

Other Event

PROJECT: WDMCS - 2018 Master Plan MEETING DATE: 4/19/2018 7:30 AM
SUBJECT: Community Update Meetings
LOCATION: West Des Moines Community Center ISSUE DATE: 5/1/2018

COMMENTS:

MEETING SUMMARY

ACTUAL START DATE 4/19/2018 7:30 AM

ATTENDEES:

Community Update Meetings
April 19, 2018
7:30AM, 11:30AM, and 6:30PM
West Des Moines Community Center

For the purpose of these meeting notes, the term “we” represents a collaborative effort between West Des Moines Community Schools, their consultants Shive-Hattery and Brainspaces, Inc., as well as a Facilities Committee and User Groups comprised of students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

Common Information presented to all meeting groups included:

1. Dr. Lisa Remy opened by presenting the process up to this day
 - a. Last fall, the School Board proceeded with developing a Framework for Educational Facilities Planning.
 - b. The recommendations of the Framework included:
 - i. Move 6th grade to Middle School.
 - ii. Modify the 9-12 grades and incorporate an Innovation Center.
 - a. Everything that we are doing as part of the Master Planning process is based on the District’s Mission, Vision, and the Portrait of a Graduate.
- It was noted that the District has some terrific schools, in some not so terrific buildings.
 1. Once the Framework was developed, the District then began to look at what is needed at each school.
 - a. The first step was to develop the space related benchmarks for each school.
 - b. Next, existing buildings are compared to the benchmarks and discrepancies are identified (called a “fit analysis”).
 - c. This is the step we are currently working on, and today’s presentation slides include analyses of the District’s elementary and middle schools.
 - i. What spaces are available after 6th grade moves out?
 - ii. What programs fit into the available spaces?
 - iii. What programs do not fit into the available spaces?
 - iv. Some of the rooms may be as simple of a fix as changing the label on the room.
 - v. Other rooms will require additional modifications.
 - a. Next, we will develop strategies to address discrepancies between the benchmarks and the existing facilities.
 - b. Over the summer, an evaluation will occur to develop an implementation plan identifying budgets and schedules for the various components of the Master Plan.
- Elementary school benchmarks were shown and explained:



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- a. Every elementary school should have at least one preschool classroom. Two of the District's eight elementary schools do not currently include preschool facilities.
 - b. In addition to the benchmark spaces that are common to all elementary school buildings, each school includes several specific additional spaces to accommodate unique program offerings, higher enrollments, and/or differences in student services such as special education.
- There have been no discussions about changing the current attendance boundaries in the District.
 - 1. Noting the urgency of space needs at the elementary schools, the Master Planning effort has focused more time on elementary and middle schools.
 - a. Make space for the 6th graders at the middle schools.
 - b. At a minimum, modifications will be required at the middle schools to accommodate 6th grade students.
 - c. Then focus on addressing space needs at the elementary schools, including making use of classrooms vacated by 6th graders.
- 1. A draft of the Facilities Master Planning strategies (including all schools) will be presented to the School Board in July, and will be finalized this fall after implementation options and logistical issues have been explored.
 - 1. The District has initiated a website to allow community members to follow the progress of the Master Plan development.
 - a. <http://MasterPlan.wdmcs.org>
 - b. There is a link available on the primary district website to the Master Planning site.
 - c. On the Master Plan website, there is a place to subscribe to receive updates as the process continues to unfold.
 - 2. A survey was conducted last fall to gather public comments to assist with developing the Framework.
 - a. The survey includes a question gauging perceptions on how well the District is preparing students for what's next in their lives.
 - b. 1,550 responses were collected in the fall.
 - i. In general, the respondents believe the District is doing a great job of preparing its students.
 - ii. However, there is still room for improvement (between 12% and 25% of respondents felt that students were less than adequately prepared for the future.)
 - iii. School facilities are one component of the solution, and the Master Plan will define spaces to help the District improve in this and other areas.
 - a. The survey has been re-opened to gather additional insights and to capture the input of community members who may have missed it last fall.
 - b. The survey is available in both English and in Spanish.
 - c. A link to the survey is available on the Master Plan website.
- Vocabulary is important:
 - a. Since many of us have preconceived notions of the term "Classroom" we are using the label "Learning Studio". A new way of talking about teaching spaces is intended to help shed our preconceptions and to spark new thinking about what learning could look like. We are hoping Learning Studios are places that inspire high quality and innovative teaching and learning.
 - b. Other examples include:
 - i. Instead of "Library" we use "Discovery Center."
 - ii. Imagine a Chemistry/Science Lab labeled "Forensic Investigation Lab."

Questions and discussions from the morning session included:

- 1. A discussion occurred concerning plans for the 9-12 High Schools
 - a. The Facilities Framework identified Valley High School as a 9-12 school, with off-site facilities for

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a new "Innovation Center."

- b. Valley Southwoods is the obvious first option to become the Innovation Center.
- i. The District and consultants are still working to define what the benchmarks are for the 9-12 programs, including what programs will be offered at the Innovation Center.
 - ii. We have yet to evaluate the Southwoods building for suitability as an Innovation Center.
 - iii. Other options will be reviewed once we establish a better definition of what the Innovation Center will include from a curriculum and operational perspective.

- a. **Q: Have you considered the loss of time spent traveling between the schools, and the missed learning time?**

A: We have looked at other school districts around the country, and what we are doing to minimize how we affect instructional time. We agree that it's important and do not want to waste time in excessive transportation.

- b. **Q: Does Valley have enough student capacity?**

A: There are currently 2,100 students enrolled at Valley, and approximately 750 students at Southwoods. So we understand that, in addition to Walnut Creek Campus, there are 2,800-2,850 high school students in the District that must be accommodated. Our current exploration includes identifying where those students will be learning at any given time, and then making sure there is enough space for them among the three facilities (meaning VHS, the Innovation Center, and Walnut Creek). Another component of the study is to identify the most appropriate locations for specific programs. For example, noting the location of the performing arts center at Valley, it may be best to locate music program spaces for all 9-12 students at Valley. This means that additional music spaces would likely be needed at Valley (to accommodate 9th grade music), but that music spaces at Southwoods could be repurposed into a new program that supports the Innovation Center.

- c. **Q: Will there be food services at Southwoods?**

A: We need to make sure there is a logic to how the services are provided. Having food offered at the Innovation Center would enable students to have classes there for a whole day – an option that would add flexibility to scheduling among the various sites.

- d. **Q: What types of programs are being considered for the Innovation Center?**

A: The programming at the Innovation Center needs to be driven by the Economy. We are meeting with local businesses and listening to their needs. A few ideas that are emerging include:

- i. IT including Cyber Security
- ii. Nursing
- iii. Skilled Trades
- iv. It is important to know that the programs needed today may not be so necessary or innovative five years from now, so the building needs to be flexible to accommodate changing demands from year to year as needed.

It should also be noted that programs allowing students to enter the workforce straight out of High School add value to college bound individuals. One student recently reinforced the importance of these programs by stating "I am going to college, but I will need to work my way through and these classes help me prepare for that."

- a. **Q: Does the District need a separate facility for innovative programs? A point was brought up about making the Innovation Center everywhere – IT doesn't need to be in a special space – it can be held at Valley.**

A: We want to make sure both the Valley High School and the Innovation Center will have dynamic programming. This will reinforce that the District is committed to its vision of preparing all students for the future.

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b. **Q: Is the District looking at risks associated with students commuting between multiple facilities?** *A concern for students commuting between buildings during Iowa's occasionally inhospitable winters was voiced by a parent.*

A: One of the goals of the Innovation Center is to give students more choices of programs and learning structures. School schedules and modes of transportation between the schools will need to be carefully considered in response to these and other parent concerns.

c. **Q: Does the District have the ability to accept sponsorship for buildings or equipment at the Innovation Center?**

A: The School Board has also asked us to keep in mind of the operational costs as well as the upfront costs. Dr. Remy did state the Board has put a mechanism in place for a partnering process. It is important to keep the business partners in mind in order to collaborate in offering innovative programs in innovative spaces, with the appropriate resources to be effective.

• **Wish List:** We are partnering with Mental Health Providers in each elementary school.

a. Right now, the providers do not know where they are meeting from day to day.

b. This is problematic for the providers and reduces effectiveness by adding stress for the students.

• **Q: With declining enrollment, is additional space really needed?**

A: Even though the school district is expecting a slightly declining enrollment, additional spaces are needed to accommodate new and evolving programs in the buildings.

a. It was pointed out, that if we create desirable spaces, then families will want to bring their children to the District, and a net increase in student population may occur.

b. This process may also influence some families who open enroll to other districts to return to the WDMCS system.

c. In this case, the types of programs that are wanted by the District, or required by the state, are driving the need for additional space.

Questions and discussions from the mid-day session included:

1. **Q: Is there a point in the Fit Analysis when the consultants will be speaking to the teachers and Principals to confirm what is needed at each school?**

A: Yes. Meetings at individual schools are scheduled for the second week of May.

2. **Q: Are teachers part of the meetings?**

A: Principals will decide who they want to invite to the meetings in May. Teachers have been invited to participate in several ways since this effort began, we agree that their voices are key to our success.

3. **Q: Did WDMCS graduates fill-out the survey?**

A: Yes, the survey was open to every member of the WDMCS community – past, present, future.

Several survey respondents identified themselves as “alumni” of VHS.

4. **Q: Do the elementary bubble diagrams illustrate how the spaces would be used when 6th grade moves out?**

A: No. The bubble diagrams overlaid on the floor plan represent current conditions.

5. **Q: Why, developmentally, is it better to have 6th graders with the middle school?**

A: The District's current curriculum is based on K-5 and 6-8. The 6th grade teachers are relatively isolated from each other limiting collaboration. By having 6th grade students at the middle school, they can have access to special programs like Robotics and others not currently available in the elementary buildings. Access to some programs are currently happening before school – rather than during the school day.

This could be alleviated by 6th graders joining the middle schools.

a. Comment: We understand that 7th & 8th grade teachers can't wait for the 6th graders to join middle schools – to help prep them for high school. Teachers want 6th graders to bridge – rather

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than bridging at the 7th grade – so they can build relationships with students over 3 years rather than just 2 years.

- b. Comment: There isn't a concern with the academics of 6th grade in a middle school – the concern is the parental psychology of their kids being ready for perceived social/emotional preparedness to deal with peer pressure on smoking, drinking, etc.
- c. Comment: I have a 5th and 7th grader, and I am teacher. Emotionally, the first part of 6th grade, they were not ready. That is not saying we couldn't create a space conducive to accommodate that.

• **Q: Will 6th graders move to the middle schools this fall?**

A: No. The only construction happening this summer is security improvements to all eight elementary schools.

1. **Q: Will these slides be made available to the public?**

A: Yes – in the next few days, the draft fit analysis for PreK-8 buildings will be posted to the WDMCS Master Plan webpage.

2. **Q: Is the Innovation Center WDMCS' response to DMPS Central Campus?**

A: The Innovation Center will not likely provide much of the same programming, instead we are considering program offerings that are responsive to our identified business and workforce needs.

3. **Q: Will the Innovation Center courses be dual credit/AP level for college credit?**

A: We have already started conversations with DMACC in aligning the programming with the community college credit requirements.

4. **Q: On the website, it sounds like there wouldn't be a cafeteria at Southwoods?**

A: It is the intent of the district to have food available at Southwoods for students taking classes in that facility. We apologize for any confusion.

5. **Q: Is there more partnering and collaborating with other universities?**

A: We would love to – however, the current state code doesn't allow it.

6. **Q: Where would the Innovation Center go if not at Southwoods?**

A: We will be looking at other possible solutions after a better benchmark is set for the Innovation Center.

7. **Q: Does the District have a plan for funding all these changes?**

A: In the last school election cycle, our Physical Plant and Equipment Levy passed. This means, starting in 2021, we will have 10 more years of an estimated 6.2 million dollars per year for facilities projects.

8. **Q: Has 6th grade moving into the middle schools been determined, or is it a draft?**

A: The Board approved this by adopting the Framework for the Master Plan. Once we explore issues such as cost, phasing and other logistics, we may find that adjustments to the Framework are necessary. Until then, we are focusing on the Framework as the Board approved it.

9. **Q: Once decisions are made, when is the earliest implementation could happen?**

A: While details have yet to be explored, a likely timeline for the PreK-8 changes would be fall of 2021, if all decisions are timely and if we expedite the design schedule.

Questions and discussions from the evening session included:

1. **Q: If we expand Stilwell in its current location, what will happen to Rex Mathes?**

A: The entire area would need to be studied, however, the Rex Mathes building is currently hosting programs for our home-school students, and that is working well.

2. **Q: What is the time frame for the Master Plan to be implemented?**

A: Once the Master Plan is approved identifying what is to be done at each school, a series of projects will have to be designed and constructed. Some of those projects have to be done in a specific order; middle schools have to be ready for sixth graders before elementary schools can be remodeled to make use of space vacated by sixth grade. Others can be done with fewer limitations by other facilities; some Innovation Center programs may be able to start in existing facilities. This will be investigated more thoroughly over the summer during the implementation study component of the Master Planning process.

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3. **Q: Once all the facilities are in place, how does that change the curriculum?**

A: 6th grade can be a great opportunity for exploration of the different programs, such as an exploration in the different languages offered at the high school.

4. **Comment:** The Innovation Center will be designed to continually re-invent itself.

5. **Q: The music programs at the middle schools are already limited in space, will adding the 6th graders become a detriment to the program?**

A: Adding 6th graders to the middle schools will necessitate additional space beyond just classrooms, such as music spaces, art rooms, PE spaces, dining space, etc.

6. **Q: What is the budget for all this work?**

A: It will be possible to estimate the costs associated with the Facilities Master Plan once the changes needed at each school are identified and quantified. Like the schedule, this will be studied in more detail over the summer during the implementation study portion of the process.

This documents our understanding of the items discussed and the agreements or decisions reached. Please contact our office within five days regarding omissions or discrepancies.

CC: