



Facilities Committee Meeting Notes

Sept. 26, 2024 – 5:30 p.m. – Mountain View Campus, Elizabethtown, N.Y.

Facilities Committee Members Present

- Bill Benoit (In the Audience)
- Tom Bisselle
- Sheera Broderick
- Tom Broderick
- Darlene Hooper
- Jim Jackson
- Josh Kingzack
- Robyn Lepage
- Shelly Mckinley
- Samuel Sherman
- Micah Stewart
- Olive Stewart
- David Whitford

Synopsis

On Sept. 26, 2024, the first meeting of a new Boquet Valley Central School District Facilities Committee was held. Committee members met with Facilitator Joe Dragone from Capital Region BOCES to discuss the purpose and charge of the committee, review prior committee work and discuss the defeated referendum and current options. How the committee plans to move forward was also discussed, and the next meeting is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 21, 2024.

Agenda

Introductions

- The Capital Region BOCES Facilitator explained his role in supporting the committee's planning and decision-making process through ongoing discussion among members. The facilitator is a neutral voice in guiding conversations and does not make decisions on the committee's behalf.

Purpose and Charge

- The Facilities Committee is tasked with providing input and recommendations to the Board of Education regarding the district's long-term facility needs, long-term capital improvement planning, and other long-term facilities-related matters.
- The Committee will review data, tour buildings, engage the community, and work collaboratively with district leadership, consultants and other stakeholders.

Review of Prior Committee Work

- Extensive review of existing facilities, program needs, and funding models from 2020-24, was covered, including:
 - The programs that drive facility needs;
 - Process of the committee;
 - Conclusion of a new campus;
 - The scope of the proposed project and project schedule; and

- State aid and tax impact.
- A [Capital Project Archive](#) is still available on the district website to the public to see the history of the project up until this point.
- The work the prior committee was reviewed:
 - Data Collection & Program Analysis
 - Staff Interviews & Survey
 - Site Selection Survey
 - Facilities Committee and BOE Oversight
 - Agreement with County for Thrall Dam Site
 - SEQR, SHPO & APA Permitting Applications
 - SED Preliminary Review
 - Finance Schedules and Tax Impact Calculations
- The differences between renovations and new construction were discussed, including challenges associated with making decisions on renovations regarding athletic fields, transportation facilities and infrastructure/utilities upgrades.

Discussion: Defeated 2024 Referendum

- **The 2024 referendum, defeated by taxpayers, was discussed.**
 - Discussion regarding capital improvement project costs that qualify for aid led to consensus amongst several committee members that aid-ability in the initial project proposal was unclear—specifically centered around the understanding of costs that are eligible for 90% aid-ability and those that are not.
 - A 10-year window to take advantage of available aid began when the merger took place in 2019-20.
 - Concerns were raised over the designated money for the failed project proposal being ‘null and void.’ This would likely necessitate a conversation with the New York State Department of Education. Clarification was made when it comes to project cost calculations and what they are based on.
 - Committee members questioned the difference between new construction and renovations and the aid implications. Renovations receive a lower aid rate versus new construction. Bonds for renovations usually receive a 20-year repayment term; new construction usually receives a 30-year repayment term.
 - Discussion ensued over planning for changes in student enrollment and using five-year projections.
- **The 2024 vote results and responses to the exit poll were presented and members discussed what may have led to the defeated vote.**
 - Poor communication was a common theme. Not enough timely information was shared with the community. Committee discussions were not heard by enough members of the public because attendance was low. Members asked for clearer communication this time around. Members also wondered if social media could be used more strategically.

- There was dissatisfaction as to how the exit poll was conducted. One member cited a crowded venue with limited seating. A member of the audience said they voted and were not asked to fill out an exit survey. The idea of a new survey to solicit feedback was discussed.
- The cost of the proposed project was another issue. Members conversed about the difference between new construction and renovations. One member mentioned the importance of not 'overbuilding' and respecting enrollment projections. An audience member questioned why the previous project proposal had roughly \$30 million worth of items that were not aid-able.
- There were also concerns that the previous facilities committee may not have received a fully transparent calculation from consultants on each of the options last time.

Discussion: Facility Options to Solve Three Interrelated Issues

- **Conversations shifted to the current facility options, including new construction and renovations. The potential options include:**
 - a) A new pk-12 school, athletics and transportation site;**
 - b) Renovations and new construction at either existing facilities;**
 - c) Extensive renovations at both sites to keep both sites open;**
 - d) Limited health/safety renovations at Mountain View Site and Lake View Site to keep them both operating.**
- Concerns were discussed about whether building on the Thrall Dam site should be considered again considering the outcome of the defeated referendum. It was mentioned that it is important to keep all options open, consider them, perhaps conduct a survey and refine them as a committee.
- It was mentioned that renovations proposed to the first facilities committee were excessive and unreasonable in scope and cost-effectiveness. They'd prefer a focus on safety and health.
- Members discussed the feasibility of where to best educate 400 students. The Mountain View Building housed that many students in the early 2000s. Another member cautioned that education has changed drastically since then and isn't fully comparable to today's educational landscape.
- It was brought up that the outcome should be a school that will attract families to the district, fostering a sense of pride. Another member cautioned that there are many residents on fixed incomes, so affordability is a major factor.
- Unity is an important factor going forward. A member said both the communities of Westport and Elizabethtown would like their respective buildings to remain open. The member urged people to unite under the 'Boquet Valley' name.

- Aid sources were discussed again, specifically the Operational Aid the district is receiving because of the successful merger. District leadership said it has yet to be spent.
- **Conceptual facilities cost comparisons from the previous project proposals were reviewed.**
 - Concerns were mentioned about the interim about the condition of the current facilities. A Building Condition Survey is underway to identify priority areas. One member noted that any renovations done in the interim may need to be redone depending on the ultimate decision the committee makes. Student health needs to be prioritized. An interim roofing project is slated to start soon at one of the facilities.
 - Discussion ensued about the Operational Aid, questioning if any of that limited-time funding is sustaining salaries or programs. District leadership believes this is not the case.
 - The idea of a subsequent merger was discussed. An audience member questioned if a large merger with other nearby districts was considered. The Board of Education has not at this point. A committee member mentioned a four-way merger that was investigated in the 1990s did not go far.
- **The new campus proposal that went to a vote was reviewed and examples of tax impacts were discussed.**
 - Concerns were raised by an audience member about the cost comparisons and the added taxable value. Discussion continued over how to lobby about the ways assessments are administered.

Next Steps and Future Meetings

- The next meeting is on Thursday, Nov. 21, at 5:30 p.m. at the Lake View Campus in Westport. A tour will be provided to all who are interested at 5 p.m.
- There will not be an October meeting to allow time for the Building Condition Survey to be completed.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:50 p.m.