

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SITE

January 21, 2015 4:00-6:00

Central Services, Board Room

Rob McElroy welcomed everyone and started the meeting at 4:05 pm. He noted that there are group members who were not able to attend; however, there was still representation from each small work group to spend time working on specific questions. After about 30 minutes of work in small groups, each work group shared out with the whole group, identifying points of consensus, remaining questions, and possible ways forward.

Setting the Parameters:

The Parameters group shared their recommendations:

- Build a structure, bring water and a septic system to the site (the septic should be as large as the budget will allow so that future growth will not be inhibited), as well as phone and data lines.
 - Structure should be a combination open/closed structure, similar in size to the type of gym/cafeteria combination that the newer elementary schools have.
 - Structure should include large gathering/dining space, food prep/refrigeration, bathrooms.
 - Size of total structure would accommodate (tightly) up to 500 people.
- Conduct safety inspection on the existing structures.
- Remove ropes course due to liability (there are other ropes course opportunities in the county).

Things to keep in mind:

- An indoor facility will enable the site to be used year-round, and it's possible that the facility could be rented to the community.
- We should build "with a purpose", keeping in mind that the building should not limit the programs that the district may end up offering – "Good form inspires good function".
- Opportunity to be an example of green design for the district, for the community.
- Where would the structure be located on the site?
- What might be needed if the facility were to be used for other uses, such as retreats (tables, chairs), as opposed to just student programming?
- At this point there are funds for developing the site/facility, but there is not specific funding allocated for programming (or ongoing maintenance costs).

There was a question regarding when the district will begin the process. Permitting and hiring a contractor could start within the next year or two, and site improvements will need to be completed no later than August 2019 (pursuant to the bond).

Guiding Principles:

- Shared updated [draft Guiding Principles](#) developed by the group, reviewed contents and led discussion with group:
 - New construction provides opportunity for building to serve as a learning laboratory.
 - Building is not sole draw of site but a support for understanding/connecting with nature.
 - LEED standards are becoming the norm now.
 - Drafted principles are broad which allow for more opportunities in the future.
 - How to honor the site's history moving forward, particularly paying attention to building in a place that keeps both old growth and new growth trees for comparison studies.

Programming:

- Distributed two handouts – a summary of a recent [discussion amongst elementary principals](#) regarding science and social studies field trips and a [summary of outdoor education opportunities](#) for elementary, middle and high school students.
- Saw close alignment between purposes cited in the guiding principles and the information from school principals.
- The decision on the type of structure and the types of programming definitely go hand-in-hand
 - Need to build the most user friendly, flexible space with low maintenance.
 - Important to work on programming now so when structure is ready, we can use it.
- Ongoing attention to the need to secure funding for programming to both launch new programs and make them sustainable.
- WWU students are interested in contributing to the development of programs for the site.

Other Sites/Programs:

- Most school districts that have an environmental site allow other organizations (outside of the school district) to use the site when it is not being used by the district. This use by others helps to ensure that the site is used year-round and also contributes a revenue source that helps to maintain and sustain the property.
- Need a better understanding of who might use the property to inform the development process. A needs assessment could assess district opportunities and needs and community opportunities and needs.
- It is important to include opportunities for elementary school, middle school, high school and beyond. It would be great to come up with an environmental education sequence for Pre-K through grade 12.

Conclusion:

Anda believes that enough information has been gathered from each of the groups so that a draft recommendation can be written and circulated electronically among the group, prior to finalization for submission to Dr. Baker.

On behalf of Dr. Baker, Rob thanked everyone for their time and contributions; the work is very much appreciated.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm.