

**Facilities Planning Task Force
Meeting Minutes
January 16, 2013**

Attending Members: Leslie Adamson, Mike Anderson, Pam Behee, Alex Brede, Patrick Brown, Steve Clarke, Paul Clement, Ron Cowan, Missy Ferguson, Marilyn Grams, Tim Hall, Hale Hanaway, Laura Johanson, Jay Jordan, Mary LeDonne, Rob McElroy, Teri McIntyre, James Pai, Mark Peterson, Vicky Reardon, Zoe Roberts, Evan Schmitt, Phyllis Textor, Tom Venable, Rachel Williams and Doug Nichols

Co-Chairs: Jim Darling

Ex-Officio: Superintendent Greg Baker, Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations Tanya Rowe

Union Representatives: Kris Craker, Peggy Shepherd, BASE; Bill Stuckrath, BAO; Matt Read, SEIU; David Vanderyacht, Teamsters

Welcome: Jim Darling welcomed the Task Force. He reminded the Task Force that they are aiming to develop a recommendation for the Superintendent during this meeting.

Processing Questions:

- **Walk-ability:** Assistant Superintendent Ron Cowan presented information for the Task Force to review. He shared [this map](#) with the Task Force that shows the walk-ability for Lowell and Happy Valley elementary schools if Larrabee was retired. Nearly all of the Larrabee walk area resides in the new Lowell walk area. A large portion of the remaining walk area resides in the Happy Valley walk area. Most students would still be able to walk to school. There are two walk routes with sidewalks to get to Happy Valley. He said if you live in the Carl Cozier walk zone, there is a safe walk zone to that school. Not every route that students walk to school are officially designated as safe walk zones, but the district works to educate families about safe walking routes. Lowell has many networks of safe walking zones for that school.

Ron Cowan said there have been conversations about the drop-off zones near Happy Valley. He said along the front of the school there would be improvements to sidewalks and a new drop-off zone would be developed if this project was part of a successful bond. He said this will not totally eliminate congestion in the area, but it would improve it.

- **Central Kitchen:** Director of Food Services Mark Dalton gave the Task Force information regarding a central kitchen ([click here to read more](#)). The request surfaced during the community input process and would allow for cooking/serving fresh, health meals to schools. There needs to be a facility around 6,000 square feet. With the equipment, it would cost several million dollars for this type of a central cooking kitchen.
- **Athletic Fields:** How would we add these to our recommendation because this also surfaced frequently during the community input process? The Task Force needs to decide whether these were going to be added to Bond 1 or Bond 2. Steve Clarke, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, said it would cost closer to \$5 million for two synthetic football/soccer fields, at Squalicum and Bellingham high schools. The cost estimate for Sehome High School already includes new synthetic football, soccer and baseball/softball fields.

- **Larrabee:** If part of the recommendation is to retire Larrabee, does it appear on the ballot? No, because no money is being allocated for the school. There is a process for retiring a school that would be separate from the bond and allow for more public input. As part of this process, a document with information and rationale as to why it would close would be shared publicly as well as a public hearing at the site.

Processing Priority Projects: Tanya Rowe and Steve Clarke led the Task Force in reviewing their ideas and discussing further questions. During the last meeting, the Task Force added Sehome High School to the recommendation as the top priority project for Bond 1.

Options High School: The Task Force was undecided about locating Options High School at the District Office site on Dupont Street. Discussion ensued. The group voted to add Options High School at \$17 million with the location to be determined to their recommendation for Bond 1.

- Questions/Comments:
 - Is there a large difference between price for locations? Yes, moving Options to Dupont Street would cost about \$17 million. If Options is kept at its current location, it would cost closer to \$9 million.
 - A Task Force member said Options should stay near Bellingham High because there is recreation there and resources that can be shared.
 - A Task Force member said they are concerned that the vision for Options hasn't been finalized yet, so he is hesitant about the location.
 - Ron Cowan explained there is about twice as much space at Dupont Street than the location near Bellingham High.

