

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Massena Facilities Study Advisory Committee

FROM: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen

RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of March 1, 2018

DATE: March 7, 2018

### **Attendance:**

Committee Members: Steven Booth, Laurel Czajkowski, Adrienne Hartman, Rachel Hurlbut, Elizabeth Kirnie, Deborah LaRose, McKenzee Lazore, AnneMarie Miller, Duane Richards, Jeff Stenlake, and David Vroman.

Consultants: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen

Observers: Patrick Bronchetti, Patrick Brady, Kevin Perretta and Alan Oliver

Location: J. W. Leary Junior High School

1. Jessica Cohen began the meeting by thanking Alan Oliver, Principal of the J.W. Leary Junior High School, for hosting the meeting and conducting the tour of the school for interested committee members. The agenda for the meeting was presented and reviewed as well.

2. Jessica then reviewed the purpose of the study that is to answer the following question:

***In considering 2 – 3 prioritized options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future?***

***If so, how should the grades and facilities be arranged?***

3. The January 31 meeting notes were approved by the committee without any changes.

4. Jessica reviewed the summary of the takeaways for the first four meetings regarding student enrollment, the instructional program, facilities and transportation. She provided an update on the enrollment projections based on the new information on the number of births in 2016 (151) and the 2017-18 BEDS day (October 4, 2017) enrollment. Enrollment is continuing to decline with a total K – 12 enrollment of 2,536, down 59 students from the previous year.

5. Alan Pole reminded the advisory committee that the purpose of the study was to look at both the educational impact of facilities changes as well as the fiscal impact. Since about 75% of school budgets are costs for staffing, it is important to look at staff costs. An overview of building level staffing was discussed indicating teachers, teaching

assistants, and aides comprise the majority of staff. He discussed the average salary of each grouping of staff (teachers, administrators, aides, custodians, etc.) as well as the average cost of fringe benefits for health insurance, pension, workers compensation, unemployment insurance, and social security, etc. Based on the information provided by the district, an average cost of fringe benefits is approximately 47% of salary. (This figure does not include what the district pays for health insurance for retirees.)

6. He indicated that there are two options typically used for implementing staff reductions: involuntary reductions and attrition. While involuntary reductions are more predictable and maximize savings, they also cause more anxiety. Attrition is driven by decisions individual staff members make and is generally well accepted. Savings accrue when appropriate vacancies occur. Alan stated that we would recommend that the district use attrition if any positions are to be reduced. He provided a table of resignations/retirements from Massena teachers over the past four years that indicated the number of staff resigning/retiring and their length of service in the district.

7. Alan Pole followed up by talking about the feasibility – *Is it possible* and the desirability of options – *Is it a good idea?* He then reviewed the four options discussed to date. The status quo is described as Option 1 and maintains the 68 common branch sections in the three elementary schools. Moving to a grade center plan is the second option and would organize the schools around grades with one school serving Pre-K – 1, another school serving 2 – 4, and one serving grades 5 – 6. This would move the district from the current neighborhood schools approach to an approach organized around grade levels. Because this option would allow equalizing of section sizes, the grade center option would have 62 sections, or 6 fewer than the status quo.

8. Other options discussed at previous meetings include exploring the inclusion of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade in the Junior High School and closing one elementary school. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades have 194 students and 9 sections each so this option would add another 384 students to the junior high. It does not appear that this is a feasible option. Another suggestion was to expand the high school to accommodate the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades and close the junior high building. This option would require an expansion of the high school to make it 50% larger. The third option would be to move the 7<sup>th</sup> grade to the elementary school and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade to the high school. The elementary schools would have to accommodate approximately 10 sections of 7<sup>th</sup> graders and the high school would have to accommodate approximately 10 sections. Neither of these options is feasible without additions at each of the schools.

9. Questions were asked at the previous meeting about the usage of classrooms in the junior high and high school buildings, Alan provided two tables that looked at how the current junior and high school classrooms are being used and found that junior high school classrooms are used about 82% of the day and high school classrooms are being utilized approximately 79% of the day. Alan concluded that the buildings are being extremely well utilized.

10. Information on staff savings by option was discussed. In summary, there would be no savings if the status quo were maintained. If the grade center plan were implemented, there would be a reduction of 6 sections/teachers for a savings of approximately \$551,910.

10. The presentation concluded with three big ideas or takeaways that the consultants reviewed: 1- Two feasible options have been identified: status quo and grade centers. 2 – It is recommended that any reduction in positions arising from this study be accomplished through attrition. 3- Staff savings can be realized by creating grade center schools.

11. Alan asked the committee and the audience for comments and/or questions.

12. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 11, 2018 in the high school. An optional tour of the school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The meeting of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on March 1. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on April 11 at the high school.

C: Pat Brady