

**Facilities Task Force Meeting
October 16, 2012**

Attending Members: Leslie Adamson, 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, Lisa McKay, James Pai, Mark Peterson, Rick Qualls, Vicky Reardon, Zoe Roberts, Evan Schmitt, Phyllis Textor, Tom Venable, and Rachel Williams, Dave Teater

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 and Peggy Shepherd, BASE; Bill Stuckrath, BAO; Matt Read, SEIU; Dave Vanderyacht, Teamsters

Welcome: Jim Darling welcomed the task force and asked if there were any new members.

Clean-up work: Assistant Superintendent Ron Cowan answered some questions from the previous meeting.

- **Portable inventory** – Ron explained there are 50 portables throughout the district. Very few are used as general purpose classrooms, most often they are used for music classes or by the PTA.
- **SqHS/BHS/SHS Physical Conditions** – Ron explained that scoring for these buildings was done by the same group that scored the other schools. Sehome High School scored 56, Squalicum High School scored 89 and Bellingham High School scored 100.
- Mark Peterson asked to see some transfer information for the future meeting, for further consideration.

Past and Present Thoughts:

- **KASK report from 1997**

Ron presented The KASK report looked at enrollment numbers and made recommendations for facilities based on projections. Under findings, for K-12, enrollment projections were 13,718 students for 2015. Actual enrollment is closer to 11,300. It is difficult to project enrollment that far in advance.

 1. Based on enrollment projects at the time, the conclusion was the district should build four new elementary schools by 2015. The district built three: Cordata, Northern Heights and Wade King.
 2. The KASK Report recommended the district open the four new elementary schools in 1999, 2005, 2010 and 2014. Instead based on updated enrollment data, The district opened three new elementary schools in 2002, 2008 and 2011.
 - Did not build as quickly due to slower enrollment growth.

3. The report suggested that four schools should be in north side of the district. Instead, the district built two schools, Cordata and Northern Heights, on the north end of Bellingham and one, Wade King, on the south side.
 4. The KASK Report from 1997 recommended that existing Lowell and Larrabee schools be closed and one new school opened. The district did not close Lowell and Larrabee, and opened Wade King.
- **2007 Zervas Group Architects Study and Survey**
 1. This study was completed by architects and engineers. They created physical condition score sheets and recommendations.
 2. This study identified the following schools as candidates for future modernization: Sehome, Whatcom, Birchwood, Carl Cozier, Columbia, Happy Valley and Sunnyland.
 3. The State of Washington no longer differentiates between modernization and total rebuilds. School districts will receive the same amount of money regardless.

Fall 2012 CSG Study Additional Information: Facilities consultant Dave Teater from Educational Services District (ESD) presented additional information from the most recent third-party facilities study about initial findings. He reviewed his presentation from the previous meeting, including major factors that affect capacity.

- Dave addressed the issue of modernization. He said the 1950s school model has several deficiencies in trying to educate today's children because it doesn't have designated spaces for student/teacher collaboration, pullout learning, flexibility and programs such as special education, preschool, music, library, etc. If architects go in and update the school, you may have a newer school that doesn't work very well to educate children. Just fixing up a school and not fixing some functional adequacy problems may not be enough.
- Utilization (enrollment divided by capacity equals utilization)
 - Dave presented an enrollment projection for the next 10 years. In 10 years, a collision between enrollment and capacity will occur and utilization will exceed 100 percent.
 - Ron added that the enrollment study was just finished one week ago. We have a brand new study for this task force's consideration.
 - The district's current capacity without portables is 90 percent. In 10 years, without any changes to facilities capacity will be at 99 percent.
 - Dave said some districts do not want any portables, some do. He wanted to show a model with just 5 percent of students in portables. This would raise capacity. In 10 years, the utilization would be 94 percent. Dave said the bottom line was that, portables are allowing some wiggle room. If portables are used in a modest way, it allows some flexibility in the future.

- Questions
 1. Pam Behee asked when the enrollment projections come out, will they tell us where to expect the most growth?
 - Ron answered that the information is districtwide. Zoning indicates where some housing is about to open. Ron said the district sees growth in the north side. Looking at Geneva Elementary School, the reason it is not crowded is because boundaries were adjusted when Wade King Elementary School opened. The opportunity for growth in Sudden Valley is not big.
 2. Pam Behee asked about the property the district has been pursuing in Sudden Valley.
 - Ron said the district has the money set aside to buy property there, but primarily haven't done so due to environmental constraints. The district does not want to purchase land it cannot build on and new housing is not being built in Sudden Valley at a rapid rate due to environmental constraints.
 3. Hale Hanaway asked if we are at 90 percent capacity right now, what would you want a school district to be at?
 - Dave replied that that is a complicated question. In districts that are smaller than Bellingham he would suggest for the district to be at 90 percent capacity. For planning purposes, consider high 90s or 100 percent capacity.
- Fall 2012 Findings from the Consultant:
 1. The Bellingham School District will experience slow growth in enrollment in the next 10 years.
 2. The use of portable classroom is giving some "wobble room" and keeping schools from being overcrowded.
 3. Elementary school physical condition scores ranged from poor to good.
 4. Elementary school functional adequacy scores ranged from unsatisfactory to good.
 5. Elementary school site condition scores ranged from fair to good.
- Fall 2012 Initial Thoughts from the Consultant:
 1. Renovate/replace Sehome High School with additions and provide special learning program space expansion. This would address problems of capacity, physical condition and functional adequacy.
 - Dave Teater said he doesn't know at this point if it should be a major renovation or replacement. If funds are available, replacement makes the most sense.
 - Jim Darling asked if we have ever rebuilt a high school.

