

MINUTES

William Penn Taskforce Meeting (of the Harrisburg School District)
Reflecting Task Force Meeting of Thursday, November 16, 2023, at 6 p.m.
Harrisburg School District Headquarters

Task Force Members Present:

Jody Barksdale
Danielle Bowers
Susan Brown-Wilson
Linda Cammack
Audry Carter
Brian Carter
Melanie Cook
Trina Gribble
Kia Hansard
Laura Harding
Yvonne Hollins
Brian Hudson
Charla Plaines
Heaven Poles
Mike Pries
Gloria Martin Roberts
Vern McKissick
Rafiyqa Muhammad
Doug Thompson Leader
Ryan Unger

Professional Staff (Ex-Officio) Present:

Mr. John Reedy, Chief Operations Administrator, Harrisburg School District
Dr. Marcia Stokes, Chief Financial Officer, Harrisburg School District
Dr. Lori Suski, Commonwealth Court Appointed Receiver, Harrisburg School District
Dr. Travis Waters, Chief Recovery Officer, Harrisburg School District

Co-Facilitators:

Elan Drennon
Sheila Dow Ford

I. Elan Drennon convened the meeting at 6 p.m.

She directed those assembled to the following documents distributed:

- a. Minutes of the November 2, 2023, task force meeting.
- b. The agenda for the November 16, 2023, meeting.
- c. The Presentation documents submitted by Harrisburg Rebirth, and the City of Harrisburg Bureau of Fire.

II. Presentation of proposal submitted by Harrisburg Fire Bureau, advocating adaptive reuse of a portion of the William Penn property to build a single-engine fire station, police sub-station, community resource room, and fire fighter training facility serving the students and residents of Harrisburg.

Harrisburg Fire Chief Brian Enterline presented a proposal to use a portion of the William Penn campus to build a single-engine fire station, a police sub-station, a community resource room, and a fire fighter training facility.

Mr. Enterline noted the project itself would be eligible for several state and federal grants for such projects designed to address fire and public safety needs in areas such as Uptown Harrisburg. He noted that the project would be phased in over a three- year period. He would also seek involvement from potential partners such as Harrisburg Area Community College, UPMC, and Capital Region Water. He identified Third and Graham as the property intersection at which the project would be constructed. Upon questioning from task force members who noted the proposed area's close proximity to the residential area, Mr. Enterline stated he was amenable to using other sections of the William Penn footprint that are less adjacent to community housing and therefore do not encroach upon the surrounding neighborhood.

General discussion ensued around building a campus that is used for multi-faceted Career and Technical Education (CTE) purposes, and that would also be open to adults for purposes of skill development, training, and various civic endeavors.

The chief was asked about the feasibility of adapting a portion of the current building for the proposed project. He noted that is possible, with setback considerations taken into account. He would not be opposed to this approach, although his preference is to erect a stand-alone edifice.

There was further discussion around other potential uses of the proposed project including using the center as a testing facility for applicants to the state police academy.

A task force member noted that H.B.301 proposes an allocation of \$14.5 Million for career and technical education funding for distressed school districts. The discussion among task force members also focused on the opportunity for dual enrollment credit, the need to create career opportunities for formerly incarcerated citizens, and the need to seek out environmental justice funds allocated to infrastructure initiatives.

III. Presentation by Capital Rebirth to seek USDA loan guarantees and a variety of grant funding sources to: a. raze the building and rebuild a structure within its footprint that is specifically designed to support various programs and activities; or, b. engage in a partial rebuild of the William Penn structure to support various educational and community programs.

Presenters on behalf of Capital Rebirth: Mikell Simpson, Rabbi Marc Kline (Temple Ohev Shalom); Madeline Williams, Wynton Williams, Danielle Savage

Overarching Proposals: Capital Rebirth presented two proposals. The first contemplates taking down the entire current William Penn structure and building a new facility that will accommodate a variety of programs and activities of interest and value to the student population and the community at large.

The second proposal suggests retaining a portion of the current structure to be used for CTE programs and community activities. The elements of the CTE curriculum would be based in part on the results of student surveys designed to identify career interests. There was discussion about the emergent need to supplement the current curriculum offered by the Dauphin County Technical School (DCTS), and to provide greater access to CTE opportunities to more students within the Harrisburg School District.

Although Harrisburg is a member of DCTS only a limited number of students can attend due to enrollment and curricular constraints. There is broad agreement among the task force and presenters that this is a serious issue that negatively impacts Harrisburg students and requires a more immediate solution going forward.

Athletic Fields: Each of the Capital Rebirth proposals contemplates revamping and expanding the use of the William Penn athletic fields to support a comprehensive sports program. It was noted that the school district's current athletic program is less robust than those of surrounding districts and the use of the William Penn fields will provide a broader cross section of the student population, most particularly young women and middle school students, an opportunity to more broadly engage in organized sports, which is an important part of a holistic approach to student development.

