



TO: Superintendent Dr. Greg Baker
FROM: Facilities Planning Task Force
DATE: June 5, 2017
RE: Facilities Plan Recommendation

In fall 2012, Bellingham Public Schools convened a [Facilities Planning Task Force](#) of 40 members representing staff, students, community members, parents and alumni. Their task was to identify and prioritize major facility improvement projects for Bellingham Public Schools for the next 10 years and to identify specific projects for a bond issue to put before voters in November 2013. That \$160 million bond passed with 66 percent support (a bond requires a 60 percent passing rate). As of spring 2017, most of those facilities projects are complete or under construction; some additional funding is needed in the next bond to complete a few of the projects due to construction costs that have increased since estimates were originally developed in 2012 and new building codes that have gone into effect since that time.

On March 15, 2017, Bellingham Public Schools issued a public call for applications for a new Facilities Planning Task Force. The 2017 task force consists of 32 members representing staff, students, community members, parents, alumni and City of Bellingham representatives. The purpose of its work is to:

- Review long-term recommendations from the previous Facilities Planning Task Force, formed in 2012.
- Learn about schools and facilities related to current and future educational program needs; the physical condition of existing schools/facilities; how facilities are funded; and the process associated with voter-approved bond ballot measures.
- Recommend updates to the long-range Facilities Master Plan to the superintendent that may include: Possible renovation of existing elementary schools (Alderwood, Carl Cozier, Columbia, Parkview, Sunnyland and Roosevelt); building a new elementary school on the district's property in north Bellingham; repurposing the Alderwood Early Learning Center; upgrading some elementary school playgrounds; exploring community facility partnerships; completing phase 2 of the high school fields and any additional

funding needed to cover the remaining 2012 bond projects, including Sehome High School and the Gordon Carter Environmental Learning Center; continuing safety upgrades and facility improvement projects (roofs, etc.) at existing schools; and/or purchasing/selling property.

- Recommend to the superintendent specific projects for a bond issue to put before voters as early as February 2018.

Rebuilding Old Elementary Schools and Responding to Growth in North Bellingham

As a task force, we spent six meetings analyzing and discussing facilities information, including data about current and future growth in north Bellingham, and the physical condition and programmatic functionality of our older elementary schools.

Having representatives from the City of Bellingham on our task force was helpful in understanding the [growth](#) occurring mainly in and around the Cordata neighborhood, as well as projected growth overall. Cordata Elementary School is currently full and our task force reviewed the recent recommendation of the district's [Attendance Areas PreK-12 Standing Committee](#) that included moving some students from Cordata to Alderwood, Parkview and Northern Heights elementary schools.

We also studied [data](#) gathered by the Educational Service District regarding the physical condition of Alderwood, Carl Cozier, Columbia, Parkview, Roosevelt and Sunnyland elementary schools. All of these schools need to be rebuilt or remodeled because they are more than 50 years old; have poor physical condition ratings despite being properly maintained over the years; do not meet modern accessibility standards; and/or do not have adequate space to provide the desired educational programming, such as three classrooms per grade level, preschool, counseling, music, world language, special education programs, etc.

Our task force reviewed the district's standard [prototype for most elementary schools](#) that have been recently rebuilt or remodeled. This includes neighborhood schools of three classrooms per grade level and additional program spaces for approximately 430 students. This size of elementary school still allows for children to be known and well cared for by the adults at the school, for teachers to collaborate at each grade level, and enough enrollment to run an educational program focused on the whole child.

Recommendation regarding a 15th elementary school: Part of our task force's charge was also to determine if building a new 15th elementary school on the district's King Mountain property should be part of this next bond. After carefully reviewing the projected growth, the prototype model for elementary schools and the additional enrollment capacity that would be created by rebuilding some of our older elementary schools, we determined that a 15th elementary school is not needed at this time. Our task force prefers an "infill" approach to accommodating the growth in north Bellingham by rebuilding and adding capacity to our existing elementary schools first.

We also learned that we could most likely build new schools for Sunnyland, Alderwood and Parkview on site and adjacent to the existing schools, so this added to our recommendation of not needing “swing space” or an alternative location to house students during construction.

Recommendation regarding rebuilding old elementary schools: We spent many hours determining how to prioritize which of the six older school to recommend for the next bond. We wanted to include the rebuilding of more than three elementary schools, but after much discussion, we reached consensus that doing so in addition to all of the other projects that need to be included on the next bond would have too great of a tax impact on our community. Therefore, we recommend that Sunnyland, Alderwood and Parkview elementary schools be rebuilt as part of the February 2018 bond measure. Our rationale for recommending these schools over the three others is:

- Their proximity to north Bellingham and ability to accommodate more students in the future through an “infill” approach;
- Their physical condition;
- Their functionality or ability to provide the desired educational program.

Initial conceptual planning indicates that all three of these elementary schools would be able to be rebuilt adjacent to the existing schools, allowing students to continue to attend their schools until the new school opens, similar to how Happy Valley was built and Sehome is being constructed. The tightest location is at Sunnyland; portables and special programs may need to be relocated during construction and working with the City of Bellingham on potential use of park land is advised.

Previous Facilities Task Force Recommendation

Our task force also spent time reviewing the recommendation of the previous Facilities Planning Task Force and its 10-year plan:

- A second tier of projects in our 10-year recommended plan includes the following:
- Additional synthetic outdoor athletic fields at Bellingham and Squalicum high schools to include baseball and softball fields
 - Office renovation and other minor modernization of Sunnyland Elementary
 - Office renovation and other building finishes at Carl Cozier Elementary
 - The addition of an elevator and gym improvements at Columbia Elementary.

