



MINUTES
Facilities Committee Meeting
District Office Board Room
May 4, 2022

Attending for the Administration: Superintendent Dr. Akil Ross, Executive Director of Operations Todd Bedenbaugh.
Attending for the Board: Facilities Committee Chair Ken Loveless, Trustee Rebecca Blackburn-Hines (virtually), Trustee Nikki Gardner, Trustee Jan Hammond, Trustee Cathy Huddle, and Trustee Matt Hogan.

Chairman Loveless called the meeting to order promptly at 3:30 p.m. and read the FOIA compliance certification. Trustee Gardner made a motion that the agenda be approved. Trustee Hogan seconded, and it passed unanimously. Trustee Hogan made a motion that the minutes of the April 4, 2022, meeting be approved. Trustee Gardner seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Chairman Loveless called upon Dr. Ross to present the results of the May 3, 2022, Community Forum of Potential Bond Referendum to Finance the Poor and Fair-Rated Facilities in the 2019 M.B. Kahn Report.

Dr. Ross briefly restated the presentation from the community forum. There were 98 online attendees. Our district is 1 family with 3 communities: Irmo, Dutch Fork, & Chapin. We strive to meet the needs of all. Poverty impacts student proficiency and teacher retention. Most of our poor and fair facilities are in the higher poverty areas. Our goal is to transform students out of poverty. 10 elementary schools feed into CRIS, and 3 elementary schools feed into CIS. We need to transition these schools back into our existing elementary facilities (5th grade) and into new wings of our middle school facilities in Dutch Fork and Irmo (6th grade). We also need to address the student population increase in the Chapin community (38% of the student population) with the subsequent decrease in the Dutch Fork (30%) and Irmo (31%) communities.

To do this, we will need a bond referendum. 4 choices were placed before the community. 1st option is to borrow no money and do nothing. If the community votes not to pass this referendum, then the only option would be to redistrict all 13 elementary schools, keep CRIS as currently used, and delay making our buildings remodeled and safe. The 2nd choice is to borrow \$340M and take on all of our schools with a dramatic increase in Debt Service millage. The focus and desire of the school district is the 3rd choice, which is to borrow \$150M without raising the Debt Service millage to be paid back until 2038. The 4th option is still to borrow the \$150M but decrease taxes slightly to take longer to repay.

A bond referendum of \$150M will lead to having 3 distinct clusters. It will include closing CRIS by adding 6th- grade wings to DFMS & IMS. A majority of the forum attendees, when asked by poll, desired the addition of 6th-grade wings and the closure of the intermediate schools. The desired 3rd option would also address Chapin's growing student body and move Ballentine Elementary School to the Chapin cluster, build a new Dutch Fork Elementary school, and transition Chapin Intermediate School into a 2nd middle school in the Chapin community with 5th grades going back to the elementary schools (Fall 2026). Nursery Road Elementary and the CRIS campus would be remodeled and upgraded for safety, Harbison West would be relocated out of an aging facility, and the building being possibly sold or leased to an appropriate buyer/tenant. Security upgrades can be added to our secondary schools in light of recent school shootings. Also, to create equity for the arts, a Fine Arts Center will be built on the CHS campus.

A majority of forum attendees, when asked by poll, desired the 3rd option as presented by the administration, with the 1st option of no bond referendum coming in at 2nd.

Questions were taken from the board members and addressed. How would the wording on the ballot look? The district cannot put “not raising taxes” on the ballot, but can be more specific and is getting a recommendation from Frannie Heizer about appropriate wording. The last bond referendum was purposely vague and there is little trust in the community now for the school district to hold to their word.

If Spring Hill High School is zoned (which is a scenario of last resort to address overcrowding in the Chapin community) does this bond referendum address the funding for a stadium, track, upgrades for athletics, etc.? No, it does not, but hopefully, there will be operational funds to cover this when and if the time comes. When will the decision about whether this school be zoned or an all-district magnet be made? The district is in collaboration with Dr. Lofton, the current principal, and will make this decision down the road as needed to address needs. Currently, with the bond referendum, we can remove the Academy for Success from that building to the DFES current location and then free up 300+ high school seats for the Chapin community. This does not require the school to be zoned at this time. If the need for more than 300 seats arises, then we will revisit the question of having it zoned.

Does Harbison West have to be relocated permanently? How much would it cost to be remodeled as is needed? The district estimates at least \$22M to remodel HWES, but there are plenty of Irmo schools, and there is no need to remodel it, only move it to the current CRIS campus (to be renamed Campus I). Trustee Huddle suggested we consider moving the District Office to the current CRIS campus instead of building a new office. The savings from this could potentially cover the HWES remodel. It is currently a community school, and we should try to keep this if we can. The district stated that if the property is sold, it can bring approximately \$3M to the district for more projects. It can be sold with deed restrictions to prevent more housing being built and/or be leased on a 99-year land lease to someone who will not put more housing or something unwanted in its place.

How do we build trust with this bond referendum? How can we ensure the community that the board and district will not change what the referendum promises? How do we account for inflation and fulfill all promises? We will continue to discuss publicly the changes and details of the referendum and make decisions in public. We have made great progress with making new policies and updating old policies to make sure we are held accountable. Chairman Loveless suggested we make a list of expectations for this referendum in order of most important to least important and then be open and honest to the public as we spend the money if inflation would require us to cut an item of least importance. Having a plan beforehand will keep us accountable and the public aware of the process. The board was reminded that the estimates in the current list for the bond referendum are accounting for inflation at this time.

Will we have to defer maintenance to complete these projects? There will always be \$15M in Debt Service millage to continue to cover maintenance year over year. Mr. Loveless addressed the need to increase this need in pace with inflation since maintenance is important. Also, it would be best to have the maintenance and technology portions earmarked separately.

Is this project list for the bond referendum complete and ready for a vote? The list still needs to be fully vetted, and the district encourages all discuss and respond to the district with their opinions and ideas before we get to the question. There is still time and room for updates and/or changes.

No comments or suggestions were made to discuss at the next meeting. Trustee Hogan made the motion to adjourn our meeting at approximately 4:30 p.m. Trustee Huddle seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. The Policy Committee began immediately after.