



2016 School Study Committee

**Meeting Minutes
November 30, 2016
5:00 – 8:00 p.m.**

Harvey Education Center, Board Room

The meeting was called to order at 5:08 p.m.

Present: Tim Ayres, Ted Berryhill, Lance Delbridge, Susie Disselkoen, Jon Droscha, Steve Duane, Liz Evans, Shelly Fanson, Matt Hall, Amy McVaugh, Patrick Meyers, Christopher Mumby, Mitch Perrault, Mike Prelesnik, Sandy Smalley, Joe Starch, Mike Thompson, Sally Trout, Chris Waltz, Russ Whipple, Tim Williams.

Absent: Brian Bushey, Erik Cargill, Jessica Curtis, Laura Fenger, Josh Galloway, Emily Kress, Kerry Minshall, Jerry Schaffer, Chris Wright

Also Present: Superintendent Ron Drzewicki, Mike Kenney, and Steve Merriman

Public Comment

Jackie Lyons spoke to the committee on behalf of Alaiedon kindergarten teachers and shared thoughts related to moving all kindergarten students to one building. In general the comments included: how will resources, special classes, literacy aids, kindergartner aids, and sharing the playground with early childhood programs be handled in this configuration option. Jackie shared that considering the new 3rd grade reading law that moving all kindergartners to one building may result in less resources for reading. She shared a general concern of having both kindergartners and early childhood programs in the same building and that it may impact how kindergartners behave in the classroom. The demands of early childhood programs compared to kindergarten is very different and kindergartners learn from having older students in the same building. Consider adding developmental-kindergarten because some students are not ready for kindergarten and the community would benefit from developmental-kindergarten program.

Chairperson Chris Waltz read an email from Michael Koot, member of the public who asked that the committee be provided with his comments on some configuration options.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes from the November 10th meeting were approved with one minor change (last page updated to say Wednesday, November 30th rather than December 15th)

Request/Clarification Forms

There were no committee questions or comments on the request/clarification form items.

Process

Chairperson Chris Waltz discussed the committee process to date and going forward.

1. As a reminder, the charge or purpose of this committee is to determine what is best for Mason Public Schools given the challenges it is facing. There have been no conditions imposed on this committee from the Mason School Board of Education. Members were reminded of the August 24 minutes which stated, “Nothing has been predetermined and there is no premeditated goal for this committee.”
2. Transparency and openness of the process is important for building community trust. Allowing community input provides transparency. Having email communication within our committee is not transparent and could impact the community impression of this committee. We want to keep open communication and that is done during the committee meetings. Members were again reminded of the August 24 minutes which “stressed the importance for all full committee communication to occur during the meeting so that accurate minutes of the meetings may be documented, to ensure transparency, and by allowing the public an opportunity to see all discussion.”
3. Once a decision is made by the committee. It is our hope that all individual members will support the decision of the group. It is possible that some members may not have everything they prefer in the final proposal, but members should fully support the final decision and be prepared to defend it and champion it. Any outside influence is in conflict with the work of this group.
4. During the committee meetings, there should only be one speaker at a time. There should not be any side conversations because this is a distraction, interferes with accurate minutes, and sometimes causes backtracking at the meetings. Committee members that miss a meeting are urged to read the meeting minutes and ask questions if not clear. All members are encouraged to actively participate in the meetings. Once decisions are made, it is difficult and inefficient to go backwards and re-open previous decisions.
5. During the past meetings, we identified possible configuration options. We have discussed 9 different options and voted on the top 3 options. We want to have a small number of

options to share with the community to get their feedback. During the last meeting, the group eliminated one of the three top options. In tonight's meeting, we want to nail down the final list options. Moving forward we should determine the costs for the options and may refine options based upon costs. Next we will solicit the public input, further refine the options, and then take our recommendation to the school Board.

Board of Education Comments – Kurt Creamer

Mr. Creamer addressed the committee on behalf of the Board and thanked the members for working on the committee. He recognized it is not an easy process and is a challenge to balance the finances, community needs, and educational needs. Throughout the committee process there have been comments about the Board's involvement in the process. There have been comments that the Board is pushing for a new school. This is not true. The Board is not expecting a new school and has no opinion on this. A new school may be part of the solution and it may not be. There have been comments that district configuration is being steered by the Board. This is not true. The Board does not have a pre-conceived notion of configuration. There have been comments that the Board does not want to utilize the Harvey Education Center other than for its current use. This is not true. The HEC has been useful to the community but it may be used for something else in the future. The Board's philosophy is to keep at an arms-length during this process. The Board is not dictating any direction for this committee. Currently, there are 3 new Board members on the committee and the Board hopes the community does not think this will be a conflict. The Board trusts the committee to bring the best solution to the Board. In all cases, decisions are not made from the Board and pushed down. The decisions start with committees.

In previous conversations with strategic planning, Parent Advisory Forums, and SWOT Analysis with staff and parents, the issues of safety, security, traffic and technology were re-occurring themes. The Board felt it needed more help in this process. Six firms were interviewed by a Board committee in February of 2015. The Board members on the committee were unanimous in its selection of the 3 firms involved. The selection was formally approved by the Board in March 2015. The firms bring a lot of expertise. After the firms were selected, the first committee was formed and the proposal did not pass. The Board approved having a second committee in June. It is critical that all meetings are open, minutes are posted, and the agenda is available. The community needs to be involved in this process and transparency is critical. The Board has been provided with an overview of the options this committee has discussed. There is no perfect solution but there will be a best solution. The Board will trust the recommendations from this committee to bring the best solution to the district.

Chairperson Chris Waltz asked the committee if there were any comments or questions regarding the process or Mr. Creamer's comments. A member asked for suggestions on methods to do better at communication to the community. Mr. Creamer thought the community will probably be more involved and aware of the issues if this goes to a ballot proposal again. Another committee member said there is a need to eliminate the rumors from the past proposal.

Chairperson Chris Waltz asked if there were any final thoughts about the end process on decisions. A member shared that they hope each member is responsible for his/her communication and that no rumors should start with this committee. He hoped that there are not any rumors about lack of transparency or conspiracy about this committee. It will be counterproductive if this occurs.

Chairperson Chris Waltz shared a handout that contained the current masonbond.info website information. The website started earlier this year before the May election. The Chair shared a few points about the site to ensure all committee members are aware of and knowledgeable about it. The site is anonymous which does not provide for transparent discussions. The site has some inaccuracies and is not objective. It is not clear who is behind this site, even though they state they are a Mason resident and have students attending MPS. It is unclear where this site is getting their information from. The author stated on the site that most of the information on the site has been provided to the committee for consideration, however, the Chair is unaware of how it was submitted to the committee. Committee members discussed the site: the author has a right to have a site, it is important that the committee be aware of the site, and some committee members are concerned with the site because they felt incorrect information had been and continues to be put out to the community.

A person from the public, Michael Kelly, announced to the committee that he developed and maintains the website. Mr. Kelly explained that the intention of the website was to provide information to the community so that all people have access to the information. The committee discussed concerns that there may be viewpoints and information on the site that are not in sync with the School Study Committee. It was discussed that the most important thing is for the committee to develop a solid strategy for providing information to the community about decisions made by this committee and any forthcoming proposals.

Re-open Configuration Options Discussion

A committee member shared an alternative configuration proposal to the committee for consideration. He proposed moving 5th grade to the middle school with some additions, kindergarten to HEC with an addition to HEC, and renovations to the other buildings. This will be added as option #10 (combined #2 and #3).

A member asked what budget and timeframe does the committee need to provide to the contractors. The member felt the committee needed to do something with HEC because the community commented on that in the post bond survey. The Superintendent thought it would be good to have 2 to 3 options for the consultants to review and provide cost estimates. The consultants would need approximately 2 to 3 weeks to provide costs and schematics.

A member stated that the committee needs to commit to a certain objective. Does the committee want the elementary buildings below the capacity or just lower than the current population. If 2 grades are moved the buildings would be below capacity. The committee discussed there would be some economies of scale if move, for example K to HEC or 5th to MMS, there are some shared staff to utilize. The committee decided to look at diverse options, review costs and pros and cons of each, and then go to the community for input.

The committee discussed moving administration or leaving administration in the HEC. There is limited educational value for moving administration. The committee also discussed if we should consider additional land and if we are satisfied with current location of all buildings. Committee did not want to pursue this further.

A member suggested we get cost estimates for the following:

1. K to HEC
2. 5 to HEC
3. K-1 to HEC
4. 4 -5 to HEC
5. 5 to MMS
6. Enlarge all elementary buildings
7. Option 1 & 5 Thompson option

Mike Kenney of the Skillman Corporation provided the committee with a high level cost estimate for moving 5th grade to the middle school, which included estimates for improvements at all buildings and the transportation building. The committee did not have time to discuss the estimates and will plan to discuss at a future meeting.

Scope of Work for Selected Options

Agenda item was not discussed during the meeting and will be discussed at a future meeting.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Next Meeting Date

Thursday December 15, 2016.