



Facilities Task Force Report

School District of Onalaska – April 2022

Prepared by:



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Introduction

Leaders of the School District of Onalaska are focused on ensuring the district continues to meet the needs of the students who make the district's schools their educational home. To that end, the district contracted a master facility study and facilitated staff listening sessions to identify a number of facility needs that require the attention of the entire community. The district offered community engagement sessions for residents to learn about the identified needs, ask questions, and share feedback.

With that, the Board of Education sought the assistance of a community-led task force. This volunteer community group was provided with an extensive overview of the district's facility needs, generated possible solutions, and ultimately made a series of recommendations to the board. It is important to note that several of the task force members also attended the community engagement sessions.

This report outlines the district needs that were considered, the process the task force used to conduct its work, and list of recommendations that received the unanimous support of task force members. This document was drafted by Dr. Lori Mueller and Joe Donovan of the Donovan Group. The Donovan Group is a communications and community engagement firm that focuses on education. Dr. Mueller, Mr. Donovan and their Donovan Group colleagues have no formal or financial connection to any solution presented in this report. The firm's fees have been paid directly by the district.

It is important to note that the board is not bound by the recommendations of the task force, but expects to use the input as it pursues next steps.

Task Force Processes

The School District of Onalaska Board of Education, in creating a community-led task force, sought to bring together a group of community leaders who would review the needs of the district and create a set of recommendations that would be presented to the board.

In the winter of 2022, district leadership created a list of community members who they felt would represent the district's rich diversity. A total of 22 residents were invited to participate in the task force, and 15 accepted the invitation. A complete list of task force members is included as an addendum to this report.

As invitations were being distributed to potential task force members, the board created a formal charge that outlines what it hoped the task force would do and what was acceptable in relation to its work. The charge is included as an addendum to this report.

In developing this charge, the board intended for the task force to operate separately from the board and the district. Board members were welcomed to observe the task force meetings. For their part, district-level staff members presented information and were available to the task force as resources, but they did not vote. Consultants hired by the district, including VANTAGE Architects Inc. and the Donovan Group, served in advisory roles.

As the task force engaged in its work, its process unfolded with great transparency. Each task force meeting was open to the public.



Task Force Meetings in Brief

The task force held four meetings. In advance of each meeting, an agenda was emailed to task force members and information from past meetings was provided, as necessary.

The meetings are detailed below.

Meeting 1 — Tuesday, February 22, 2022: The meeting began with a welcome to participants by Todd Antony, the district's superintendent. Mr. Antony's remarks were followed by introductions of the task force co-chairs, Tom Kennedy and Ardyce Clements.

Joe Donovan, who assisted with the facilitation of the meeting, reviewed the Board of Education charge, outlined norms and roles, reviewed at a high level all the future meeting agendas, and explained expected deliverables, including the creation of this report.

Director of Finance and Business Services, Kent Ellickson, provided a high-level summary of facility needs and why the district believes a solution is needed at this time (Mr. Ellickson's presentation is linked below). This was followed by a debriefing of the community engagement sessions (led by Joe Donovan) and a tour of the middle school (led by the building's principal). The meeting was then adjourned by the co-chairs.

Meeting #1 Agenda:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/13-p1Knf3Z9pbBZWKXRqtX21DhuQYq7f4WcSqo_GiNOM/edit

Meeting #1 Presentation:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1dubMTNzF_hsoSd4gW2cE2tpBjNe1R6MQV7a1w7VuVVVo/edit#slide=id.p4

Meeting 2 — Thursday, March 10, 2022: Prior to the start of the meeting, task force members conducted a tour of the high school, led by the building-level principal and VANTAGE architects. Immediately following the tour, Tom Kennedy and Ardyce Clements, the task force co-chairs, kicked off meeting #2 by reviewing the board charge, norms, and roles, and by addressing remaining questions from the last meeting. The co-chairs also shared examples of task force recommendations from other districts to create a deeper understanding of the board's charge.

VANTAGE Architects presented facility needs in greater detail through a series of "buckets" to allow the task force members to engage in a prioritization process. Task force members viewed needs at the high school through images and conversation with the architects and school leadership. Task force members then used a 1-3 priority system to determine the level of support of the projects being proposed at the high school (please see the 'Facility Requirement Prioritization' section on page 5 of this report for a description of the system used.) The architects' presentation is linked below.

Meeting #2 Agenda:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1m77YZefjHUgdnUEBSnmj1ksXonMOfZ7W-XlaG6ddJj4/edit>

Meeting #2 Presentation:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1gYCIotWYlohoPyzhLm8eWSIkBvIOhmJx/edit#slide=id.p1>



Meeting 3 — Thursday, March 31, 2022: The third meeting began with a welcome by the co-chairs, followed by a review of the second meeting. Again, VANTAGE Architects presented facility needs in greater detail through a series of “buckets” to allow task force members to engage in a prioritization process. Task force members viewed needs at the middle school through images and conversation with the architects and school leadership. Task force members used a 1-2-3 priority system to determine the level of support of the projects being proposed at the middle school. The architects’ presentation is linked below.

Meeting #3 Agenda:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19x91w8BMHtjNtPx-aHSOT6UPHrXvKtyvuKYuBUBhhOg/edit>

Meeting #3 Presentation:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u1RjkoSocAenzaOOYe3zbltoSss_fhoBtXtAkdkiPyU/edit

Facility Task Force Tally List:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1HiDkwjoTmLPbRRpoNDQa7aZRiqc7-WX8e4zKR_UEeKU/edit?usp=sharing

Meeting 4 — Tuesday, April 12, 2022: The fourth task force meeting began with a welcome by the co-chairs. This was followed by a review of topics and a facilitated conversation on the work of the task force to date—specifically the process for prioritization, questions, themes, and responses. Additionally, VANTAGE architects provided a review of options for the task force to consider in light of previous prioritization to finalize recommendations to the board. This was followed by a facilitated large-group conversation, in which the group agreed on a set of recommendations for the board to include in a report.

After the group reached a consensus, task force members unanimously voted on the recommendations to the board. This was followed by concluding remarks from Todd Antony and adjournment by the co-chairs.

Meeting #4 Agenda:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zwF-Ot2c8Xr8GmMaa3TSKaeHqcjdXxbMdXuofGJt-g/edit?usp=sharing>

Meeting #4 Presentation:

<https://vantagearchitects.app.box.com/s/53tjq87p505vvmhrt6rlwrprotc9sor4/file/944235963222>

Facility Requirement Prioritization

During the task force review of school needs, members were presented with various deficiencies for each of the schools in terms of the appropriate amount of space, building systems, space functionality, ADA or safety concerns, environment for learning/interaction, etc. Task force members asked clarifying questions to the engineering firm, district superintendent and staff, and school principals. Discussions then focused on the charge that was given to the task force by the Board of Education.

As the task force discussed various needs individually, a 1-2-3 system (1- high need, 2- moderate need, 3- lower need) was used to summarize each member’s thoughts about priority and support for each need. The task force used the following in its decision-making as members scored individual requirements:

1. **Align with district mission: Working together to ensure high levels of learning for all**
-