Learning Support Center/District Office: The Task Force voted and approved adding this project to their recommendation for Bond 1 for \$10 million, location to be determined.

- Questions/Comments:
 - A Task Force member said to honor the community, something should fill the Roeder building on Dupont Street.
 - A Task Force member said that \$10 million would be a new facility; it would not go toward a rebuild of the current Roeder building.
 - A Task Force member suggested that linking Options with District Office may prevent the community from supporting the idea.
 - The size of the bond issue does not change whether these items are linked or not.
 - Ron Cowan said it is a good idea to have a working document with some costs so we can give the community an idea of what the Task Force is thinking but the estimates for projects could be lower or higher as more research and planning is conducted.

Elementary School Package: After discussion, the Task Force voted to approve this collective idea for \$29 million for Bond 1 to include a new elementary school, a new gym at Parkview, and a new gym, cafeteria and elevator at Lowell.

- Questions/Comments:
 - A Task Force member asked if there is any idea when the timing of Larrabee's possible closure is?

- Ron Cowan said he cannot give an answer about when that may be. There are steps that need to occur before a school is retired because the idea hasn't been recommended yet and that process involves more community input.
- A Task Force member asked if a new Happy Valley would need to be opened before Larrabee is closed?
- A Task Force member said he read a comment that people suggested making Larrabee a K-2 school and make Lowell a 3-5 grade school. He wanted the Task Force to give some feedback on the idea.
- A Task Force member said that Larrabee is not a functionally adequate school and it is not fiscally responsible to keep it open. In addition to not meeting program needs, the school is not energy efficient and costs taxpayers additional money. It makes more sense to build a new school that is more efficient.
- A Task Force member said Happy Valley needs to be rebuilt. He said, if Larrabee should be retired, having a date is important.
- A Task Force member said she would prefer the new Happy Valley to be built before Larrabee closes, to prevent students from moving multiple times. One Task Force member also felt strongly that students already attending Larrabee should finish at the school. Other Task Force members expressed concern about keeping Larrabee open too long after a closure decision because staff and families will want to leave and get started at a new school.
- A Task Force member said that the communities most directly impacted by these decisions need to be included in the opening of Happy Valley, the revision of school boundaries and the closure of Larrabee.
- A Task Force member said he feels strongly that the recommendation of keeping Larrabee open for currently attending students and that students do not move until the new school is built needs to be considered.
- A Task Force member said that the only decision about when Larrabee should close is whenever the new Happy Valley is ready.
- A Task Force member said that every year the enrollment numbers are going down at Lowell. There are a certain number of students you need at a school to make it really be functional. She said as they delay the closing at Larrabee it could result in job losses. She said it won't only affect Larrabee families, it is going to affect many different areas.

School Bus Facility: The Task Force voted to include rebuilding the bus maintenance facility in their recommendation as part of Bond 1 at a cost of approximately \$4 million.

- Questions/Comments:
 - A Task Force member asked about the salmon creek near the facility and how the district would make sure it is not negatively impacted.
 - Ron Cowan said the district would have the ability to make the improvements to the bus facility without a total \$4 million remodel.
 - A Task Force member said he wants this project done right and wants to take care of the people who are maintaining our buses for students.

Various School Facilities: The Task Force discussed adding an additional \$2 million to their recommendation as part of Bond 1 for a total of \$8 million. In addition to improvements at many schools, energy efficiency and other upgrades, the additional \$2 million would add funds for more projects and for safety improvements at schools throughout the district.

- Questions/Comments:
 - Buildings and Grounds Director Mike Anderson said many staff have raised some questions about safety and the ability to lock doors from the inside during lockdown procedures. Principals also want functional blinds/window coverings. The district also wants to explore systems that can lock down schools with a push of a button. Mike Anderson said they can put an array of safety modifications throughout schools with the addition of \$2 million.
 - The Task Force asked that a descriptor of safety be added to this proposed part of the recommendation.

