



MEETING MINUTES

PROJECT: Mercer Island School District Long-Range Facility Plan Update
PROJECT NO: 2023902.00
DATE: 26 June 2023
FILE NAME: MM005_FPC5_230626
SUBJECT: **Facility Planning Committee Meeting 5: Consolidation & Plan Approach**

MEETING DATE: 26 June 2023
TIME: 5:00 – 7:00 pm

LOCATION: Library, Mercer Island High School

ATTENDEES:

Facility Planning Committee

– Colin Brandt	✓ Linhui Hao	– Sandra Levin
– Debbie Burke	– Jenny Harrington	– Deborah Lurie
– Sophie Cartwright	– Ian Henry	– Brian Mock
– Julie Ogata Ciobanu	– Janelle Honeycutt	– Rich Nakatsu
✓ Jessica Clawson	– Andrew Howison	– Jamie Page
– Vickie Cleator	– Robyn Kimura Hsu	✓ Carrie Beckner Savage
✓ Susan Conrad-Wang	– Wen Hu	✓ Becky Shaddle
✓ Jennifer Crespi	✓ Ralph Jorgenson	– Toby Suhm
– Dave Cutright	– Jason Kitner	✓ Kim Thomas
– Marcus Engelman-Ost	– Kate Wise Knecht	– Lee Tortorelli
– Dan Glowitz	– Diana Lein	✓ Asha Woerner
✓ Matt Hall	✓ David Figatner -observer	✓ Todd White - observer

MISD Support Team

✓ Fred Rundle
✓ Matt Sullivan
✓ Tony Kuhn
✓ Andreeves Rosner
✓ Brandy Fox

Mahlum Architects

✓ LeRoy Landers
✓ David Mount
– Rebecca Hutchinson

The following represents the architect's understanding of discussions held and decisions reached in the meeting. Anyone with amendments to these minutes should notify the author within five (5) days of the minutes date in order to amend as appropriate.

ITEM	DISCUSSION
1.1	<p>Welcome and agenda presented by LeRoy Landers. Goals for the evening include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Understand impacts of elementary school consolidation> Consolidation discussion and input> Review plan approach results within the context of the consolidation discussion
1.2	<p>LeRoy presented information related to program impacts of school consolidation on the utilization of each elementary school. This review included a detailed evaluation of general classroom count, the impact on specialized learning spaces, and use of existing portable classrooms.</p> <p>Committee member questions and comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> A Committee member asked whether the assessment of program impact considered constructing a new school with increased capacity. LeRoy stated that the assessment evaluated a scenario that studied existing schools (consolidation would be within existing school capacities) and a scenario where a replacement school was constructed with additional capacity.> A Committee member asked whether the consolidation study (and its assumed enrollment numbers) is for next year's enrollment. LeRoy stated that three different years with associated enrollment projections were studied, these included current enrollment, the peak enrollment year within the 10-year projection (2025-26) and the last year in the 10-year projection (2032-33).> A Committee member stated that during the years 2012 to 2014 the district utilized eight to ten portables. They also stated that it was generally felt within the community that using portable classrooms was an acceptable situation. The only perceived negative was the impact of high enrollment on the shared or common areas within each school. LeRoy pointed out that for some school districts portables are considered a less than desirable learning environment that presented safety concerns associated with moving between the portables and main building.> Takeaways – Based on current 10-year enrollment projections, if the district consolidates without building a larger replacement school, or if consolidation occurs either pre-bond or concurrent with the construction of a new replacement school, there should be adequate classroom space over the next ten years. If a larger replacement school is built, there should be adequate capacity, a slightly higher level of flexibility regarding the location and use of specialized learning spaces, and two schools with separate gym and commons/cafeteria rather than only one school with this condition.
1.3	<p>LeRoy presented information related to relocation impacts of school consolidation (how students would be relocated throughout the district). The analysis looked at a scenario that does not include a bond measure, a scenario that included a bond measure but does not construct a replacement elementary, and a scenario that included a bond measure that constructs a larger replacement elementary school.</p>

Committee member questions and comments:

