

Monday | July 6, 2020



MINUTES

1. Attendees:

- a. Bray Architects: Matt Wolfert, Mark Miller and John Mahon
- b. Mercer County School District Building and Grounds Committee, and building administrators

2. Schedule Review

- a. State of Illinois - Phase 4 impact to schedule
 - i. Schools are going to be open for fall 2020 however plans are still being formulated
 - ii. Survey to community is underway for options/solutions development
 - iii. Draft plan to be reviewed week of 7/13/2020
 - iv. IHSA has developed a 'return to play' for high school athletics for compliance with State of Illinois Phase 4 guidelines
- b. Facility study status update
 - i. Design team walk throughs scheduled beginning 7/6/20.
 1. Initial walk through beginning with Joy, IL building
 - a. Asbestos abatement is currently in progress at Joy and will be completed by July 29
 2. Next walk through is scheduled for 7/15/20 at Apollo Elementary
 - ii. Faculty/staff needs assessment survey underway
 - iii. Faculty/staff interview (listening) sessions will follow after receiving responses to needs assessment survey

3. Optimal Configuration

- a. Configuration for curriculum
 - i. The current facilities are configured as K-4(Elementary)/5-6(Intermediate)/7-8(Junior)/9-12(High School) arrangement
 - ii. K-5(Elementary)/6-8(Middle/Intermediate)/9-12(High School) is the optimal and desired configuration for building arrangement. Curriculum is currently arranged for delivery in this manner.
- b. Staffing

- i. Art/Band/Chorus is a shared staff position, requiring travel between buildings for staff. There is not sufficient resource to justify dedicated staff member at each building for this activity
- ii. Special Education – the District has had to hire more staff than needed in order to fulfill needs for special education at individual building locations.
- iii. There is currently 1 counselor in each building however each building does not actually have enough need to justify 1 full time counselor in each.
- iv. The District has 1 District Nurse, 1 RN and 1 LPN as shared resource between 5 buildings

c. Logistics

- i. It was discussed that fewer buildings would be more beneficial to the district. Factors influencing this included the need to transport food, transportation time for shared staff, and ability to balance class sizes.
 1. Fewer buildings would make more economic/fiscal sense for the district
 2. Currently the distance between buildings does not make it feasible for staff collaboration, staff development/training/meetings
 3. The ability to equally balance class sizes for 5 sections of 15-20 students per class is too difficult with multiple buildings/locations.
 - a. Currently the balance is either too big or too small at the current locations to comply with state requirements
- ii. A single elementary school building is preferred over multiple elementary buildings
 1. A single elementary would be one of the biggest impacts for the district for the students and staff
- iii. A single 6/7/8 Middle school is preferred option
- iv. The district once discussed a single district building as centralized campus. This was previously discussed for Millersburg as a central location. However, it was determined that a single, centralized building is not desirable, nor preferred.
- v. A K-8 building arrangement is not a good solution for the district.
 1. Parents would not desire or like this solution
 2. There is concern over the size of building required to house a K-8 population being far too large.
- vi. Sharing of resources happens between the various buildings but occurs most frequently between the High School and Junior School. Sharing predominately occurs from 5th through 12th grades and infrequently between lower grades.

d. Location

- i. The location is less of a concern as the district population is spread throughout the district boundaries.
 1. Population centers – The district has a population map which was submitted after the meeting, that illustrates size and locations of the district population centers
 - a. The district population is more evenly distributed than originally thought
 2. Due to the location of population there is not a sentiment that the school district buildings be centralized or located in Aledo.
- ii. Currently the district is utilizing bussing logistic software to assist in determining efficient routing and bus logistics. This will aid in any new building site location decision making related to bussing.