Recommendation: To deliver upon the previous recommendation, we are recommending that the second phase of turf fields for soccer, baseball and softball at Bellingham, Sehome and Squalicum high schools be included as part of the 2018 bond. In addition, Sehome will have six tennis courts after it is built and we are recommending adding one more tennis court at Bellingham and Squalicum high schools to bring them up this standard. We also learned many of

our parent organizations are fundraising to improve drainage and the usability of our elementary school fields; this is financially burdensome for families and exacerbates inequities among our schools. Therefore, we are recommending that some funding for improvement of elementary grass fields (Cordata, Northern Heights, Wade King) be included in the 2018 bond. Finally, we heard from Shuksan Middle School that both the school and our community have increased needs for more gym space and are recommending that this project be included:

[BHS Fields Phase 2 Schematic](#)

[SHS Fields Phase 2 Schematic](#)

[SQHS Fields Phase 2 Schematic](#)

[SQHS 6th Tennis Court Schematic](#)

[Elementary Playfield Assessment](#)

[Shuksan Additional Gym Space](#)

We are not recommending significant improvements for Carl Cozier, Columbia or Roosevelt at the current time because these schools will need to be rebuilt or remodeled in the future. However, some entry/office improvements are included in the recommended districtwide projects. We also reviewed [elementary playground](#), equipment and play structure needs that parent organizations are also fundraising for, but are not recommending new playgrounds in this next bond other than for the three elementary schools that are recommended to be rebuilt due to the number of other needs at the current time.

Funding Needed for Completion of 2013 Bond Projects

The task force also reviewed the current status of our [2013 bond projects](#):

- Safety, maintenance and energy upgrades at all schools – *many improvements complete and others underway through 2019*
- Lowell Elementary School improvements – *complete: new addition opened in fall 2015.*
- Happy Valley Elementary School rebuild – *complete: opened in fall 2016*
- Parkview Elementary School cafeteria/stage and covered play area – *complete: opened in fall 2016*
- Phase one high school field renovations at Squalicum High School – *complete; opened in fall 2016*
- Phase one high school field renovations at Bellingham High School – *in progress, opening in fall 2017*

- Options High School – *in progress, opening in fall 2017*

The remaining voter-approved bond projects from 2013 are currently in the planning phase:

- Sehome High School rebuild
- District Office Seismic Safety and Renovation at Dupont Street
- Central Kitchen
- Transportation Garage improvements
- Gordon Carter Conservation Site water, sewer and initial construction

The task force learned that since original estimates were developed in 2012 for these projects that are currently in the planning phase, construction costs have escalated and the Sehome project in particular will be subject to new storm water regulations.

Recommendation: The task force reviewed the need to include [funding](#) in the 2018 bond to complete the 2013 bond projects.

School Safety, Security and Other Projects at All Schools

Our task force learned of additional safety improvements that are needed for the safety all of our schools, students and staff, including lockdown shades to eliminate visibility into classrooms and school areas from the exterior when needed; radio communication; PA/intercom for all school areas, including portables; access control for more secured entrances at some schools in need; systems of secured external doors and internal classroom doors; security cameras for exterior vandalism deterrent and protection; and cameras in some commons interior areas such as hallways (all school offices have cameras from the previous bond).

Recommendation: We recommend including these safety improvements in the 2018 bond.

Our task force also reviewed long-term technology needs for our schools. These technology infrastructure improvements are different than the short-term needs such as computer and software that are funded by our technology levy. These long-term technology needs include cabling and improved technology infrastructure.

Recommendation: We recommend funding these [technology infrastructure needs](#) as part of the 2018 bond.

Our task force learned that some parent organizations are also fundraising for school reader boards as a communication tool for important reminders to parents during pick-up and drop-off times.

Recommendation: We discussed this item at length and recommend including it in the next bond because the cost is approximately 1 percent of the recommended bond and it will meet a need, relieve fundraising pressure and provide equity for schools that want or need [reader boards](#).

We learned that an important part of every bond is funding to protect and maintain our investments in our existing schools, similar to homeowners that need to paint, replace roofs, flooring, heating and ventilation systems, etc.

Recommendation: We are recommending including funding in the 2018 bond for [districtwide improvement projects](#).

Financial Impact and Summary of Recommendations

Our task force carefully weighed the [financial impact](#) of all of these recommendations on our residential and business property owners. We certainly have more needs that we can fund, so we landed on a recommendation that meets many of the greatest needs while not increasing the combined total tax rate for property owners living within Bellingham Public Schools' attendance areas. The approximate total cost of our recommendation is for a \$155 million bond measure. This measure is recommended to be put before voters in February 2018. It would keep the total schools tax rate at approximately \$4.81 cents per \$1,000 assessed property value. This a lower tax rate from \$4.86 that we were projecting at the time of last levy in fall 2016. We are able to fund all of the [recommended facility projects](#) while not increasing the tax rate because our two-year school bus levy is expiring and we will also be retiring some debt. We are very pleased to put forward this recommendation without increasing school property taxes.

DRAFT

BOND 2 - 2018	#	Project	Estimated Cost
Elementary Schools	1	School 1	\$28,700,000
	2	School 2	\$30,100,000
	3	School 3	\$31,700,000
	4	Field Improvements	\$1,900,000
Middle School	5	Shuksan Gym	\$4,250,000
High Schools	6	Sehome HS Fields	\$9,200,000
	7	Bellingham HS Fields	\$8,700,000
	8	Squalicum HS Fields	\$10,500,000
District Improvements	9	Safety & Security	\$3,600,000
	10	District Improvements	\$7,460,000
	11	2013 Projects	\$17,000,000
	12	Technology	\$1,730,000
	13	Reader Boards	\$160,000
TOTAL:			\$155,000,000

24-May-17

Please let us know what questions you have or if you would like additional information on any aspect of our recommendation. We are excited that every school could experience some type of facility improvement in this next bond.