

# Vision 20/20

11/25/14 Committee Meeting Notes



**Welcome: Geoff Palmer** . We'll be reviewing where we are, where we've been

## **Survey Results To Date**

As of Nov. 25, there were 94 completed surveys.

*In considering needs v. wants, what absolutely must be included in a facility plan?*

- Adequate parking and traffic flow
- Air conditioning
- Books
- Classrooms
- Commitment
- Consistency
- Cost
- Educational
- Energy funding
- Heating
- Increase
- New buildings permanent improvement
- Plan resources
- Technology
- ventilation

*What do you value, in terms of facilities?*

- Activities
- Comfortable
- Cost effective
- Functionality
- Heating
- Look
- Materials
- Needs

- Quality construction
- Safety
- Technology

*Do you favor neighborhood or grade-level schools?*

- 47 votes v. 47 votes
- Neighborhood schools received the top votes for first and third options while one site had the least amount of interest. Downsizing to 2 elementary buildings received the highest number of second option votes.

*Timing of Ballot Issue*

- 61 believe the district should go on in 2015 and take advantage of the drop off
- 33 say after passing an operating issue
- Timing is a piece of the puzzle.

#### **Discussions with the Board of Education**

- Projected timeline to communicate a potential elementary reorganization is 9-12 months.
- Feedback suggests need to protect investments without sacrificing programming. On average the district spends around \$350,000 annually on capital improvements from the operating budget.
- Permanent improvement levy – how does that impact 2017 millage drop? Provides flexibility with operating dollars. If we move forward, there will be a clear delineation of what we'll be doing with it? We have an aging bus fleet and technology needs. The net effect we see operating-wise is it will move our real operating needs (going into the red) back another year. This community has spoken clearly there needs to be change. Those changes have impacted all of our buildings.
- Looking at the millage drop off in 2017. If we went for a ½ to ¾ of a mill, the remaining millage on that drop could likely cover Phase II. You'll get everything with little to no increase in taxes.

#### **Questions Related to Ballot Issue**

1. Millage drop off is not clearly understood by a large number of people
2. Permanent improvements should be addressed

#### **What are your thoughts?**

1. Neighborhood v. grade level v. single building
2. Does the revised grade-level concept make sense to you?
3. Assets/partnership opportunities for our community owned properties?
4. Does it still make sense to utilize the built in drop of millage originally proposed?
5. Does it still make sense for the Board to address operating funds before Phase II?

## Questions

1. Are you talking about not going for an operating levy and going for a permanent improvement levy?
  - a. Yes. Looking at this to take strain off the operating budget and put money aside to deal with bigger capital issues. Then look at operating/bond issue down the road. Give stability and protect our investments. We're taking almost \$500,000 out of the operating budget this year to deal with capital projects. PI has to be on long-term projects.
2. You need to prioritize this will fund your PI needs. Community doesn't understand. While we are an affluent community, we are not willing to spend it on education.
  - a. It becomes a delicate balancing act of determining what piece you want to address. Combination levies are very difficult because of all the different components being combined together.
3. Do you have an idea why people in the middle are saying no?
  - a. A lot of it has to do with people who feel they got burned when they got the high school. They saw pictures of things wrong with the middle, high school and elementary schools. There were a lot who thought we were fixing all the schools, and that wasn't the case.
4. 30% of the homeowners in this community with children don't utilize schools. How do you sway the non-school user?
5. If we had a correlation to property values, maybe we'll get some of those people.
6. I'm worried about programming being impacted more than it already has.
7. If this passes, your operating levy will not pass. This is what I'm hearing from the community. I think we have to choose our battles.
8. Renewal levies: have we looked at that?
  - a. Our levies have been passed as continuing levies. Renewals expire. We've never pursued a termed levy. If a PI levy were to pass in May 2015, the net effect would be a slight increase in taxes for the 2016 calendar year. In 2017 you have that drop when you would target bond/operating to offset that.
9. When we look at campaign, seems like we dive too much into detail. That letter about our water bills going up struck fear into people. If we could have a grassroots group that can talk about this and get the grey area shifted.
10. Surprised to see the PI because I think operating is more important. The education component is very hard. People already have ideas in their head.
  - a. It's even harder when you have organized opposition against anything for the schools, compounded by the partial truths about things that become difficult to overcome. There needs to be an immense amount of communication no matter what happens. You'll never turn a no. you deal with the people in the middle and get your supporters out to vote.
11. What does 1 mill equate to in dollars?
  - a. Talking \$70-\$75 range, or around \$32 per \$100,000 per home valuation.

