

Minutes of Special and Work Meeting

The Board of Directors Ashland School District

A Special and Work meeting of the Board of Directors of the Ashland School District was held Thursday, May 7, 2020, beginning at 7:00 PM via Zoom link .

1. **Call to Order / Roll Check**

Chair Westrick called the meeting to order and a roll check confirmed that all board members were present. Also present were:

District Staff:

Superintendent Kelly Raymond
Operations Director Steve Mitzel
Board secretary Jackie Schad

Guests:

Former Board member Eric Strong
BBT Project Manager Mike Freeman
BBT Architects Renee Alexander and Matthew Guthrie
HMK Program Director Chris McKay
HMK Principal in Charge David McKay

2. **Bond Update**

Mr. Mitzel introduced the guests and the group began a review of the Walker Elementary School project.

Mr. McKay reported that program planning with Walker staff has been completed. This included identifying site priorities and also surfaced other desirable items which were not included in the plan because they were not on the pre-bond list. He then walked the board through a summary of the cost model that shows a resulting projected budget of approximately \$10 million more than original pre-bond estimates.

The overall plan is to replace the pre-1960's East/West Wing, perform seismic upgrade to the historic wing, replace the HVAC with a modern system, and renovate classrooms to a modern environment. All aspects of the building would be upgraded and the school should be good for another 50+ years. Early cost estimates were based on a plan to renovate the East/West wing. However, close inspection revealed that the structure of the wing will not accommodate modern systems and it makes more sense to demolish and rebuild. This was the consensus of a variety of consulting experts. The classrooms in the historic wing

need more than cosmetic upgrades and the team proposes a more significant renovation. This recognizes the need for equity across the school with regard to instructional spaces. The team did consider a complete rebuild of the school but determined that parts of the building would support a renovation approach.

Achieving ADA access for the basement is not viable. There are a combination of factors including low ceilings, the presence of steam pipes, the expense in dollars and sacrificed space of installing an elevator. The recommendation is to move the functional learning uses to other spaces in the building and use the basement primarily for storage.

Ms. Alexander described the program planning process. This included meetings with a large group of staff to learn the culture of the school, the importance to its staff of strong community interaction, and the important priorities for teachers and families. The group desired a welcoming facility with a balance of security and accessibility, flexible multi-use learning spaces, an inclusive community approach, and diverse spaces with a combination of quiet spaces and gathering spaces. The staff brought a love of teaching to the school culture.

Mr. Guthrie stated that in early conversations, they encouraged the planning team to brainstorm about proposed spaces with few constraints. There was strong attention to the historic wing. They talked about functional relationships, sight lines, and the topography of the site. They wanted a focus on the courtyard where possible and wanted to move the main entrance closer to the main parking area, with a more secure entrance.

Walker staff wanted attention to the cafeteria. They thought the lighting was too bright and it lacks a welcoming feel. They discussed the potential use of the space for emergency gathering in the event of an earthquake. There was a desire for a cohesive building concept.

The team tried to build in more private spaces in the office set-up for small meetings, as well as additional flexible teaching spaces and community spaces for gathering.

There was a period of questions and answers:

Q. Is the parking in the plan adequate?

A. The plan assumes additional parking lots on the site.

Q. Will there be sufficient classroom options in the event we have unplanned additional capacity needs?

A. The new plan includes 14 dedicated classrooms, a SPED room, a reading room, and a computer lab that could be classrooms.

Q. What would be the increased student load in the new configuration?

A. Mr. Strong commented that he remembered in original discussions, Helman was identified to accommodate student overflow space because it has extra land and less neighborhood traffic congestion.

Q. Director Chang, a Walker parent, stated that he appreciates the care taken with Walker staff. Would moving the administrative offices to the back side impede staff ability to monitor street activity? Also, how would this impact flow of students into the building from the bus stop and parent drop-off sites?

A. The proposal is to re-configure the traffic flows so that students are dropped off in the interior of the property. The goal would be to keep students within the more protected areas of the school, e.g., the courtyard and cafeteria. There is also discussion of arranging a direct entrance to the Kindergarten classroom, as many families like to bring their kinders.

Q. What was teacher feedback to keeping the more traditional wing structure?

A. They were very positive once they saw that it was preserving the proximity that was important to them, e.g. two classrooms adjacent to an activity space and with views to the outside. They like the library and the cafeteria in the central location.

They are still grouping K-3 students in one section of the building and upper grades in the other. This allows appropriate rest room considerations and age appropriate groupings. The teachers selected this option after reviewing multiple approaches.

Q. Are features like making a nice central courtyard and adding parking lots etc., included in budget?

A. Yes, these are included in the cost model.

Q. Could we add a Kindergarten class at Walker if enrollment surged, taking into account the in-class rest room requirement?

A. Some of the dedicated rooms are positioned so they could be converted to a Kindergarten classroom, though it could require using a rest room next door.