- a. Task force members considered and placed priority on addressing ADA compliance, safety, and alternative job paths, such as tech ed and music.
 - b. Student education was prioritized above sports or other co-curricular activities.
- 2. Address facility challenges**
 - a. Without bias, task force members listened to district, school, and engineering/architect presentations regarding functionality deficiencies.
 - b. Task force members reviewed reports, viewed presentations, asked questions, took tours, and thoroughly discussed requirements to gain a clear understanding of deficiencies present in district facilities.
- 3. Based on need**
 - a. Utilizing a 1-2-3 system allowed the task force to quickly show support and prioritization for each requirement.
 - b. Reviewing the overall list of priorities ensured an objective look at the needs across all schools.
- 4. Considers impact to local taxpayers**
 - a. Understanding the impact on the community, the task force considered which was a real need as opposed to a 'nice to have' requirement.
 - b. A prioritization system was used, recognizing that addressing all facility needs would present an unprecedented expense for the community.
- 5. Supports continuous improvement**
 - a. Tours through the middle and high school allowed the task force to see spaces identified in the report.
 - b. A principal description of what the academic day looked like in each space gave task force members an understanding of the needs.
 - c. Without regard for district budgeting constraints, the task force considered recommendations to address needs now, even if a referendum is required.
- 6. Commitment to graduate readiness**
 - a. Focus on academics over co-curriculars was on the minds of all task force members as each need was discussed.
 - b. Task force members understood the importance of foundational education in the middle school as a stepping stone to success in high school and beyond,
 - c. Task force members recognized two paths for graduates: (1) Preparing students who will go on to college and (2) preparing students who will pursue a trade or a technical career path.
 - d. While academic spaces were emphasized, the task force recognized that the richness and variety of co-curricular activities often provide incentive for a level of academic performance to be eligible to participate in these activities.
- 7. Protects and maintains district assets**
 - a. The task force recognized that the basic infrastructure maintenance and upgrade requirements had to be addressed as a minimum, and that these requirements far exceeded the district's ability to address them without outside assistance.
 - b. With these infrastructure improvements as minimum requirements, the task force reviewed facility and functionality requirements that could be addressed in conjunction with infrastructure requirements.
- 8. Retain and attract teachers and staff**
-



- a. The task force agreed that Onalaska’s schools are a large reason for families to be attracted to the community. The schools are great because of the breadth and depth of academics, well-maintained facilities, and quality of educators and staff who support students.
- b. The task force considered what the district lacks in comparison to other schools in the region, and the impact it has on keeping the district relevant and the community desirable to families looking to move here.

9. Consensus

- a. Recognizing that each of the 15 task force members would have their own opinions and thoughts about the material being presented, the task force focused on ensuring all opinions and thoughts were welcome.
- b. The task force used a simple definition of consensus and referred to it often to ensure members were doing their best to meet this requirement.
- c. The task force adopted this definition of consensus: “Group consensus is reached when it is obvious to everyone what the group thinks, even though not everyone agrees.”
- d. Use of the 1-2-3 system presented an open system in which everyone could see what everyone else had rated the requirement. It was obvious to everyone what the group thought overall.

Task Force Facility Requirements Prioritization

The task force discussed and scrutinized every requirement presented. Members watched presentations, took facility tours, and asked questions of the engineers, district staff, school administrators, and staff to ensure deficiencies presented were needs-based requirements. While the task force concluded that all are solid requirements, members used a 1-2-3 priority system to rate each requirement relative to other requirements.

For this exercise, 1 was the highest priority and 3 was the lowest priority. The Board should not interpret requirements marked as “3” as not required, but instead not as urgent as a “1.” Following a thorough discussion and scoring of each need presented individually, the task force reviewed the list in priority order to visualize the overall requirements. This table became the basis for the task force’s recommendations, as overall themes were reinforced by examining the priorities holistically. The task force agreed to include this table in its report to the Board to illustrate and support its recommendations.

In the graphic below, the high school (labeled in the first column) is in green and the middle school is in yellow. Other facilities are white.

