Jeremy Belfield, Mary Beth Horn, Julie Bradish, Janice Clark, Abigayle Garrett, and Chad Bigelow

Location: Palermo Elementary School

1. Bill Silky started the meeting by thanking Peggy Scorzelli, Principal of Palermo Elementary School, for hosting the meeting and conducting the tour of the school for interested committee members. He then reviewed the meeting protocol for new meeting observers, circulated the attendance sheets, and asked committee members to review the updated contact list for any changes. The agenda for the meeting was presented and reviewed as well.

2. Bill then reviewed the purpose of the study that is to answer the following question:

How can we educationally and fiscally reconfigure our grades and/or facilities to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future?

He indicated that this purpose will be shared at each meeting to keep the committee focused on what the Board has asked the consultants to accomplish.

3. Notes from the December 12th meeting were reviewed by the committee without any changes and/or additions.

4. Bill provided an overview of the district's transportation program. The district has a double trip busing pattern that picks up the middle and high school students first in the morning and then picks up the elementary school students. There are 35 in-district runs each day. Approximately 85-100 students who live in the village of Mexico, are in grades 5-12, and have a sidewalk in front of their home walk to school. The longest time that any student would be on a bus going to or from school would be 45-60 minutes. The first middle/high school students are picked up at 6:15 am and the earliest elementary school

students are picked up at 7:50. Mexico also provides late bus runs at 5:15/5:30 for students in sports, plays, musicals, tutoring sessions, etc.

5. The consultants then reviewed three different options they had developed that might be considered for reconfiguring the district's grades and/or facilities. While the consultants provided some of the pro's and con's for each of the options, the committee members were asked to agree or disagree with these and to add to these items. The committee members were also asked to propose additional options for consideration. The options that follow along with the pro's and con's include the items from the consultants as well as the input from committee members.

Option 1: Remain As Is: K-4, 5-8, 9-12 and renovate current buildings

Pros

- There would not be a major community backlash as perhaps with other options.
- Each community would still have a local school for its elementary children to attend.
- The transportation program would not have to be altered.
- Keeps the same grade configuration.
- There would be no split of siblings as with other options.
- There would not be the possibility of staff lay-offs.
- Younger students would have a shorter bus ride as compared to other options.

Cons

- No fiscal savings would be realized.
- Would not offer an opportunity to improve the transportation program by having a centralized elementary campus.
- Class sizes would not be equal across buildings.
- We would still have old buildings despite investing \$47 million
- Palermo is not on municipal water and is on septic.
- This option does not address space issue in New Haven.
- There would need to be building expense due to renovations.
- Building maintenance and upkeep is still an expense (would not be reduced as possible with other options).

Option 2: Develop a grade center plan by having New Haven Elementary as a PK, 2-4 building and Palermo a PK-1 school. The other schools remain as is.

Pros

- All three elementary communities will still have a school locally.
- Greater efficiency of staffing and saving of money
- Easier to balance the class sizes between the two buildings.
- It would be easier to develop curriculum and do staff training; and staff could specialize.
- No duplication of special education services.
- Keep section sizes?

Cons

- Transportation would become more complex with perhaps a shuttle system between the two elementary schools.
- Some students would ride the bus longer; particularly elementary children.
- There would be one more transition in the K-12 sequence for New Haven and Palermo students.
- There would be a transition for PK students in New Haven when they enter kindergarten (not smooth).
- Alters the grade configuration people are used to.
- Transportation issue with Pre-K students.
- Parent involvement will decrease.
- Possible split of families with children close in age (i.e., open houses).
- We would still have old buildings.
- Housing for specials, cafeteria.
- Staffing-care/cuts.
- Will it overwhelm students?
- Transportation: Number of buses/number of drivers needed
- Class sizes would increase (not an improvement); 25-26 are large sections
- Scheduling-housing specials.
- Doctor appointments/ER pick-ups a difference for parents.

Option 3: Close New Haven and Palermo elementary schools and centralize all the elementary grades at Mexico Elementary School with an addition.

Pros

- Much greater efficiency in staffing
- Financial savings
- Easier to balance elementary class sizes for all sections
- Easier to provide transportation (all to one school) and possible transportation savings
- Keeps the same grade configuration.
- Could sell both Palermo and New Haven elementary schools; perhaps create senior care facility in Palermo
- Possibly put two elementary schools back on the tax rolls.
- Would reduce maintenance cost and save money on grounds, clerical and administrative costs.
- All students and families and all elementary staff would be together.
- All grade levels would become a more cohesive unit through collaboration.
- Would permit better mixing of students with academic & personality similarities/differences.

Cons

- Community concern and backlash in Palermo and New Haven due to school closings.
- Question about what to do with closed elementary schools; are there alternate uses?
- Some students would have to ride the bus longer- particularly younger children.
- Too tight spaces; would have to figure out how to house and schedule special area classes, lunches, library, etc. (common area spaces).
- There would be disruption during the construction of addition; existing Mexico elementary staff and students would be displaced and then there would have to be post-construction reorganization.
- The lunch line would be too long.
- There would be an adjustment for students.
- Would there be enough space if in the future new sections of grades were added?
- It would be a large elementary school.
- Emergency evacuation would be complicated.
- There would be difficulty with parking spaces (for staff and family events) and traffic flow (bus loading).
- Green space would be lost.

6. In addition to adding to the list of pro's and con's for the original three options above, committee members were also asked to brainstorm whether there were additional options that should be considered. The committee members offered the following additional options:

- ✓ **Option 4**-Close one elementary school (either Palermo or New Haven) and change the grade configuration to PK-2 (at either Palermo or New Haven), 3-4 (at Mexico Elementary), 5-8 (Middle School), and 9-12 (High School).
- ✓ **Option 5**-Redistrict the current elementary attendance boundaries to better balance school enrollments and class sizes.

- ✓ **Option 6**-Close New Haven and Palermo and realign the grades as follows: PK-3 (Mexico Elementary), 4-8 (Mexico Middle School), 9-12 (High School).
- ✓ **Option 7**-Close all three elementary schools and build a new elementary school on the Middle School campus.
- ✓ **Option 8**-Develop a grade center plan across all three elementary schools (for example, PK-K in one elementary school, 1-2 in another elementary school, and 3-4) in another elementary school; 5-8 middle school and 9-12 high school.
- ✓ **Option 9**-Realign the grades as follows: PK-2 (all three elementary schools), 3-6 (Middle School), 7-12 (High School).
- ✓ **Option 10**-Close all the district's schools and build a new K-12 facility to house all grades.

Further discussion on these options will take place at future meetings of the advisory committee.

7. The presentation concluded with five big ideas or take-aways that the consultants reviewed:

- ✓ The district runs a two-tiered daily transportation program to and from school—secondary students on one run, elementary on another.
- ✓ There are very few walkers in the district; only grade 5 and up who reside in the Village of Mexico and have a sidewalk in front of their home.
- ✓ Mexico does transport some students outside the district to special education programs and BOCES.
- ✓ The consultants and committee are brainstorming possible “feasible” options for future configuration of the grades and schools primarily based on enrollments and available space at this point in time.
- ✓ At least three (3) possible feasible options were offered by the consultants and seven (7) more were added by the advisory committee.

8. The meeting was opened up to the observers for questions and comments.

9. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Monday, February 27, 2017 in the New Haven Elementary School cafeteria. An optional tour of the school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The meeting of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on January 9. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on 2.27.17 at New Haven Elementary.

C: Sean Bruno