New/Additional Projects:

Synthetic Fields at Bellingham and Squalicum high schools: The Task Force voted to add \$5 million to Bond 1 of their recommendation for synthetic football and soccer fields at Bellingham and Squalicum high schools.

- Questions/Comments:
 - A Task Force member said it was pretty clear from the community that they want synthetic athletic fields.
 - A Task Force member said this appeals to members of the community who might not have students in the school system currently.
 - A Task Force member said they don't think this is an issue that the Task Force needs to worry about cost-wise because there is wide support.
 - A member said these fields can be used year-round and benefit a large number of people.
 - A Task Force member asked if these fields will have bright lights and will that impact the surrounding neighborhoods?
 - A Task Force member said there are newer low profile lights that have a smaller impact on surrounding neighborhoods.
 - Mike Anderson said there is a real consideration about the turf needing to be replaced every 10 years.
 - A Task Force member said he agreed that this is a popular project but it needs to be more balanced.
 - A Task Force member said that it doesn't seem like it is needed for every sport. The two sports that are most popular and cause the most damage to the grass are soccer and football.

Career/Technical Education: A Task Force member suggested that \$200,000 be set aside to build a 1,000 square foot new shop at Bellingham High School. He said this ties into student safety and education. The community was very supportive of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) classes in the feedback the Task Force received.

- Ron Cowan said some money needs to be set aside for unknowns, such as repairs that could come along in the next 10 years.
- The Task Force did not take any action on this item at this time.

Bond 2:

Synthetic softball/baseball fields at Bellingham and Squalicum high schools: The Task Force voted to add \$5 million to Bond 2 for the addition of synthetic softball/baseball fields at Bellingham and Squalicum high schools.

Sunnyland Elementary School minor modernization and new gym: The Task Force voted to add \$3.8 million to Bond 2 for projects at Sunnyland Elementary School.

Carl Cozier Elementary School office remodel: The Task Force voted to add \$1 million to Bond 2 for renovations at Carl Cozier including remodeling the main office, replacing an intercom and some building finishes.

Columbia Elementary School elevator: The Task Force voted to add \$1.5 million to Bond 2 for an elevator to be built at Columbia.

- A Task Force member asked why the elevator at Columbia would cost so much?
 - Doug Nichols, ESD consultant, explained that elevators are difficult to incorporate into older buildings.

Centralized Kitchen: The Task Force discussed the addition of a centralized kitchen for Bond 1. The Task Force discussed that the centralized kitchen could be part of the Sehome remodel, if possible.

- A Task Force member said regarding a centralized kitchen, this could serve as educational opportunities for students.
- The Task Force left this item to be discussed further at the next meeting.

Discussion about Bonds 1 and 2: A Task Force member said he feels it is more fiscally responsible decision to try and complete as many projects as possible in the next 10 years that impact as many schools as possible. This would raise the amount of the bond from \$146 million to \$159.3 million. Some members felt strongly that they should include all recommendations in one bond in order to complete all priority projects within the next 10 years. Other members felt the recommendation should be divided into two bonds and wanted to pass along the current recommendation to the Superintendent for review.

Comments from Dr. Baker: Superintendent Greg Baker took a moment to thank the Task Force for the work they have done. He said he appreciated how thorough and thoughtful the Task Force had been in their discussions about proposed projects. He said he would be unable to attend the next meeting because he would be out of town presenting at an Early Childhood Education Conference, but he expressed his heartfelt appreciation. He said that with the amount of time the Task Force has spent reviewing data and preparing the recommendation that he will take their proposal very seriously.

Next Steps as a Writing Team: Tanya Rowe explained that members of the Task Force would be meeting over the next few days to draft a recommendation for the Superintendent. The draft would be shared with the Task Force at the next meeting in order to finalize and submit their recommendation to the Superintendent.

Final meeting: Jan. 29, 2013 at 8 a.m. in the District Office Board Room