12. Why is the Board switching from operating/bond to PI?
  - a. Concern with short timeline and the need to engage the community in deep discussions about the configuration and delivery of elementary instruction.
13. Do we feel we can do it properly with a PI issue? I don't think the community will know the difference between a PI – bond – operating.
14. If you come to me for a PI, I'll tell you to maintain the current buildings.
15. Is there a clearer way to say that our facilities are no longer safe, or something concrete to make people understand the need.
  - a. The challenge is getting people into the buildings.
16. I think the key is getting the elevator speech toned.
17. There is an older, not affluent population in Westlake. We need to communicate to them why it's important. They want to know more. They need to see more than a crack in the wall. Can we take polls at the senior center? The library? The parks?
  - a. We've tried to reach out with our ongoing communication to reach out to every household in the district. We're moving to the every door direct mail route.
18. Social media is not working. You invite them to a crumbling building and feed them spaghetti. Need to cater to people who don't come in and don't see it.
19. How much does it cost to put a levy on the ballot?
20. Impact of millage drop on a \$100,000 home and average home?
21. Transportation impact? Longer rides mean placing younger kids on buses earlier and for longer stretches.
  - a. We transport a large percentage of our kids now. We have a walk area around each building. We'll have more ridership if we reduce the number of buildings, but we would have to comply with ride times set by board of education.
22. The concept of fix Parkside and build 2 new elementary schools seems to have disappeared. That shouldn't be off the table.
  - a. That had to do with total cost and long-term savings not being realized. We need a clearer discussion about what led to that.
23. All scenarios should compare transportation costs, management costs, operating costs, etc.
24. Is this based on OSFC standards?
  - a. Cost per square foot is based on OSFC with a margin for error.
25. These options are not what we originally discussed. If we can't get our board members to explain why that option was taken off the table, we won't be able to explain it to the community.
26. Avon teachers/administrators came and talked to us about grade-level configurations. It was overwhelming we wanted to keep neighborhood schools in Westlake.
27. What are we paying to non-public schools? My entire street is private. I hear we pay for their transportation and IEPs.
  - a. About 25% of our population attends private schools.
28. I know many private school parents who support the levy and many public school parents who don't. It's not relevant to our discussion.
29. What's our OSFC percentage?

- a. 5%. We're using their figures and estimates to drive preliminary cost estimates.
30. What are the consequences if this fails?
- 31.
32. Has there been an effort to regularly communicate with community via a brief annual report? Thought would be a mailing to address non-parent voters. I think a comparison of services to surrounding communities. Major issues (age of textbooks, operating deficit, age of buses). Include a summary of 3 biggest needs in district and comparison to state average/Greater Cleveland/West suburbs. Maybe regular communication on needs would prepare community greater for coming needs.

### **What's next?**

The CAC report on elementary structures is slated for January on best learning environments.

20/20 Committee meetings:

- Dec. 8 and Dec. 18, 6:30pm at Lee Burneson Middle School
- Community survey/staff input
- Recommendation to Board in early to mid-January

Subcommittees?

- Educational staff to discuss input on educational considerations?

There are different ways to move forward. That combination levy was what everyone focused on. We can't tackle that effectively in a short time period.

What happened in the spring v. what came forward was a combination of what was shared by the board and central office. Any time you have a group the challenge becomes how to gain input and use it for decisions. You need a clearer understanding of the fork in the road that went from 3 neighborhood buildings to 1 PK-4.