

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF JEFFERSON

FACILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, March 16, 2022

A meeting of the Facility Advisory Committee of the School District of Jefferson was held on Wednesday, March 16, 2022, in the Jefferson High School Library. Superintendent Urness called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., with the following members present: Dale Gaugert, Francis Langer, Emilie Shoop, Roger Ganser, Susie Schuld, Jim Pratt, Lindsay Knoebel Baneck, Lynn Enke, Peg Beyer, Leah Thorp, Chris Schmidt, Beth Krahn, Tonya Umbarger, and Ben Warborg. Absent: Jeff Laesch, Ryan Mundt, and Jen Pinnow.

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Charlie Urness; Valerie Schmitt, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent, Nick Skretta, High School Principal; Tim Graffin, Maintenance Director, Steve Gee, Athletic Director, and Jason Poeppel, IT Director along with planning partners from Findorff: Erika Freeman and Jon Winch and Eppstein Uhen Architects (EUA): Andy Lyons and Kim Frerichs.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made by Peg Beyer, seconded by Dale Gaugert, to approve the minutes from the February 23, 2022 committee minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

HOUSEKEEPING ITEMS: Superintendent Urness reviewed housekeeping items including:

- A reminder that the Vandewalle enrollment study was presented to the Board on March 14th and declining enrollment was discussed
- A review of the committee and subcommittee schedule
- A reminder of the committee charge

PATHWAY CONSIDERATIONS: The committee reviewed pathway considerations including:

- Operational cost impacts of closing East or Sullivan, which were discussed in detail later in the meeting.
- Capacity levels at each school as projected into the 2035-2036 school year, using the Vandewalle enrollment study. Each of these scenarios was reviewed:
 - As our buildings currently sit.
 - Currently, the district is under capacity and if the decision is made to stay with 5 buildings the district will stay within capacity through the 2034-2035 school year using the moderate level projection from Vandewalle.
 - If East Elementary were to close and West Elementary was to build an addition in order to consolidate the two schools.
 - This scenario reiterated why a consolidated elementary school would be built to fit an enrollment of 650 students.
 - If Sullivan were to close and East and West elementary were to absorb the students (assuming shifting only 2/3 of Sullivan's population with 1/3 choosing to enroll elsewhere).
 - This scenario showed that both East and West would be over capacity by 2030 (West by 2024).
- If relocating the District Office is a high-priority need.
 - The committee discussed including the District Office in different scenarios of renovations and additions in order to repurpose the space into back-of-house space for the Performing Arts Center(PAC) and other student-centered needs. It was determined that the District Office project on its own is not a priority unless the PAC space renovation is something the district will pursue.
- If investing in PAC support spaces is a high-priority need.
 - The high school does think utilizing the space the District Office is in to allow for adequate and accessible PAC space, as well as opportunities for alternative classrooms on-site at the high school, would be a beneficial project. Because the District Office is tied to the PAC the committee decided they wanted to survey the community and ask for the support of the full amount for PAC and DO addition elsewhere in order to gauge support for the PAC project from the community.

OPERATIONAL IMPACTS: Operational cost impacts of closing East or Sullivan were discussed reiterating that closing Sullivan is not in the best interest of the District and that continuing as a 5 building district means we would need to commit to investing a significant amount in East to maintain the building.

Closing East Elementary:

- Annual operational cost avoidance (Utilities, plowing, mowing) = \$59,500
- 10-year maintenance project avoidance = \$7,469,205
- Potential annual staff reductions (1-2 FTE) = \$75,000-\$150,000

Potential 10-year total cost avoidance if East closes = \$8,814,205-\$9,546,205

- Annual cost avoidance = \$881,420-\$956,421

Note: Recent investment in projects at East = \$352,000

Closing Sullivan Elementary:

- Annual Budget Deficit Breakdown
 - Annual revenue for open enrolled (OE) students is \$8,224 per student = -\$583,904
 - 42 students directly enroll at Sullivan
 - 29 students directly enroll at Middle School & High School
 - Conservative estimate that 1/3 of the 255 students from the Sullivan area (84 students) would OE out
 - 84 students x \$8,224 = -\$690,816
 - Total OE annual budget deficit (based on 2022-23 OE amount) = -\$1,274,720
- Annual Cost Avoidance
 - Annual operational cost avoidance (utilities, mowing, plowing) = \$37,540
 - Potential annual staff reductions (2-4 FTE) = \$175,000-\$325,000
 - 10-year maintenance projects cost avoidance = \$1,444,550
 - Estimated 10-year OE budget deficit would be a loss of \$12,747,200
 - Estimated 10-year total cost avoidance if Sullivan closes = \$3,569,950-\$5,214,405

Potential 10-year operational impact would be a loss of \$7,532,795-\$9,177,250

Note: Recent investment in projects at Sullivan = \$579,000

Also of note was that the cost avoidance of East closing's full amount was not the actual amount that would be saved because the consolidation to West Elementary would come with additional operational costs and investments.

PATHWAYS/ PROPOSED SCENARIOS: The pathway summaries created through the previous work of the committee were discussed in order to determine the highest priority items which should be included in a base plan for both a 5 building and 4 building option to use for the community survey.