Additional Elements: Capital Rebirth also discussed a medical services component to the campus design, in which a local public health provider would be housed on-site and provide care to the students and the surrounding community. This is one of a number of education- focused and community-centered programs contemplated by Capital Rebirth in its overarching concept.

Capital Rebirth stressed that the concepts presented are expected to be phased in over a series of years.

In addition to a robust question-and-answer session after the presentation, there was further discussion of the concept during the last half hour of the meeting, which was reserved for dialogue among task force members. Several questions were posed by task force members during each discussion. Among the questions posed were the following inquiries: whether a traffic study had been undertaken; the degree to which a medical facility would compete with services currently present within the city; how available are the proposed sources of financing; whether the cost per square foot calculations provided by Capital Rebirth, which were based upon school district data, remain realistic; whether such cost calculations take into account prevailing wage considerations; whether Capital Rebirth has approached the City to propose that the sports stadium concept (not included as a part of the presentation) be developed at City Island, which, according to a task force member, is legally designated for uses benefitting underserved citizens.

Mr. Simpson and his colleagues responded to the inquiries, noting that the USDA loan covers both vocation/technical education and medical programs and facilities. He noted, further, that certain questions posed are subject to answers available only upon receiving site control of the property.

Finally, Mr. Simpson noted that Capital Rebirth welcomes the opportunity to partner with other entities to develop the project. A task force member lauded Capital Rebirth for providing a well-reasoned presentation.

IV. Presentation by Patricia Will and Donal McIntyre on adaptive reuse of William Penn facility via a public-private partnership

Developer Patricia Will, in partnership with Donal McIntyre, presented to the task force a proposed adaptive reuse of the William Penn facility. Ms. Will conveyed her credentials, having worked on an \$80 million condominium project and served within the design/build project management arena. She also conveyed her interest and personal knowledge of the successful adaptive reuse of Hanover High School, in Hanover, PA.

She noted that she is committed to using Harrisburg contractors on any project undertaken within the City.

Acknowledging the district's lack of borrowing capacity, and the community's desire to retain the building, Ms. Will expressed the necessity to develop a plan that leverages private and public funding to meet the approximately \$48 Million in estimated costs (according to her calculations) to save a portion of the William Penn edifice and to adapt the facility to meet education and community objectives.

Ms. Will noted she has five areas of focus in undertaking this initiative:

1. Community benefit.
2. Creating Job opportunities/community resources.
3. Project Viability.
4. Fostering a positive relationship with the City.
5. Building a sustainable project.

Proposal Elements: Ms. Will proposed that the front third of the William Penn building be retained, a space of approximately 100,000 square feet. She further proposed that a portion of the facility be used as an acute senior dialysis/rehabilitation facility, which is designed to bring needed medical services to a significant demographic of the Harrisburg population while also bringing a funding stream to the entire William Penn project, which will help to offset capital costs and operational expenses. A related financial element of the proposal is the recommendation that the district enter into a long-term, 100-year land-lease agreement, under which the district, as lessor, will receive payments for the term of the lease.

An additional component of the proposal is the development of a vocational-technical education program with a focus on medical field training that would enable students to earn certifications permitting entry into various fields.

Ms. Will noted that she is also interested in forging partnerships that will build a strong vocational education program for the school district and suggested that she work with other presenters to build capacity in this regard. The concepts discussed included building a performing arts center. Finally, she conveyed her interest in the concept of making affordable housing an element of the public-private partnership. Upon questioning, she noted the senior housing would be affordable housing and would accommodate 75 units.

On the issue of utilizing the grounds around William Penn, Ms. Will proposed the development of gardens which can be used by the seniors and community.

Task force members asked several questions regarding the presentation. A number of questions related to the focus on a medical facility versus a stronger focus on education. A task force member asked for greater detail about any financial obligation the school district would have to assume under the proposed model. Ms. Will explained that under the proposed model the district would not have significant out-of-pocket expenses, as third parties would underwrite the costs through various agreements.

Several questions centered upon the use of local MBE contractors. The presenters confirmed their commitment to learning the intricacies of such initiatives within Pennsylvania and the Harrisburg locality, and, further, providing assurances to a commitment around hiring practices that reinforce a focus on MBEs.

Certain task force members thanked the presenters for bringing forth a proposal with substantive suggestions for alleviating costs associated with building rehabilitation and programmatic funding.

V. Additional Discussion Among Task Force Members

At the conclusion of the presentations Ms. Drennon opened the floor to a general discussion of all matters before the task force. At the outset she suggested that given the upcoming holiday the task force cancel the meeting scheduled for December 21, and establish two meeting dates in the New Year: January 4, and January 18.

The task force agreed to the proposed meeting dates, with the understanding that due to scheduling conflicts certain members would be unavailable but will remain apprised of the work of the group.

The last proposals will be presented at the December 7 meeting.

Under general discussion there were concerns raised around third-party development of the William Penn property, and a strong sentiment emerged around the prospect of the Harrisburg School District serving as its own developer of the William Penn Project.

Having reached the hour of 8 p.m., the task force adjourned.

The next meeting of the task force: Thursday, December 7, 2023.