e. Current building considerations

- i. New Boston – there was conversation that a portion(s) of the existing building could be salvaged for reuse and expanded upon for a new building solution.
 1. Currently building classes are full but not overflowing. Challenge occurs when a grade level has more than 20-25 students as it is difficult to justify a second section class. However a class size up to 30 becomes a very large class.
- ii. Joy – Joy has beneficial spaces due to formerly being a high school building. However, there are concerns that large portions of the Joy building are in disrepair and/or are in need of significant maintenance. The gymnasium is as functional due to only having bleachers on one side of the gym and there is not enough parking for events. The space is not conducive for larger events for band/chorus due to lack of stage, parking and audience seating.
- iii. Aledo Intermediate – The building is the newest in the district. However, the lab equipment is not used as the lab spaces were constructed for an older age group. The gymnasium is as functional due to only having bleachers on one side of the gym and there is not enough parking for events. The space is not conducive for larger events for band/chorus due to lack of stage, parking and audience seating.
- iv. Existing building sentiments
 1. Every town has pride in the buildings located within their respective towns, however there is no requirement to preserve or reuse those buildings
 2. Constituents will want a ‘nice’ building for the students

3. The general sentiment is to have a nice, well prepared building in lieu of keeping and reusing existing buildings
4. All of the existing buildings are in need of improvement of HVAC, technology, quality of space, etc.
5. Additional sentiment of the need to get back to basics, solve the needs for space and provide good quality of education for the students.
6. If portions of the existing buildings can be easily changed for re-use, then those options should be explored.
7. The lack of air conditioning in district buildings has been a problem for attracting and retaining both families and faculty within the district. This is a regular issue in staff recruitment.
8. Security of existing buildings is a source of worry to parents in the district.
 - a. There is concern that it is more difficult to add security to existing buildings as opposed to the design of security being integral to the design of a new building.

v. Special Education

1. Special education is present at each building and special education students move through grade levels along with their corresponding level.
2. The district does have children within the district who can't be served. Those students attend learning centers at different districts
 - a. Students are bussed to other locations for service.
3. Mercer County School District participates in a special education cooperative, along with other districts, for access to services.
 - a. This process should consider exploration of solutions which could allow the district to solve needs in a different way. "Think outside the box."
 - b. This process should consider solution options which would allow the district to provide service for all of the student needs.
 - c. Space (lack of) for special education is a current problem.

vi. Vocational-Technical

1. There are limited programs available to students in Mercer County. The closest programs are too far away to allow student attendance. (East Moline and Galesburg).

2. The district should consider solution options which allow the district to provide more opportunities for students to receive vocational training.
3. Such learning opportunities may help the district attract families and students
4. Can the current Vo-Tech building be reutilized in a manner which allows the training of students for entering the workforce?

vii. Other

1. What other changes or additions to the district can be made that would provide something different from other districts. Opportunities like this may help the district to attract and retain families.

4. Current Maintenance/Improvement

- a. There is concern related to the magnitude of cost related to performing upgrades to the existing buildings in order to be re-used.
- b. Life Safety Survey Items
 - i. The first life safety list began with a recommend item list at a value of \$9M, however that was reduced down to a \$3.5M bond issue.
 - ii. The cost of some items has proven to exceed original expectations. This causes great concern with the ability to afford necessary and required repairs.
- c. The district is not currently on the School Construction Grant program list, due to being a newly formed district. However, there is discussion at the State level that a new list may be formed.
- d. Question has been raised as to whether it makes more sense to save money or complete necessary work at the Joy, IL building.
 - i. Point was made that the Joy, IL property may have land, or even portion of existing building, that could be usable in a new solution.
 - ii. Current cost to maintain is high, and there is concern that even with a new remodeling or expansion, that there will be continued expense incurred to continue maintaining.
- e. There is concern that Apollo will eventually be in a similar condition as Joy, due to continued process of aging and need for maintenance.
- f. Question was raised whether district will continue to need 'brick and mortar' buildings into the future. Will more education occur online?
 - i. General sentiment is that physical attendance centers will be valid and necessary.

g.

5. Why

a. Sentiment was raised that the board of education will need to be strongly centered with a statement of “Why”. The best way to utilize district funds, care for the facilities, students and taxpayers are at the top of list of reasons.

i. Reasons would need to include:

1. Nice buildings
2. Cost efficient operation
3. High quality education
4. Spend district funds well
5. Facilities should be attractive to families
6. Facilities should enhance education
7. The district should give the community good value

6. Next Meeting

a. 6:00 pm, August 3, 2020