



Facilities Planning Task Force

May 11, 2017
3:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Welcome

Co-Chair and Executive Administrator Rob McElroy welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Review/Approve May 4, 2017 Minutes

Rob asked that a few minutes be spent reviewing last week's meeting minutes. A motion was made by task force member Patrick Brown to approve the minutes as written. Task force member Ralph Schwartz seconded that motion and there was a unanimous vote to approve.

Sunnyland Elementary On-Site/Off-Site Update

Co-Chair and Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Steve Clarke noted that at the May 4 meeting time was spent prioritizing the needs of the 6 identified schools, using the provided criteria. There were some questions at that meeting regarding whether Sunnyland can be rebuilt on the site while students are attending, without accessing City of Bellingham parks property. Steve shared that consultant Doug Nichols has some additional information to share with the task force today. Doug then presented maps that indicate it could be possible to build while school is in session at the older Sunnyland facility, perhaps with permission to use the parks land for recess. Steve noted that it likely would be necessary to remove the portables and also relocate some classrooms and programs. A task force member asked whether it might be possible to purchase some adjacent property that has not appeared to be used for some time. With this additional information, it appears that the task force's top three ranked schools would be viable to build on-site while students are attending in the current buildings. When those 3 elementary schools are rebuilt, total capacity would be increased by approximately 400 students, which will help to absorb the growth occurring on the north side of town. A task force member asked if some of the schools that are not identified as being recommended for a rebuild in Phase I would be able to receive some repairs/upgrades. Steve stated that some maintenance will be needed for other schools that are not included in the next bond.

Maintaining Our Facilities – Buildings and Grounds

Rob shared that bond measures typically include some facility maintenance priorities and introduced Director of Buildings and Grounds Mike Anderson, who shared a list of maintenance and replacement needs across the district. Mike projected a list of those needs and gave some detail about the list. He noted that any work listed for a school that will be replaced would be removed from the list. A request was made by a task force member to provide a total of maintenance items for each school. There was a question regarding whether portables ever receive paint and carpet upgrades, and Mike responded that the portables are maintained in that

way. Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations Tanya Rowe noted that repairs such as those contained on Mike's list help communicate to the community that the district is being a good steward of public funds by caring for its investments. Rob stated that many of our schools have doubled their life expectancy because of the maintenance, repairs and upgrades over the years. Bob Kuehl, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, added that the state used to match some maintenance costs, but the threshold for those costs has risen dramatically over the years (e.g. it is now expected that carpets should last 30 years).

High School – Fields/Athletics – Phase II

- Fields (BHS, SHS, SQHS)
- Tennis Courts (BHS, SQHS)
- Multi-Purpose Room (BHS)

Steve shared that it is anticipated that “phase II” of the high school athletic fields is being considered for inclusion on the 2018 bond. He noted that it is difficult to use the fields for a good part of the year due to their condition. Steve shared drawings of the needed turf field improvements for Bellingham High, Sehome High and Squalicum High. It is also hoped that the number of tennis courts at each Bellingham High and Squalicum High can be increased by 1, so that each high school has 6 tennis courts. Having 6 tennis courts enhances the ability to host tennis matches and also creates more capacity for physical education classes. Steve added that all fields would have lighting, as well as concession and restroom facilities, which makes them far more accessible for the community. Task force member and Squalicum High School Athletic Director Patrick Brown shared that he receives contacts almost daily by organizations asking to use the fields at Squalicum. There was a question regarding how long synthetic fields last. Patrick answered that they typically last for 12-15 years. There was another question regarding the quality of the products used for the synthetic fields. Steve shared that there have been crumb rubber studies done all over the world, and there is no proof that the material is not safe. There was some discussion about the process that was used to decide on the materials that were used for the Squalicum fields. The estimated cost to finish all of the field projects is \$28 million. It was added that we have not been able to host many sporting events in Bellingham due to not having adequate facilities, which would change if these projects were completed.

Other Bond Projects:

Rob expressed to the task force that there is an interest in establishing a new standard for elementary schools for fields, reader boards and playgrounds, and there are some presentations this afternoon on those topics.

- **Elementary Fields**

Bob Kuehl shared some ratings of the elementary school fields, some of which need improvements. To improve the 7 fields with the highest need, would cost approximately \$700,000.00 - \$1 million. Elementary fields have a high community use in addition to the school day use. Matt Read, task force member and maintenance and grounds employee for the district, added that each field requires some “rest”. Steve noted that some school PTAs have partnered with the district to improve the fields, and it is the district's belief that field costs and maintenance should be a district expense. A task force member commented that students are not always able to play outside due to the field conditions. There was a question regarding whether

the Birchwood and Happy Valley quality of fields is included in the construction estimates for the schools that could potentially be rebuilt, and the answer is yes. A task force member asked if it is beyond the scope of this task force to decide if turf fields should be provided for each high school. Patrick Brown answered that there has been a lot of community support for playable, accessible fields. There was another question regarding the condition of the middle school fields. Matt Read answered that Fairhaven and Shuksan have adequate fields; the Kulshan field is in fair shape; Battersby Field, which is used by Whatcom, is too wet for much of the school year.

- **Reader Boards and Playgrounds**

Tanya Rowe has been researching reader boards and playgrounds and asked that everyone keep equity in mind for these topics. Historically, our elementary PTAs have fundraised for new playgrounds, and PTAs have now started to fundraise for reader boards. We are seeing a system of inequity across the district for reader boards and playgrounds. The district communicates through many channels – email, texts, newsletters, websites and reader boards. Our city and county regulations do not allow for the electronic signage, except at Alderwood and Wade King. The hope is to standardize reader boards at the elementary schools, which would include a single or double-sided reader board, as well as indirect lighting. Tanya reviewed the cost for purchasing reader boards for all elementary schools.

Tanya then reviewed the need for playground equipment at our schools. There has not been enough vetting with the community for covered playgrounds/canopies, but that may be something that is considered in the future. There was a question regarding whether it is possible to have preschool playground areas that will be separate from the older kids' play areas. Tanya shared that Birchwood and Cordata do have a separate area for younger children, and she and Ron will check to see how that may change the cost estimates. It was also noted that adaptive equipment can be added for students who are in the Life Skills program, but a separate play area would not be designated in order for those students to be integrated with all students.

- **Shuksan Gym**

Deputy Superintendent Mike Copland and Shuksan Principal Amy Carder talked about another project that is being considered, which is the addition of gym space at Shuksan. It was noted that Whatcom currently has twice as much gym space as Shuksan. The current configuration for the Shuksan gym creates some issues during the school day, as well as for community use. Amy noted that the gym can be divided into three sections, but those are too small to accommodate a full class. Teachers have adapted by combining PE classes, but some students still sit out at times due to space issues. They are not able to host any basketball games or volleyball matches because there is not enough space. The wrestling, dance and gymnastics teams are being bussed to other schools due to the lack of space. Shuksan would like the experience of hosting other schools for games/matches. Also, on a rainy day there is nowhere for kids to go to expel energy, as the gym is being used for PE class during lunch recess times. Mike shared an architect rendering of where a second gym could be added. He also added that Shuksan is in the large growth area on the north side of Bellingham. Shuksan acts as a community center, and the addition of a second gym would be a benefit for the community. The cost would be approximately \$4.5 million.