Site	Issue	Score (1-high, 3-low)
OMS	Classrooms insufficiently sized for student population	1.00
OHS	Upper mezzanine & weight room not ADA compliant	1.00
OHS	Tech ed department & equipment outdated and insufficiently sized	1.00
OMS	Building systems poor; lacking windows, poor HVAC, lack of insulation, poor lighting	1.07
OMS	Science classroom & equipment outdated; fixed lab spaces limit flexibility	1.07
OMS	Building lacks secure entry point	1.07
OMS	Daily traffic flow of buses, parent vehicles, & pedestrian intermixed and congested; safety concern	1.20
OMS	Administration/Support Services Offices disconnected & inadequate	1.27



OMS	Flexible learning spaces (including hallways) inadequate	1.27
OMS	Music department undersized for students, instrument storage, practice, etc.	1.27
OMS	Tech ed classrooms & equipment outdated and insufficiently sized	1.27
OMS	Gymnasium is undersized for student population; lacks seating/storage	1.40
OHS	Science classrooms/labs inadequately sized; equipment lacking	1.50
OHS	Locker rooms outdated/lack privacy/not ADA compliant; inadequately sized; training room/athletic locker rooms disconnected from gym	1.60
OMS	Art room does not provide separation from kiln; safety concern	1.73
OMS	PE department inadequate for adaptive PE, offices spaces, storage	1.80
OMS	Commons area inadequately sized, not functional, limits flexibility of use	1.87
OHS	Learning/support spaces have poor sound control	1.90
OMS	Cafeteria serving spaces not sufficiently organized	1.93
OMS	Library is not enclosed; lacks sound control & security	1.93
OMS	Locker rooms are outdated and lack privacy; toilet/shower areas not ADA compliant	1.93
OHS	Music department classrooms/support spaces insufficiently sized	2.20
OMS	General storage in building is lacking	2.40
OMS	Fitness room & equipment is outdated and undersized	2.47
OMS	Playground lacks age appropriate equipment	2.47
OHS	Commons area lacks adequate seating; food service flow inefficient	2.50
OHS	Gymnasium lacks sufficient space; equipment outdated; storage lacking	2.50
OMS	Parking inadequate for staff/student teachers/visitors;	2.57
OHS	Art room lacks storage; kiln area within art room safety concern	2.70
OHS	Kitchen inefficient	2.70
Northern Hills	Northern Hills playground security is non-existent	2.87
OHS	Administration/Main Office/Student Services location/congestion	2.90
OHS	Dance studio lacks ADA access	2.90
OHS	Outdoor pedestrian safety between school and stadium	2.90
OHS	Performing Arts Center & equipment is outdated & undersized	2.90
OHS	Parking is inadequate for students & visitors; Parent drop off is undefined	2.90
District Office	District Office space not sufficient to house all staff and equipment/vehicles	3.00
Eagle Bluff	Eagle Bluff lacks parking, kitchen lacks cooler/freezer space for everyday operation	3.00
OHS	Amount of flexible learning spaces (including hallways) are inadequate	3.00
Irving Pertzsch	Irving Pertzsch lacks additional learning space	3.00
OHS	Football practice field access poor; athletic storage & toilet facilities inadequate	3.00
OHS	Primary football/track/field drainage poor	3.00
OHS	Stadium seating inadequately sized; exterior toilet facilities not available	3.00
OHS	Exterior storage for athletic equipment is lacking	3.00



It is important to note that task force members are not architects, and these numbers are provided for information only. In keeping with the recommendations above, the task force wishes to add that the facility options to address the district's needs that are created by the architects may not be able to address all the needs in this prioritized order. As was described by the architects, addressing facility solutions may have a domino effect. Therefore, the task force has not weighed in on very specific referendum solutions or their impact on taxpayers, as this goes beyond the scope of the task force's work. However, the task force wishes to provide the above data as another piece of information that may assist the Board of Education.

Task Force Recommendations

The task force submits the following to be considered by the Board during its April 25, 2022, meeting, based on a unanimous vote by task force members:

- 1) **The School District of Onalaska has facility needs. The task force has validated the needs of the district as outlined in the master facility report.**
- 2) **While the students and staff of the school district are not at risk, the needs of our facilities require the urgent attention of the Board of Education.**
- 3) **The Board should pursue a referendum to address the most highly prioritized facility needs. The task force believes the board should pursue this work now.**

Additional Recommendations were formed by consensus during the final meeting on April 12, 2022:

