

Facilities Planning Task Force
September 27, 2012

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

Co-Chairs: Jim and Linden Darling

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

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

Introduction: Co-chair Jim Darling welcomed everyone to the meeting. He said facilities are a key part of the educational experience. The task force's work involves facilities recommendations that will impact future generations for years to come.

Superintendent's Introduction: Dr. Greg Baker welcomed everyone and thanked the task force. Dr. Baker stated that facilities have emerged as a priority as he listened to students, staff, families and the community during his entry plan process. He said facility planning is a complex issue due to limited resources and great need. He shared highlights that have been topics of many conversations he has had with stakeholders:

1. There are two brand new high schools (Bellingham and Squalicum) and two high schools that need support, (Sehome and Options).
2. For middle schools, the district has an outstanding portfolio of schools. Whatcom Middle School is a great example. Great facilities add to mission of The Bellingham Promise.
3. The task force will spend time reviewing elementary school facilities. The last bond helped build Wade King and Cordata. Seismic retrofitting was scheduled for District Office, but it was put toward remodeling Birchwood instead. Dr. Baker encouraged task force discussions about age, function and the size of buildings.
4. Athletic facilities, how do those support our students and community?
5. District Offices are never the most exciting projects but it is an important part of our school system and also provides a place for training and development of staff.
6. A few things to think of:
 - a. Where school buses are worked on
 - b. Last bond had money for a school site at Sudden Valley
 - c. Property – Gordon Carter site, how could this serve our environmental education and professional development needs?

Welcome: Co-chair Linden Darling greeted the task force and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Overview of process: Assistant Superintendent Ron Cowan introduced the scope of work for the task force. The task force will develop a plan that will prioritize facility planning for the next 10 years.

Major renovation/modernization of existing facilities that are eligible for state construction funding assistance are as follows:

- Every elementary qualifies except for Wade King, Northern Heights and Cordata because they are too new
- Sehome also qualifies for modernization money

The district is eligible for state construction funds to help pay for a portion of the cost of eligible facility modernization or replacement projects. The district is not eligible for state construction funds to pay for additional facilities.

Other facility projects that are ineligible for state construction assistance, but high need:

- Options High School
- Transportation shop building
- District Office
- Athletic fields
- Miscellaneous projects

The task force will need to consider:

- Additions to existing facilities, based on enrollment projections or programs needed
- New facilities
- Repurposing (do our facilities support and enhance what they were built for?)
- Future property acquisition

Since 2004, every project on the list of Recommended Capital Facilities Projects has been completed except: Sehome High School; purchasing property in Sudden Valley for a future elementary school; and seismic retrofitting of the District Office. Ron Cowan explained that the next task is to recommend future projects for a new bond. He explained that all projects have been completed from the 2006 bond except for the Sudden Valley property site.

More on process: Ron Cowan explained that district staff are here to serve the task force specifically to:

1. Share data and information on finances and facilities
2. Share information on functional adequacy
3. Arrange touring school sites – the task force needs to discuss which schools they want to go to before the tours on October 20

Decision-Making Protocol: The task force brainstormed norms for the group, they included the following:

- Build consensus
- Use a parking lot for issues/questions
- Respect ideas, “no stupid ideas”
- Be forward-thinking, solution-oriented
- Assume best intentions
- Encourage messy conversations – brainstorming
- Respect tempo
- Be stewards of process
- Promote proactive mingling

Task force tagline – “Stay in the Future” and “Place Matters”

Consideration Factors:

Ron Cowan explained that facility planning is complex and the task force will have to weigh issues with the help of consideration factors. He reviewed the following draft consideration factors with the group:

1. *Facilities will **strive to** provide equitable and effective learning/working environments supporting enhanced learning and productivity.*
 - Equity across the district to promote learning (task force suggested the change “will provide equity” to “strive to provide equity,” **see bold above**)
 - Facilities need spaces that allow people to work and do not detract
2. *Be safe and healthy for occupants*
 - Provide good air, water quality, light
3. *Foster optimal utilization considering enrollment, academic program needs, fiscal responsibility and community desires/needs*
 - Can the facility be optimally utilized for its purpose?
4. *Projects should allow flexibility to accommodate a variety of teaching/learning situations*
 - Teaching and learning has changed
 - Long-term perspective, “stay in the future”
5. *Enhance accessibility*
 - Strive for access at schools
 - District Office example –
 - There is a ramp outside the building to allow visitors to enter the main floor but no way to get up or downstairs if a person is in a wheelchair
6. *Demonstrate fiscal responsibility*
 - Need voter-approved funding projects
7. *Help protect community’s investment*

- Maintained to last for many years
 - Capital projects fund is used to protect investment and increase longevity- e.g. replacement of roofs
8. *Enhance energy efficiency and sustainability*
 - Spent \$500,000 less on resources during the 2011-12 school year than 2007-08
 - Half of full-time kindergarten is funded by saving money on energy costs
 9. *Foster community use*
 - Community pays for these buildings, they should be available for community use
 10. *Engage our neighboring community*
 11. *Design for a local context – capture what makes sense for our region*
 - The task force recommended adding this consideration factor
 - Steve Clarke commented that he thinks about timeless vs. trendy. Example: Bellingham and Sehome high schools. How do we capture what makes sense for our needs and our region?
 - Phyllis Textor asked, if we have a design that works, does it survive the test of time?

Finance 101: Ron Cowan presented a finance overview.

1. School Finance Overview
 - a. Budget made of five funds, each is independent and self-balancing
 - b. Money is borrowed for capital projects
 - c. General fund money comes from federal (10 percent), state (60 percent) and local (30 percent) sources
 - d. Almost everything for capital projects fund comes from local taxpayers
2. Local Revenue –
 - a. Primary source of local revenue is property tax levies
3. Definitions and procedures
 - a. Bond approval process
 - i. Must be approved by the School Board, 45 days prior to election date. Board must approve resolution before Dec. 28, 2012 for February 2013 election.
 - ii. Voters have to pass bond with super majority, 60 percent approval. In addition, validation requires that at least 40 percent of voters who voted in the most recent general election must vote in a bond election. We will discuss this in greater detail at an upcoming meeting.
 - b. Bond underwriter – helps sell bonds to raise funds
 - i. Interest rate is determined by multiple factors including market conditions and credit rating
4. Factors that influence bond tax rate

- a. Assessed Value - when considering what things might cost, we estimate about assessed value by working with the county assessor
- b. Issue Amount
- c. Bond repayment structure
- d. Annual principal and interest payments
- e. Bond interest rate
- f. Existing outstanding debt structure

The tax rate is important because that is the number the voters see when they vote. Tax rate is the number the task force needs to be aware of when considering the bond.

Questions:

- Jim Darling suggested for next meeting that district staff bring a chart that shows all local taxes. This will help the task force consider voter perspective.

Next Meeting

8 a.m. Friday, Oct. 12, District Office Board Room