

**Facilities Planning Task Force**  
**October 23, 2012**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**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, Mary LeDonne, Rob McElroy, Teri McIntyre, James Pai, Mark Peterson, Rick Qualls, Zoe Roberts, Evan Schmitt, Tom Venable, Rachel Williams and Doug Nichols

**Co-Chairs:** Jim and Linden 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:** Co-Chair Jim Darling welcomed the group. He mentioned the previous meeting minutes and the dot exercise results. He thanked everyone for committing their time. He asked the group if there were any other schools they would like to tour/see.

The task force recommended Parkview and Carl Cozier. Assistant Superintendent Ron Cowan suggested the task force visit a school during a meeting next week.

**Clean-up work:** Ron Cowan presented the group with information from the previous meeting.

- The athletic fields handouts will be posted online as part of the minutes.
- Transportation Director Rae Anne Thon's transportation facility handout regarding facility needs was given out.
- School transfer information was presented by Deputy Superintendent Tom Venable. Of the 14 elementary schools, 11 responded with complete information. Eight schools experienced a net change of three or less students. One school, Carl Cozier, had a reduction of 12 students. Two schools, Happy Valley and Columbia, received a net increase of 15 students. Cordata had partial information and had taken in six transfer students. Wade King took in 25 transfer requests, not sure how many transferred elsewhere. Renewed transfers were not counted. Only new transfers were counted to show what happens year to year.

The task force members asked the following questions:

- If students were leaving to be homeschooled, the district wouldn't know that number.
- How accurate is the information of students leaving?
- During the past few years a number of students have transferred from private schools to public schools.

## **Presentations:**

**Options High School:** Tom Venable and Leslie Adamson presented a PowerPoint about Options High School.

- Tom Venable said he hoped the presentation would allow the task force to become familiar with Options and the students who attend. He said often students need different pathways to graduation. In the spirit of the One Schoolhouse approach, he wants what the task force presents to voters to represent how the district cares for all students.
- Tom Venable went over the Bellingham Public Schools mission and vision and some facts about Options High School.
  - Options High School currently serves 145 students
  - 75 percent of the students request free or reduced lunch
  - 22 percent qualify as homeless
  - 54 percent are female
  - 72 percent are Caucasian
  - 19 percent receive special education services
- Leslie Adamson conducted interviews with Options High School students and asked them the three questions below:
  - “If you really knew me, you’d know...”
  - Why I chose to attend Options High School
  - My hopes and dreams include
- Tom Venable asked the task force to consider how this current facility of portables promotes education or takes away from the experience. Options High School has no staff lounge or commons for students to meet or staff to collaborate. There is no gymnasium, just a basketball hoop held up by cinder blocks.
- Shuksan principal Jay Jordan looked into what has been done elsewhere for alternative high schools.
  - Auburn School District – West Auburn High School
    - Have a redesigned elementary school to serve as an alternative high school
    - Support students who are falling behind
  - Spokane School District
    - Community School, focus on providing quality choices
  - District – Spokane
    - Built a new facility, provide contract-based education
    - Located in the heart of the business center, vocational educational opportunities, career ready
  - Mead School District
    - Centrally located in business community for community partners
- A task force member asked how kids at Options get to school.
  - Leslie Adamson said 90 percent of students take the city bus. Location itself is conducive for students to get to school and students are provided vouchers.
  - Tom Venable added we can often identify students who are at-risk before high school. Some programs are expanding to grade 6-12 programs which try to catch students before they fall behind.

- A task force member said our decision may be different for Options depending on the vision for Options, but it's not the task force's job to pick that vision. He isn't sure what the future goal is for Options and he wanted to get some of that information.
- Jim Darling added, what level of capacity do we need for Options in the future?
- Linden Darling asked if we should look more at 250 as a capacity number.
- Tom Venable said yes there are many students we are not serving currently. We can aspire to a vision that provides a wider array of opportunities for students. He said he is confident this current facility of portables prohibits expansion.
- A task force member asked how much the size of the current facility dictates the size of the school.
  - Tom Venable answered that often he is signing off on students to leave the district who want to seek other pathways to graduation.
- Jim Darling asked if it would be reasonable to confirm the student enrollment number for the task force. If Bellingham and Options are not co-located, what would that look like?
- A member asked if there is room to redesign at Bellingham High School or is there another property in town that we could use for Options?
- A member said we are trying to find a permanent spot for Options, maybe capacity-wise we need to catch students earlier in middle school. Does 250 catch enough students?
- A member asked if some counselors might keep students at their schools who are higher risk because Options doesn't have space? Do you think if Options was larger more students would attend there?
  - Leslie Adamson said that Options' current facility limits kids who want to come because there isn't enough for them.
  - Steve Clarke said if you build it, they will come. He is sure the school would fill up quickly.
- A member asked if we build a new, small high school is there staffing and funding for it.
  - Ron Cowan said teachers follow where kids are. In a simplistic way, the answer is yes.
- A member said since charter schools are on the ballot, does this change anything?
- A member asked if there is some thought on the population changing? Maybe we need more technology?
- A member was curious about other alternative programs. Do we collaborate with other programs?
  - Tom Venable said we do collaborate. A new facility would allow us to better serve students.

The re-purposing presentation has been rescheduled for next week.

**District Office:** Steve Clarke and Marilyn Grams

- Roeder school history
  - Built in 1908, at some point it was an elementary school and district office
  - Converted to a district office in the 1960s
  - Seismic upgrade to occur in 2010, but postponed to put money toward Birchwood Elementary remodel
- Structural Issues
  - Issues that developed since 1908 continue to be issues
  - There are electrical and technical disadvantages and no significant upgrades have occurred
  - Trying to have a networked building that is the hub of the district in a building not designed for that
- Accessibility issues
  - Lower level and second floors are not ADA accessible
  - Nearly 70 percent of staff work in the lower level or second floor
  - 75 percent of programs are located in lower level or second floor
- Usage Issues
  - Meeting spaces are inadequate with only two spaces for groups of 20 or more
  - Parking is inadequate
  - Basement flooding does not allow for use of lower level
- Update comparison
- This is the oldest building in the district and has had the least amount of work done.
- Proposed solutions
  - Tear down and sell
  - Upgrade and repurpose
  - Remodel, seismic upgrade and add larger professional development space
  - Relocate Central Services to new site and combine with other programs
- A member asked what do the architects say about District Office.
  - Doug Nichols said this building would not score well, probably score about 30 out of 100.
- A member mentioned keeping the feel about Roeder.
  - Steve Clarke questioned the level of connection people feel with the Roeder building.

The task force toured District Office and then left to tour Sunnyland Elementary School.

**Next Meeting:** 3 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 30, District Office Board Room