

MEMORANDUM

TO: Massena Facilities Study Advisory Committee
FROM: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of January 31, 2018
DATE: February 5, 2018

Attendance:

Committee Members: Steven Booth, Kerry French, Adrienne Hartman, Elizabeth Kirnie, Deborah LaRose, AnneMarie Miller, Carmela Phelix, Duane Richards, Jeff Stenlake, and David Vroman.

Consultants: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen

Observers: Danielle Chapman, Patrick Bronchetti, Patrick Brady, Paul Haggett, and Allen Rowledge

Location: Madison Elementary School

1. Alan Pole began the meeting by thanking Danielle Chapman, Principal of the Madison Elementary 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. Alan 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 December 20 meeting notes were approved by the committee without any changes.

4. Alan reviewed the summary of the takeaways for the first three meetings regarding student enrollment, the instructional program, and facilities. He provided information regarding exploring the feasibility and desirability of creating a new 300,000 square foot 7 – 12 facility including an approximate cost for new construction of \$300/sq. ft. He also provided a summary of utility costs for each of the five school buildings as well as an estimate of savings of approximately 40% of these utility costs if a building was closed.

5. Jessica Cohen introduced the topic of transportation. She explained that the discussion on transportation is designed to answer questions about the impact of any of

the discussed facilities changes on the costs and efficiency of the transportation system. She introduced Allen Rowledge, Director of Transportation for the district to provide the overview of the transportation system. He explained that the district operates about 41 buses including 7 owned by the New York State Education Department that transport students from the Akwasasne Mohawk Reservation to and from the Massena schools. Buses are replaced approximately every seven years.

6. The district has board policies governing transportation that indicate that Pre K- 6th grade students are transported if they live more than $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from their school. Students in grades 7 – 12 are transported if they live 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles or more from their school. As a result 441 elementary students, 146 junior high school students and 207 high school students are not eligible for busing.

7. Allen Rowledge described the system of busing as a combination of single, double, and triple bus runs. In addition, the district provides mid-day pre-K bus routes, BOCES runs, and late buses from the junior high and high school. He estimated that the average ride for students is between 40 and 45 minutes with the longest bus ride being slightly more than 1 hour for high school students. The district is about 220 square miles and is divided up into 3 elementary attendance zones.

8. The grade center plan would increase the amount of time many of the elementary students would be on school buses by between 10 and 20 minutes, increasing the average bus rides to between 55 and 65 minutes for most elementary students. Adding buses/routes might decrease the amount of time students were on buses but would not be cost efficient in terms of the number of students riding each bus. Allen Rowledge also estimated that 6 additional buses would be needed to accommodate the 295 additional students who would need to be bused. The number of walkers would decrease significantly (by approximately $\frac{2}{3}$) as students would no longer be walking to their neighborhood school. It was also estimated that 2 additional buses would be needed because the ability to double trip Madison Elementary students would be lost.

9. Questions were asked by the committee regarding single tripping and making the start times in all of the schools the same. Allen explained that would require approximately 72 buses and additional drivers. Currently there are 12 full-time and 22 part-time bus drivers.

10. The presentation concluded with five big ideas or takeaways that the consultants reviewed: 1- About 30% of the students walk to and from school every day and 70% are bused on one of the 41 buses in the fleet. The average ride for students is about 40-45 minutes; 2 – The district operates on a double trip system, with a few single and triple trips; 3- Moving to a grade center plan would add an extra 295 students who would need to be bused and would require the addition of approximately 6 extra buses; 4-The length of time that many elementary students would be on the bus would increase by

approximately 20 minutes; 5- A grade center plan would increase the cost of transportation.

11. Alan asked the committee to divide up into groups to discuss three questions:

- What are the pros and cons of creating a new 7 – 12 facility?
- What are the pros and cons of moving the 6th grade to the junior high school and creating a 6th – 8th grade middle school?
- What other options should be considered?

After discussion, the groups of committee members identified the following:

Brand new 7 – 12 building

Pros

- New infrastructure; less need for repair
- Would not have to invest in the BCS costs of \$27 million
- New lay out that would be optimally designed to meet the needs of students
- Possibility of better behavior of students because of newer building and pride
- Potential staff savings by combining 7 – 12 grade staffing needs
- Could potentially offer more electives because of staffing efficiencies
- Savings because of shared administration
- Improved safety

Cons

- \$90 million price tag
- Tax payers would most likely be against the cost
- What would we do with the old structures
- Where would it be located
- Would not save anything in transportation

It was the consensus of the group that the option of creating a new 7 – 12 building not be pursued. It was not viewed as realistic to explore. A question was asked about the ability of the current location to serve as the location for a larger building. Pat Brady indicated that SED requires that grade 7 – 12 buildings be located on a parcel that has 10 acres plus 1 acre for every 100 students. SED requires elementary schools to have a parcel of land that is 3 acres plus an additional acre for every 100 students.

Moving 6th grade to middle school

Pros

- It is a legitimate option
- Could provide more advancement classes
- Have additional collaboration for 6th – 8th grade students and teachers
- Having three years in a building would help ease transitions
- It would benefit extracurricular activities

- It would assist the district in providing the CTE, family and consumer sciences, and technology changes that SED is now allowing.

Cons

- Is it financially viable
- Would parents buy in
- Would faculty be welcoming
- Space seems to be an issue
- It might result in larger class size to accommodate all of the students
- There would potentially be overcrowding at the junior high
- This would cause underutilization of the elementary schools
- Certification issues (6th grade teachers might not be able to teach 7th – 8th grade courses).

The group requested an exploration of the utilization of classrooms to see if there was space.

Other options to consider

- Explore including 5th and 6th grade in the Junior High School and closing 1 elementary school. This would result in 2 Pre-K – 4 elementary schools, a 5th – 8th grade middle school, and a 9th – 12th grade high school.
- Expand high school to accommodate the 7th and 8th grades and close the junior high building
- Move the 7th grade to the elementary school and 8th grade to high school and close the junior high.

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

15. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Thursday, March 1, 2018 in the Junior 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 January 31. 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 March 1 at the Junior High School.

C: Pat Brady