

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mexico Facilities Study Advisory Committee
FROM: Alan Pole and Bill Silky
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of December 12, 2016
DATE: December 15, 2016

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, Joe Kisorak, and Chad Bigelow

Location: Mexico Middle School

1. Bill Silky started the meeting by thanking Kim Holliday, Principal of the Middle 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. Joe Kisorak from SWBR Architects was introduced to the committee. SWBR is the architectural firm that recently conducted the Building Condition Survey for the district.

2. Bill then reviewed the purpose of the study which 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 October 24th meeting were approved by the committee without any changes and/or additions.

4. Bill provided updated live birth data and enrollment projections for the district. He reported that the updated trend still shows that the district is likely to continue to see a decline in Pre-K to 12 enrollment at even a slightly greater rate than shared last meeting.

5. The grade organization of the district (PK-4, 5-8, 9-12) was shared with the committee and it was noted this is a very common grade arrangement pattern in New York. Bill then offered an overview of the educational research on grade level patterns. He reported that the bottom line is that there is no one best way to organized school grades and that “what” a district does with its grade arrangement is more critical to student success than “which” grade organization it has adopted.

6. Bill then provided an overview of the 2016-17 elementary class sizes in each of the three elementary schools. Bill said that the class sizes seem very reasonable and quite equitable (except at second grade) across the three schools. Most sections of the grades are between 15 and 20 students per section.

7. Recent elementary (grades 3 and 4) student scores on the New York State ELA and math tests were shared with the committee. Bill’s observation was that the results, while possibly varying widely due to the low number of students, show that the district is not performing as well as it should. In addition, he offered comparative test results for all district students grades 3-8 on the state ELA and math tests for the past two years which also indicate district performance on both is below state averages, another indicator that improvement in warranted.

8. The elementary school special area subject offerings were presented to the committee as an indicator of the curricular breadth in grades K-4. Bill noted that these opportunities provide a rich program of study for the students and there is comparability across all three elementary schools.

9. An overview of the district’s special education program was discussed. Bill offered a five-year summary of the number of students in the district that have special educational needs and whether they are receiving their educational program in the district or elsewhere. He indicated that the district currently has 333 students (or 16% total enrollment) identified as having special educational needs. This is slightly greater than the 12% New York State says most districts should experience. He praised the district for programming in-district for 95% of its resident special needs students.

10. Alan Pole then took over the presentation and reviewed the high school curricular offerings. Alan shared the number of students in each course section for all subject areas this year including English, Social Studies, Math, Science, Foreign Language, Family & Consumer Science, Technology, Music, Art, PE, Health and ROTC as well as a few other courses. He pointed out that the district offers a very comprehensive secondary program given the district enrollment. However, he did note there were a large number of study hall sections in the high school schedule (177) as well as some courses with low enrollments .

11. Alan presented a summary of the number of high school junior and seniors that attend the BOCES for various career and technical education classes. In total this year there are 73 juniors (44% of the class) and 90 seniors (40%) of the class.

12. The meeting focus then shifted from educational program to an overview of the districts facilities. Alan began this with a general overview of all the schools before going into a summary of space utilization of each individual building. He reported that New Haven was the most densely occupied of the three elementary schools. All other buildings have some excess capacity but probably not enough this year to move entire grade levels from one school to the next.

13. The 2015 Building Conditions Survey (BCS) conducted by SWBR architects was highlighted. Alan reported that the full report was available in the district office and that he was just presenting an overview of the estimated cost for upgrading each of the schools. Those costs were as follows: Mexico Elementary, \$5,097,979; New Haven Elementary, \$6,549,850; Palermo Elementary, \$6,092,288; Mexico Middle School, \$7,128,630; and Mexico High School, \$14,210,651. Alan did indicate that not all of the noted work would necessarily have to be done and that the district should engage a committee to determine priority items.

14. The presentation concluded with six big ideas or take-aways that the consultants reviewed: 1-Student enrollment is expected to decline by approximately 85 students over the next 7 years; 2-There is no one best way to arrange the grades in a school district; 3- For a school district of its size, Mexico has a broad range of courses available to its students; 4-Approximately 40-44% of the juniors and seniors attend CTE classes at BOCES for half a day; 5-The school buildings have some available space but are generally well scheduled; and 6-The BCS has identified approximately \$43,000,000 worth to work to be addressed in the next five years.

15. The committee was then asked for comments and/or questions. A couple of questions/comments included:

- Have some high school course enrollments dropped recently? Assistant Superintendent Mary Beth Horn noted that the high school has expanded its offerings thus fewer students are enrolled in more sections of courses due to this.
- It was mentioned that there are some accelerated course offerings at the 8th grade level (such as Algebra and Biology) that should be noted.
- It was suggested that the consultants provide an overview of the Middle School educational program.

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

10. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Monday, January 9, 2017 in the Palermo 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 December 12. 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.

Thanks again for agreeing to serve on this committee. Looking forward to seeing you again on 1.9.17 at Palermo Elementary.

C: Sean Bruno