

## **2013-14 Repurposing Larrabee Think Tank**

### **February 3, 2014 Meeting Minutes**

Think Tank Members in Attendance: Kathy Hasenjaeger, Kristi Birkeland, James Tinner, Katie Franks, Courtney Sawyer, Ron Cowan, Mike Anderson, Rob McElroy, David King, Terry Brown, Jim Darling, Kate Baehr.

Rob McElroy and Ron Cowan welcomed everyone at 4:35 p.m. and asked that a few moments be taken to review the minutes from the last meeting (Jan. 30, 2014). Ron asked if there were any changes to be made. A motion was made to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Ron sent an email to Think Tank members on Jan. 31, 2014, following the Jan. 30, 2014 meeting, suggesting that perhaps the group discuss the option of considering only Tier I uses before collecting Tier II proposals. Since the formation of the Think Tank in Nov. 2013, some potential district uses for the Larrabee facility are being talked about, and there is a feeling that we should not ask anyone spend time going through a process to submit and consider proposals from outside of the district if district uses would be given priority over non-district uses. One group member stated that she agrees with Ron's email, and thinks it would make sense to look at any possible district uses prior to asking for outside submissions. Another member noted that the Bellingham Public Schools is a fairly large institution, and it could be that Rob and Ron may not know of all potential in-district uses for the building. It was asked if Ron and Rob would be asking for submissions for potential district uses. Ron responded that it is true that there could be potential uses that are not known at this point. It would certainly be the intention to make program administrators within the district aware that they can submit proposals for district uses. A group member pointed out that there would still be value in gathering letters of interest from outside of the district, but wonders if the timing could be problematic. Ron agreed that if Tier I submissions are going to trump Tier II submissions, perhaps we should be sensitive to that and also be aware of how we are treating community agencies and companies. One member stated that he thought it had been decided that Tier I would always trump Tier II. Another member asked if there were a proposal that contained an offer to purchase the property, would the district consider selling? Ron stated that the district could, but also stated that it would involve a pretty lengthy, structured process. A group member agreed, noting that the property would first need to go through the surplus process, and it could not be declared surplus if there was a district use for the property. Ron noted that, just because the district receives a proposal for a district (Tier I) use, it does not mean the proposed use would be approved. One member noted that the Tier I submissions could be reviewed, and if it is determined that not all of the building/property would be used by a district program, a Tier II submission process could then be activated.

Ron asked if others felt that only Tier I proposals should be accepted at this time, keeping in mind that there would be a communication within the district to all program administrators to give them information on the building and property. One member suggested an accelerated process for acceptance of Tier I proposals, and as the submission process proceeds, this group continue to look at what a Tier II process would look like. That way, if there is not a Tier I use identified, we would be ready to go forward with collecting Tier II proposals. A member stated that if there is a long term district use identified, the district should consider some upgrades to the building (such as electrical and heating). Another member noted that it might be difficult for the district to invest funds into the facility for a district program if it was not willing to invest funds to keep the facility open as a K-5. It was noted by a group member that some programs, such as a homeschool partnership, could generate funding that would support facility improvements. It was again noted that it could be potentially difficult to justify upgrades to the building when it was decided to close Larrabee. A group member asked what the response would be to a proposal by an outside program that would be similar to a K-5? Kate Baehr noted that, while the facility is not conducive to a PreK-5 program within our district, it could be that an outside proposal similar to a PreK-5 that does not require space for specialists (psychologists, speech language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, ELL specialists) could be considered.

Ron stated that he believes he has heard that everyone is in support of looking at district uses prior to soliciting proposals for non-district uses but wanted to make sure. The group concurred that this seemed like a good way to proceed. A group member advised that it be made clear to all that this is the first step in investigating potential uses for the building.

Ron noted that the two documents that were distributed as handouts (“Criteria Assessment” and “Statement of Interest Request”) are still useful, and he would like to take a closer look at them to make any needed changes.

#### Changes to Criteria Document:

- Criteria 1 – Strike “financial ability”; add ‘timing of proposed use’.
- Criteria 2 – No changes.
- Criteria 3 – There was discussion about adding a look-for with regards to sustainability of management. The general intention is to make sure there is demonstrated ability to keep the program going. It was decided that there should be a bullet added: “Ability to provide ongoing operations and management”.
- Criteria 4 – There was discussion about the term “educational use”, could someone take that as a very traditional educational use? An example of how these would be rated was given by a group member: a school for saddle-making-would be yellow; a conference center would fall in the yellow category; Montessori school would fall into the light green section). It was suggested that a bullet be added: “PK-12”.
- Criteria 5 – Perhaps add the description of the “neighborhood” above the colored section. There was discussion about what the description would be, and it was decided that it would be “approximately ½ mile radius from Larrabee”. The bulleted items were

discussed. With regards to the second bullet ('Age Group Served'), Ron commented that it sounds like we prefer younger age students over older and reminded us that we are here to serve all students in our community. After discussion it was decided what we are looking for is the impact of various uses such as noise, parking, etc., which could be different with different age groups and we did not need to include 'Age Group Served' Criteria 5 as it is information that will come out in Criteria 4. There was discussion about "neighborhood and community draw". Anything other than a K-5 would likely be broader than a neighborhood draw.

- Criteria 6 – No changes.
- Criteria 7 – If both extreme interior and exterior changes were required, that would be a significant impact. The red box descriptor was revised to, "Significant changes to the interior features and exterior façade".

#### Repurposing Larrabee: Statement of Interest Request:

Ron thanked Jacqueline Brawley for drafting the document. The task of this group is to look at this document and, now that we're looking at Tier I only, see if there are things that don't make sense for Tier I proposals, but that could be kept in the background in case we start looking at Tier II proposals at some point in the future. Comments included:

- What will happen with the furnishings and portables?
- It would be a good idea to investigate the environmental conditions of the building and site (heating tank, etc.).
- It is strongly recommended that the district ask for an opinion letter from the City of Bellingham regarding zoning (what can be done under district ownership, what can be done under non-district ownership if Tier II proposals are accepted). Jim Tinner indicated it is not a complex process to apply for a conditional use permit.
- Reference to zoning will be taken out for Tier I document. Will the district support a zoning change for a Tier II proposal/use?
- It was asked if the operational costs that are listed are annual costs? Yes, they are.
- Will Tier I proposers want to know whether the portables and furnishings are staying or going?

Ron asked everyone to turn to page 15. Which of those 19 items would not make sense for someone making a Tier I proposal, and which additional questions should we ask of a potential Tier I user?

- Numbers 2, 3, 4, 9, 13, and 16 should not be included.
- What about a school use that might not be allowable (bus garage)?
- For number 7, "furniture, fixtures, equipment, technology" should be added.
- Ron asked if it was satisfactory to ask for the description of the project concept (#6) to be one page or less. It was decided that one page would be sufficient since this is a screening device.

- For number 8, could it read “How does your proposal align with the key strategies of the Bellingham Promise?”

Rob asked if, when we are considering Tier I proposals and there are two or three that come forward to this committee, would it be advantageous to have them make an in-person presentation so the committee can ask questions, etc.? There was discussion that phase I is the questionnaire and phase II could be a presentation if there were questions after reviewing the Statements of Interest.

It was asked if it should be made clear that the district can make the final decision? Ron stated that the Superintendent and Board make the final decision, but they would want to review the pros and cons and to look at any proposals.

The question was asked what if there are a few proposals from district programs, but Ron also wants to use the facility as a swing space? Would those be in the same mix? Yes, they would all be considered at the same time.

Ron stated that he thinks this document is good, but would appreciate others’ opinions. It was suggested that pages 14 and 15 be cross-referenced.

Ron informed the group that both documents will be revised according to the discussion today. As far as timeline, he suggested cancelling the Feb. 13 meeting and meet next on Feb. 27 to review the proposals. He suggested that there be a deadline for submission of proposals of Feb. 24, which would give Ron and Rob sufficient time to make copies and distribute to the group, prior to discussion on the Feb. 27. The group concurred.

Jacqueline Brawley suggested anyone interested in making a proposal may like a tour of the facility. Kate Baehr indicated that she would be available on Feb. 12 and Feb. 19 for tours (both are early release days).

The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

**Next Meeting February 27, 2014, 4:30-6:00 p.m.  
Whatcom Middle School**