REVIEW SURVEY DRAFT:

The committee reviewed a draft of the survey that will be sent to the community to confirm that the District is asking the right questions to give us the information they need to determine community funding support level along with an answer to the question "Are we a 4 building or 5 building district?". Considerations included that the bulk of tax-payers are not parents or staff and the committee values the opinion of that demographic as much as any other because they are a large part of the voting community. The committee discussed that the survey will include: information about the need for the survey, demographic information about the respondents, information about student enrollment, a facility background with information about the facility study the district had done in 2020, options for elementary school planning to include in a base plan, information about district-wide updates that are also part of the base plan, information and a question about potential additional project support, and a question about overall funding support level. There was discussion about adding information to the survey to highlight the importance of the "why" as it relates to supporting renovations and maintenance in order to continue being a "destination district" to draw more open enrollment which equals more dollars for the district. Included in the discussion was that communities that invest in their schools tend to have less crime, more open enrollment, and increased home values.

It was reiterated to the committee that the survey results will give the committee the results they need which include the level of funding support and projects that are a priority to include in order to make a confident recommendation to the Board about the exact question to bring to a referendum.

BASE PLAN FOR SURVEY:

The committee returned to the pathway summaries to determine what should be included in a base plan for the survey as well as the potential additional projects they thought were a priority but wanted to gauge community support for.

After much discussion, the committee decided the base plan should include these priority items in both a 4 building and 5 building scenario:

- Capital Maintenance priority 1-2 for all buildings
- Heavy renovation/expansion of the Technology/ Ag areas of the high school
- Improvements to Sullivan Elementaries secure entrance

The base plan will also include work at the elementary level for West and/or East depending on the elementary planning option best supported by the district. Both pathways will address early childhood/ 4K spaces, ADA-compliant restrooms, renovations to existing floors, ceilings, and fixtures as needed throughout the building, and address safety issues. The West/East planning pathways options to include in a base plan would be:

- Continue as a 5 building district investing in major renovations at both East and West Elementary schools to include new resource spaces.
 - Pros for this option according to the committee are: It is less expensive than consolidation, it keeps the small neighborhood school feeling, The East building will remain.
 - Cons for this option according to the committee are: The continued need for "bubble" classes, large investment in an old building, and it does not address the lack of collaboration/ flexible spaces, small/inefficient classrooms, small cafeteria, or gym spaces.
- Consolidate to a 4 building district by closing East Elementary, and adding a two-story classroom addition onto West Elementary along with expanding the kitchen and cafeteria, updating music spaces, relocating the library to the existing gym, and adding a 2-station gym to replace the 2 existing elementary gyms.
 - Pros for this option according to the committee are: It provides innovative new educational spaces to allow for collaboration and flexibility, bigger gym space which could be used by the public, balanced class sizes, cafeteria and large group spaces, annual cost savings, the potential for bringing open enrollment to a new building, and a "campus-like feel" with the middle and high school.
 - Cons for this option according to the committee are: Traffic patterns would need to be evaluated and city planners would need to be involved, sentiment for East Elementary and the potential need to sell the building, and losing the "small school feel".

Pros for both of these plans include their costs versus a new school is substantial and that investing in our schools is a good thing for our community as a whole.

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS FOR SURVEY:

The committee came up with these additional projects they want to add to the survey:

- A major renovation at Sullivan Elementary to include improving existing and adding additional resource spaces, relocating the kitchen, renovating 4K spaces, and renovating the restrooms to be up to ADA standards.
- A minimal renovation to the Middle School to include heavy renovation to modify house group areas, movable walls to a pair of classrooms per house to create flexible large group spaces.
- Performing Arts Center renovations to the back-of-house area that is currently the District Office noting the project would require relocating those offices.
- Additions to the high school to include a fitness area addition to improve student and community access along with a wider more accessible staircase to improve flow in the academic area. This would also allow the existing fitness space to be renovated into a large group collaboration space.
- A 2-station gym addition to one of the buildings in Jefferson to address inadequate fitness space for school and community use as well as provide space for spectators.
- Athletic Fields to include 2 softball fields on District-owned land which would address Title 9 compliancy and remove the need for the Jefferson Softball team to play games on a field not owned by the District.

SELF-REFLECTION:

The committee was asked to reflect on the following questions:

Does this option reflect the District’s mission, vision, belief, and commitments?

Does this option include purposeful spaces to inspire innovative learning, accommodate diverse student needs, and promote collaboration?

Does this option include new construction, renovations, repurposed spaces, and/or upgrades to empower student learning and success?

Does this option include spaces for students, staff, parents, and the community?

Is this option cost-effective for taxpayers, safe, energy-efficient, and adaptable for future use?

The committee thanked EUA and Findorff for their work on the fly at the meeting getting them information on the cost and feasibility of different options as the base plan and projects evolved. The District Office will send the committee information about the upcoming meetings and the scope of the committee work going forward. A subcommittee will be formed to act as the advisory board to review survey results and ultimately present a recommendation to the School Board.

ADJOURN:

Meeting concluded at 8:17 p.m.

Valerie Schmitt, Scribe

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