



Bond Task Force : Recommendations Working Sub-Committee Meeting 1 Summary

December 13, 2017

Meeting #1, Wednesday, December 13, 2017, Ferndale District Office

Attendees: Recommendations Sub-Committee members

Name
Jamie Albrecht
Joy Born
Faye Britt
Michael Britt
Edwin Elefson
Rusti Elefson
Kathy Hopkins
Denise Kamschulte
Joe Lupo
Sandi McMillan
Jamie Plenkovich
Cathy Raymond
Jeremy Vincent

Staff:

Ferndale School District

- Erin Vincent
- Linda Quinn
- Mark Deebach

EnviroIssues facilitator

- Penny Mabie

Welcome and Introduction

Penny opened the meeting and noted that the working sub-committee meetings would be smaller and more informal than full Task Force meetings. She noted the informal structure was designed to encourage discussion and allow a deeper dive into subject matter. Penny identified three items for the agenda – preliminary options and costs for updating Ferndale High School and other district facilities; discussing approach for sharing information with the full Task Force; and identifying any other information needed to inform Task Force discussions. She reminded the group that the purpose of the working sub-committee was to help advise the Task Force on how to develop their recommendations.

Updating Facilities : Ferndale High School

Terry Brown, architect with Zervas, reviewed several project documents, including three different options to address Ferndale High School, cost estimates for work at all buildings, and concepts for North Bellingham. The three options for FHS were 1) build new on the same site, 2) retain some buildings (gym,

cafeteria and performing arts center, and build around them to make an attached campus and 3) build a new school on a different piece of property in or near downtown. Penny noted that the cost estimates are very preliminary and are not yet validated for public discussion. Comments and discussion.

- A member would like to see more options for Ferndale High School and was surprised by the costs. Terry explained the preliminary costs were derived by looking at the average cost of high school construction, adjusted using inputs from local districts, and by using current cost escalation factors to estimate cost per square foot. The costs are not based on specific designs. He also noted that the proposals can be changed; these aren't the only options for FHS.
- People think the district owns different property.
- For Option 2 what happens to the Career Technical Education program? Response: It is included.
- What does playfield mean? Would it be artificial turf or sod? Response: Terry noted he plugged in \$4 million for playfield/track/multipurpose fields and artificial turf for the football field, with updated grandstand seating.
- Would that make the football field comparable to other districts? Response: Yes, we could host playoffs.
- Do the cost estimates include fixture, furniture, equipment, etc.? Response: Yes.
- Are the estimates pre-value engineering? Response: Yes, the estimates are pre-value engineering. Value engineering is a cost review process. It is required for projects receiving state construction assistance. VE can bring cost down 5% without reducing quality. VE does not happen until after the work is funded (bond passed) and actual design is completed.
- Are temporary housing costs (if students must be relocated) included in estimates? Response: Yes.
- We don't want to over promise what can be done for a budget amount. We need to come in on or under budget.
- The group discussed the Old Main building. Some people in the community are attached to it. Can it be salvaged/reused? Response: If over 50% of the value of a building is remodeled, it triggers 100% code compliance. That drives considerable cost since the building must fully meet energy, seismic, disability access, and other code requirements. It is likely there is asbestos in the building as well. Renovation can cost between 70-110% of new construction.
- A member noted that Terry's information about Old Main and the significant updates that would be needed should be shared publicly.
- Another concern with retaining Old Main as part of the campus is safety. The many access points now, with the disconnected buildings, is a safety concern. Keeping Old Main would limit the ability to regulate entry and egress.
- Could the Old Main façade be kept? Response: Yes, there are many ways the façade could be retained and worked into a new or remodeled high school.
- The group discussed the cost estimates and whether they were conservative. Response: We have current cost numbers from five schools in Whatcom county, so our numbers are pretty good for new buildings. A member noted that it is very difficult to cost estimate renovation of old buildings on a commercial scale – so much is unknown about what will be found and what will need to be constructed.
- What is typical over run for budgeting construction? Response: New buildings we add 5%, typically, another 5% contingency is added for the project contingency (this is separate from construction contingency.) Terry noted that they also use 5% contingency for remodeling current buildings.
- In response to discussions about remodeling and retaining all or part of Old Main, a member asked what the real goal of the Task Force is – whether to preserve something or to provide



excellent facilities. It was suggested the discussion could be framed as: our goal is to serve the kids the best that we can, and we need to determine what does that look like: new or combo?