- > A member of the Committee stated that the question of consolidation and recommendations for a long-range facility plan are two separate issues. It was felt that consolidation is an issue for the School Board to decide on and not one that the Committee should make a recommendation on. LeRoy concurred that a decision regarding consolidation would be left to the Board, but also noted that input received from the Committee and broader community would be very useful during Board discussions and deliberation.
- > Dr. Rundle reiterated how important it is to hear from the community regarding their opinions about consolidation.
- > A member of the Committee stated that they were having a “terrible reaction” to the impacts of consolidation, particularly in view of approaches that would require multiple moves for students.
- > A Committee member stated that the analysis was very helpful toward understanding the strategic opportunities associated with consolidation and a potential bond measure. The Committee member stated that this is a unique opportunity to make good decisions for the student’s benefit – “this puts the students as a priority”.
- > A Committee member asked whether the district could identify what the monetary savings would be if the district had three elementary schools rather than four. Dr. Rundle stated that the District would be meeting in the next few weeks to determine what the likely cost savings would be.
- > A Committee member asked if the Island Park site might be used for something else if elementary schools were consolidated and whether the State energy requirement (Clean Buildings) would still apply. Dr. Rundle stated that there was precedent for alternative uses, citing previous district facilities that had been rented to other organizations. It was also stated that the State energy requirement would apply unless the building was demolished.
- > LeRoy reminded the Committee that previous Committee discussions had all presumed that the Lakeridge site would not be occupied during the construction of a replacement school. If a replacement elementary school is included as part of a proposed bond measure under this presumption, students would need to be temporarily relocated even if the district did not consolidate.
- > Takeaways - If consolidation occurs prior to the bond, a bond does not pass, or the bond does not include Lakeridge, Island Park students move once. If consolidation occurs prior to the bond, and a bond passes that includes Lakeridge, most Island Park students move once, however a small cohort of Island Park students that became Lakeridge students during the pre-bond consolidation would move a second time. It would be unlikely that former Island Park students would need to move a third time (as Lakeridge students back to the new replacement school) due to the likely timeline of events these students would have already matriculated into the middle school. If the District waited until after construction of the replacement school to consolidate, Island Park students would move once and Lakeridge students would move twice as part of the replacement project.
- > A Committee member asked whether Island Park could accommodate the +/- 520 Lakeridge students during construction of the replacement school. LeRoy said that the school could

accommodate the students during construction. Dr. Rundle added that this would include use of the portables on the Island Park site.

- > A Committee member stated that it would seem less impactful if an entire school cohort moves together “it would be an adventure” vs splitting a school’s cohort into different schools. It was felt that this is an important distinction when discussing different moves (i.e. Lakeridge moving twice during a replacement, but moving as an entire school cohort).

1.4 LeRoy presented information related to capacity impacts of school consolidation. This included an analysis incorporating the present (last) year’s enrollment, the peak projected enrollment (2025-26) in the next ten years, and the last year of projected enrollment (2032-33) in the next ten years. District maps were used to present current enrollment/capacity within a geographic context. It was stated that present enrollment at all existing elementary schools is well below capacity. This level of under enrollment may have an impact on staffing, likelihood of blended classrooms, and efficient facility utilization/operational cost.

Committee member questions and comments:

- > A Committee member asked about potential benefits of three larger elementary schools vs four small schools. The Committee member noted the potential benefit related to librarians at each school. Dr. Rundle noted that there would likely be less “jostling” of students within and across student boundaries, citing the current distribution of Kindergarten enrollment as an example.
- > A Committee member asked about the cost associated with building a 600-student elementary and expressed some concern about building a school to accommodate more than 550. The Committee member encouraged the District to look at 2014 community poll regarding elementary school with 450 vs 650 students.
- > Takeaways – If consolidation occurs pre-bond, or a bond does not pass, enrollment will be at or slightly above existing permanent capacity of three remaining schools. Portables may be used for either general instruction or specialized programs depending on what makes most sense. If consolidation occurs concurrent with replacing an elementary, the permanent capacity would be increased. Enrollment would be at, or near, permanent capacity of three remaining schools and portables would likely not be required but could still be used on a discretionary basis. During construction of the replacement school, portables at the three existing schools would still be used for instruction.

1.5 Additional Committee discussion regarding consolidation. LeRoy asked that three questions be considered by the Committee: 1) Should the District consolidate elementaries? (personal view) 2) Should the District consolidate elementaries? (community view) 3) Should the District consolidate elementaries prior to a potential bond?

- > A Committee member stated that they felt that the Board and District should do what is best for the students independent of whether anything gets built or not. The Committee member also stated that this topic is politicized, and the Committee should not have a say in whether consolidation is implemented. LeRoy stated that the approach to consolidation could impact the long-range facility plan and a potential bond measure (if a replacement elementary were included in a proposed bond) since the bond would need to budget for either the consolidated or unconsolidated capacity of the replacement elementary.
- > A Committee member stated that they had spoken to a number of people about the topic of elementary consolidation (30-40 families). One family had reservations and felt that it needed

to be discussed more broadly, the other families felt that it would be a good financial decision. The Committee member also felt that two simultaneous issues offered a unique opportunity for the District in the event a replacement elementary were included in a proposed bond, these issues are: 1) An elementary is under consideration for replacement due to age/condition and 2) Current and ten year projected enrollment suggests considering consolidation of four schools into three. The opportunity could be to replace one of the old schools while doing so with a larger capacity that better accommodates consolidation and offers more flexibility with regard to fluctuation of enrollment within a three elementary district.