Q. What is the thinking about building security?

A. The building helps create a secure perimeter. Parking lots would be located outside a fence. The exterior courtyard would be enclosed on all sides.

Q. Was there parent input and is the principal in support?

A. Parents were on the planning team and Principal Burns has endorsed it.

Mr. Mitzel stated that the team just did the CMGC selection on Friday and they have much more work to do on cost estimates and budgeting. There will be more discussion once we get better data.

Q. Would the current economic situation possibly result in a decrease of cost estimates.

A. There is currently a good amount of construction in southern Oregon on projects for which costs are underwritten, so competition for firms may keep costs elevated. The impact on supply chains is also an unknown. Material procurement could suffer and that could drive up costs.

Q. Do we know our overall budget delta currently?

A. AMS – with the allocations recently added AMS is reconciled to budget. HELMAN – the schematic design was within budget. There will be new estimates in about 2 weeks.

AHS - estimates are in line if we stick with the original bond plan. Science classrooms and other improvements would exceed budget by an estimated \$8-9 million.

Mr. Strong stated that science rooms were a wish list item in early plans, budget permitting. Mr. McKay stated that they are very hopeful about receiving a seismic grant for AHS that could add more than \$2 million to the AHS revenue plan.

Q. When the Board approved cost reductions for AMS, are those changes now included as standard in other project specifications?

A. The biggest savings was in roofing materials and it is specific to that school. We do not expect significant alteration of interior building standards. AMS covered the delta in part with some design changes and additional revenue sources.

Director Prud'homme noted that we are about \$13 million in project overages now and we don't want front loaded projects to penalize later projects. Director Chang also expressed concern about equity involved in the ordering of the projects. The initial amounts for elementary projects seem out of sync with scope of the work intended to be done.

Mr. Strong stated that there was a review of relative costs projected for each project and some concern about it. The estimators and the previous business manager believed that it would even out. We didn't know as much about Walker structurally as we do now. The Walker "bare bones" wing lasted for 40-50 years.

Q. Director Skuratowicz asked for a clarification about changes that were made to the AMS design with regard to wallboard?

A. Mr. McKay stated that the proposed wainscoting was reduced in height from 8 feet to 4 feet, which is closer to standard, and they adjusted some exterior paneling to a product that was less expensive but very durable.

Q. Director Prud'homme asked whether the AMS exterior changes are specific to the site or new specs overall.

A. Mr. McKay replied that they are specific to the site because they are incorporated into the architectural design features. Ms. Alexander commented that the variation of materials will provide depth and interest to the building exterior. They are

incorporating similar concepts into the Helman design. Mr. Guthrie added that Helman is in a residential neighborhood where the proposed fiber cement panel fits more with the neighborhood housing.

Q. Director Prud'homme asked what remains to be done by the end of the school year.

A. Pre-design will wrap up and they are moving to the selection of the CMGC, then will start working towards first initial cost estimates. They will spend 3-4 months for schematic design, depending on the COVID impact on their ability to plan efficiently.

Mr. Mitzel stated that he wanted a deeper conversation to bring the Board up to speed so that they did not have surprises similar to those that arose with the Middle School.

Q. Chair Westrick asked whether the site programming conversations are realistic or aspirational.

A. Superintendent Raymond stated that the schools are doing great thinking about ways that space enhancement can enhance their instruction. They are not adding a lot of new programming but flexible space is a high priority for principals. Site based classrooms and ELL spaces are equity goals for every site where possible.

Director Westrick added that he thinks the Walker plans are straight forward. He urged caution about adding items that may be more in the category of luxury, rather than essential to the educational program.

Mr. Strong stated that there is always a measure of uncertainty in construction projects and no certainty until a shovel hits the ground.

Mr. McKay stated that these projects will give the district three elementary schools that will be highly functional for several decades. The Middle School allocated funds do not necessarily need to stay with AMS. The continuing need for them will be evaluated as we move forward.

Mr. Mitzel stated that there are several more milestones and decision points with the Walker project and as the project moves forward there will be opportunity for more input. Helman is coming into alignment well and the final budget should be wire tight. The Middle School was a challenge because there are two different programs operating under one roof. It took a lot of work to arrive at sufficiency for both needs. They will work towards not having to use all of the set-aside now allocated.

Director Chang appreciated the briefing and receiving information earlier in the process. Other Directors added their thanks.

Chair Westrick extended appreciation to everybody on the team for a great presentation and open discussion. He also thanked former board member Strong for sitting in.

Mr. Mitzel thanked Mike Freeman, who is the project manager.

3. Other items of interest

Director Skuratowicz noted that at the ASF board meeting she recently attended, there was discussion of the need to make support of our food services a priority. Superintendent Raymond said that she would confer with Supervisor Lehman and Executive Director Bacon.

4. Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Westrick adjourned the meeting at 8:35 pm

Submitted by:
Jackie Schad, Board Secretary

Dated for Board Approval: June 8, 2020

Board Chair, Eva Skuratowicz

Acting Superintendent Steve Retzlaff