- Ron Cowan said Shuksan and Birchwood are complete rebuilds. For Bellingham High, we kept the façade but gutted and replaced everything. For Whatcom, looks the same but we rebuilt a replica, and replaced the interior and exterior
- 2. Renovate/replace elementary school facilities beginning with those having the lowest composite scores (i.e. Sunnyland, Lowell, Happy Valley, Parkview, etc.) This would address problems of functional adequacy and physical condition.
- 3. Expand the two-section elementary schools into three-section schools where site sizes and core spaces will support additional students. (A two-section school has two classrooms for each grade.)
- 4. Re-purpose or close the Larrabee School and send students to adjacent schools due to inadequate functionality, physical condition and site size. This would place Larrabee students in functionally adequate buildings with adequate capacity that would be in good physical condition.
- 5. Plan for improvement projects to address upgrading needs such as a new roof, plumbing and electrical to extend the life of a facility. This would address some problems of physical condition for low scoring schools and maintain high-scoring schools.
 - Ron said there is a capital project budget line item for miscellaneous projects that would deal with system replacements. This money is for things that protect the community investment including roofing, doors and windows. We had money in last bond issue to do those updates.
- 6. Relocate or build a new Options High School and increase its capacity to approximately 250 due to inadequate functionality, physical condition and site size. This would address problems of capacity, physical condition and functional adequacy.
- 7. Relocate or rebuild the District Office Due to inadequate functionality, physical condition and site size. The district should seek a site with improved parking, a facility that is functionally adequate and a building that is in good physical condition.

Questions:

- Jim Darling – Are there state/district requirements for walking distances for elementary schools?
 - Ron Cowan said there is no state law for elementary schools for walking distance. We use the standard of a mile; we also factor in safety issues such as sidewalks.
- Jim Darling – Is there any information about reselling district buildings?
 - Dave Teater said there is a Portland example of an elementary school reopened as a hotel. Some facilities are repurposed for educational purposes but some of the driving issues are functional adequacy.

- Bill Stuckrath – what are some ideas for Options High School?
 - Dave said sometimes small high schools may be placed in commercial areas where there is a close relationship with school and career areas.
 - Another option is to go into an existing school or district office
 - It may occupy strip malls or buildings
 - Building new
- Mary LeDonne asked for ideas for District Office?
 - Dave said he has worked in communities where District Office is part of a school
 - Others want it to be close to a school but not part of the same building; larger site but in the corner
 - Others want District Office in downtown, right in the center
 - Want District Office to be out in airport area for economic growth
- Mark Peterson – what opportunities were there for energy efficiency?
 - Dave said they just looked at condition of systems, not cost benefit studies. He said anytime the HVAC systems are marked down there is opportunity for savings.
 - Ron said all of the district schools are energy star-rated except for one.
- Kris Craker – Current enrollment at Options High School is 89, why are you recommending a facility that holds 250?
 1. Dave answered that was an estimate based on discussions for a future vision of a small high school.

Presentations: Beginning at this meeting. Task Force members will help present further information about focus schools or possible facility projects for the group to consider as part of its recommendation. (There will be a presentation about Options at the next meeting.)

Patrick Brown, athletics and activities coordinator at Squalicum High School, gave a presentation about the athletic fields around the district.

- Evaluation and challenges we face for outdoor facilities
 - Volume of demand that we receive from our teams and the demand from the community groups have a greater impact on grass. This impact is felt at all levels, elementary, middle and high schools.
 - We are grateful that community groups show up and play on fields but notice is needed
 - Can help environment because synthetic fields don't need to be cut
- Questions
 1. Zoe Roberts – how much of field wear is due to where it is located or use?
 - Patrick said synthetic fields would have drainage.
 2. Vicky Reardon – how much would these synthetic fields cost?
 - Patrick said looking at anywhere from \$800,000 to \$1.5 million for fields.

Closing: Jim Darling said the Options presentation will be moved to next meeting. The task force will be touring schools on Saturday, Oct. 20.

- Phyllis Textor said Happy Valley received really low scores and suggested adding Happy Valley to the tour and look at it.
- The task force decided they will be viewing Happy Valley Elementary School instead of Columbia based on data at this time.
- Hale Hanaway suggested the task force look at 1970s era schools including Silver Beach, Roosevelt and Geneva.

Parking Lot Questions

1. How are the population projections keeping pace with current economic climate – may this accelerate as conditions improve?
2. If softball fields are considered for turf than they must be open to more than single sport use (i.e., Joe Martin.)

Next Meeting

3 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 23, District Office (leave at 4:15 p.m. to tour Sunnyland Elementary School)