- The group discussed whether the preservation of old buildings is based on sentimentality or a false sense of economy. It was also noted that there is fear from the band / theater community that the program would be weakened by not having a standalone facility.
- Someone noted that Task Force members should have a script to help guide conversations with the public. Response: The Communications WSC is working with the district on something like that.
- The group discussed what would happen to transportation and maintenance operations under the different options. It was noted that Task Force recommendation have to include what will be done with any (if any) displaced facilities.

Penny asked what other information does the group need to know?

- How much will the state match (construction assistance) be?
- What happens to buildings that get saved?
- What are the project costs vs. construction costs and what does each include? There is a lot of confusion by the public, and we'll have to be very clear and consistent about what numbers we are using.

Updating Facilities: Other Projects

Penny asked the group to think about the rest of the potential project list that Terry shared and consider how it might be addressed. Discussion and comments included:

- What is meant by cosmetic work? Response: This refers to finishes, wall surfaces, etc.
- The group agreed that cosmetic was not a good descriptor and should be relabeled updating.
- Geography was discussed as something to consider when selecting projects. A member noted something is needed on the eastside of the freeway, where there is more impact/value than at Mt. View. Another member noted that people whose children attended North Bellingham are still feeling the impacts of the school closure, and those impacts should be considered when making choices.
- A member noted that the district closed Mt. View and that re-opening it could be a hot issue.
- A member asked if FHS has a high absentee rate? Response: We're at average.
- A member asked if there is a segment of the high school population that we're still trying to connect with? Response: Yes, Parent Partnership (to support home schooling) and other programs.
- A member noted that until there was a decision on what maximum dollar amount in the bond request is, there is no point in looking at other projects. Response: It is important to think about how other projects would be prioritized after the high school, as it is unknown at this time how much the high school will cost and what might be available to address other district projects.

Penny summed up discussed considerations suggested for the Bond Task Force:

- Look first at all projects/costs that address safety, as it is one of the communities' top concerns
- Consider geography when looking at needs
- Address basic needs first
- Consider what will allow/build trust in first bond to prepare for successful future bond requests

Penny asked if there was other information needed:



- Bring data that shows how facilities impact educational outcomes
- Provide resource list with references to research about school facilities and connections with educational outcomes
- We need information / proof about why old facilities aren't adequate anymore.
- What can legally be included in a bond and what can't (e.g. maintenance work)

Bond Task Force Website

Penny noted that a new website for the Bond Task Force was developed and was live. She shared the site with the committee. Comments included:

- A photo of FHS needs to be on the Challenge page
- Include elementary school boundaries that people live in
- If members of the Task Force are district employees, that should be included on the list on the site
- Note how well the district has demonstrated financial accountability, as its been excellent.
Response: Penny suggested that might be better on the District's website; not the Task Force's site. Others agreed.

Task Force Approach for Recommendations

Penny asked the group to consider an approach to the Task Force which included showing each project, its estimated cost, estimated state match, and estimated tax increase. She suggested the Task Force work in small groups at the next meeting to develop recommended bond packages based on that information and share their lists and rationale. Discussion and comments included:

- Include a demonstration of the impact on an average (\$300,000) home, since not everyone understands how a tax rate applies to them.
- Clarify the North Bellingham option(s).
- Key questions to pose:
 - Should the basic needs be met first? (roof, heat, etc.)
 - How should the project list be prioritized? (safety, structures, etc.)
 - Should the recommendations have a narrow or wide scope (need to consider impact on future bonds.)