- > A Committee member stated that the cultures of MISD elementary schools are different, also noting that the Island Park community had already paid for certain enhancements associated with their school.
- > A Committee member stated a concern that if the District consolidates before a bond that this would be seen as solving the District's fiscal issues and that support to replace an older elementary at a larger capacity to better support consolidation might not be as solid.
- > A Committee member stated that her family would be "devastated" if Island Park closed. Their family moved to the island for the schools, and they want to be in a small school. The Committee member also pointed out that the State has passed a law that would allow up to three units per lot, which in the future will impact the need for capacity within the district. The member stated that 500+ students at an elementary school feels really big.
- > A Committee member stated that they hope the "latte factor" isn't brought up because some community members don't have means to go to Starbucks regularly and this reference throws up a red flag. The member also stated that they would be "all in" for a 575-student elementary, but 600 or 650 seems big. The Committee member also felt that people who consider moving to MISD are primarily looking at the elementary schools not the middle school, which is one of the reasons that Committee member advocated for a replacement elementary school being included in a bond.
- > A Committee member asked how consolidation would impact busing. Dr. Rundle stated that the biggest impact would be for Island Park families whose children currently walk to school (those children would be bused). For those children who already ride buses, the impact would be very small. Conversely, some families whose children currently do not walk to school may have the opportunity to do so at either Lakeridge or West Mercer because of their proximity to those schools. The number of bus drivers would probably not change.
- > A Committee member stated that some members of the community may remember the recent construction of a fourth elementary (Northwood), because it was needed for capacity, and be confused about why the District is now considering consolidation. "Now we are going back to what wasn't working ten years ago?" Having answers for this will be very important.
- > A Committee member stated that they were fearful that the community might associate voting for or against a bond with voting for or against consolidation. There could be some benefit from separating the consolidation question from the bond measure.
- > A Committee member stated that planning Scenario C, which finishes replacing the middle school and does not replace an elementary school, provides an opportunity to easily separate the issue of consolidation from a proposed bond measure.

- > Results of the “straw poll” regarding consolidation were:
 - Question 1: Should the District consolidate elementaries? (personal view) 9 yes, 2 no
 - Question 2: Should the District consolidate elementaries? (community view) 10 yes, 1 no
 - Question 3: Should the District consolidate elementaries prior to a potential bond? 5 yes, 5 no, 1 undecided
- > Dr. Rundle asked whether people are more compelled to consolidate by the fiscal benefit, the programmatic benefit, a mix of both, or something totally different. A Committee member responded that the fiscal consideration will be a huge driving force within the community. This member advocated for Scenario C. They also stated that a number of parents are really pushing the program benefit, so there is a split interest. Another Committee member felt, personally, that the biggest driver is the programmatic benefit of consolidation. Dr. Rundle noted that he asked this question because consolidation related savings put forth by surrounding Districts (i.e. Bellevue) are larger than preliminary “back of the envelope” projections by MISD.
- > A Committee member stated that a parent/neighbor had stated that they would prefer to stay in their current school but if consolidation avoided programmatic situations, such as blended classrooms, they would accept consolidation. Dr Rundle stated that while the District could not absolutely guarantee that blended classrooms would never happen if schools were consolidated, they could state that with larger consolidated schools they would be far less likely.
- > A Committee member stated that the safety concerns are also compelling, “having a Kindergartener and not having her get into the car on the street” (Island Park Elementary).
- > A Committee member stated that, if the Board and District felt that consolidation made sense (taking community input into consideration), it might make most sense to consolidate prior to the bond as this may separate that decision from the potential bond vote.
- > Dr. Rundle stated that the decision to consolidate is a very difficult decision that should involve community input. Dr. Rundle stated that consolidation is a topic that commonly gets Superintendents fired and used the example of SPS that has slowed down their timeline for making a decision in order to provide a robust engagement process with the community.

1.6 LeRoy asked the Committee to consider whether the topic of consolidation would have any influence on their opinion regarding a preferred plan approach (thereby impacting the preference cards placed on scenarios A, B, C, D during FPC 4). With that in mind, he also gave the Committee an opportunity to re-locate either their personal card or their community card to a different approach if they felt compelled to do so.

Committee member questions and comments:

- > No preference cards were relocated by Committee members.
- > A Committee member asked whether all four plan approaches would be shown to the community. LeRoy stated that the four approaches would be shared along with their associated preference cards. This would allow the community to see what has been discussed to date and how the Committee’s preferences were distributed.

- 1.7 Next steps in the planning process include:
- > August: Board update on long-range facilities planning work
 - > Early September: Reconvene FPC to preview materials prior to community outreach, to make sure information represents the Committee's perspective
 - > October: Community outreach meetings (FPC members are encouraged to attend if possible)
 - > November: Potential final FPC meeting to review outreach findings and final plan
 - January: Long-Range Facility Plan Update report complete
- 1.8 A copy of the presentation can be found on the District website, for additional information.