- 4) **There are substantial infrastructure needs for both the middle and high schools that far surpass the district's ability to address them through the normal budgeting process. At a minimum, these requirements must be addressed to simply maintain the facilities the district has.**
- 5) **While we wish all requirements for the middle and high school could be addressed, we realize that the community's willingness to support both may be limited. In this light, the task force believes the middle school, as a whole, should be addressed with a higher level of priority than the high school. After considering the needs of the middle school, there are high school priorities that rise to the top of the list.**
- 6) **The inclusion of the Boys and Girls Club to the middle school would add great value to the school, local youth, and the community overall.**
- 7) **The French Road site is of little value to support the goals of the school district.**
- 8) **District office renovations/improvements are not recommended at this time due to far greater needs in the middle and high schools.**
- 9) **Rider's Club Road improvements are not recommended at this time due to far greater needs in the middle and high schools.**
- 10) **Eagle Bluff, Irving Pertzsch, and Northern Hills school needs, while valid, are of a lower priority than the middle school and high school. These needs could be addressed as part of the district budgeting process.**



Addendum I: School District of Onalaska Board of Education Charge to Facilities Task Force

On behalf of the School District of Onalaska Board of Education, we want to thank you for your participation as a member of the Facilities Task Force. The purpose of this document is to present a formal charge for the task force.

The Facilities Task Force shall consider the District's facilities and work as a committee to develop a written report that details a solution, or a set of solutions, for the Board of Education to consider within the context of the parameters detailed below.

The report shall be presented to the Board of Education at its regularly scheduled meeting on April 25, 2022. The Board must note that establishing this task force does not bind it to accept the task force's suggested solution(s).

1. Specific Duties

The Facilities Task Force shall present to the board a solution (or set of solutions) that:

- Ensures the district's ability to achieve its mission 'To Work Together to Ensure High Levels of Learning for All'
- Addresses the facilities' challenges as outlined in the facilities study, as presented to the board on October 11, 2021, in a comprehensive manner
- Solution(s) should identify prioritized options based on need
- Takes into consideration the impact on local taxpayers
- Does not propose materially altering the district's current structure/program offerings
- Is consistent with the district's focus on continuous improvement
- Reflects the district's commitment the ensure graduates are ready for an increasingly complex economy and society
- Accounts for state and federal law
- Protects the district's assets and ensures they are adequately maintained
- Ensures the district's ability to develop, attract and recruit highly skilled teachers and staff

2. Co-Chair Responsibilities

The chairs of the Facilities Task Force are specifically charged with the following duties:

- Running the meetings and keeping the process moving
- Seeking consensus among task force members on all decisions
- Keeping the district representative apprised of problems encountered by the task force in the course of its work

3. Membership

The Facilities Task Force shall consist of approximately 15 voting members. Members of the district staff will attend the meetings to provide technical assistance to the task force. District staff will not vote on any of the outcomes. Similarly,



while Board of Education members may attend task force meetings, board members will neither actively participate in the meetings nor vote on the findings. Because board members may attend meetings, all task force meetings will be posted as open meetings; this means that the public may attend, but not participate in, the meetings.

4. Support

The district will provide all necessary support for the work of the task force.

If you have any questions about this document, please call Superintendent Todd Antony at 608-781-9700 or email at antto@onalaskaschools.com.

Adopted this 22nd day of November, 2021 by the School District of Onalaska Board of Education.

Ann Garrity, President
Mark Cassellius, Vice President
Brian Haefs, Clerk
Shawn McAlister, Treasurer
Tony Benson, Director
Tesia Marshik, Director
Aaron McDonald, Director



Addendum II: Task Force Members

Co-Chair - Tom Kennedy
Co-Chair - Ardyce Clements

Kris Borene

Tom Brock

Larry Dalton

Andrew Duckworth

Fran Finco

Ron Johnson

Molly McKelley

Emilee Mielke

Derek Peterson

Dianne Pica

Dan Stevens

Leanne Stokes

Dan Wick
