

20/20 Vision

10/7/09 Committee Meeting Notes



ATTENDEES: Harry Applegate, Cathy Axcell, Bill Baddour, Tim Barrett, Mike Bilardo, Amy Butcher, Annette Caraulia, Tracy Cox, Nate Cross, Dawn Dawson, Kathy D’Ettore, Ken Didion, Jon Dregalla, Chuck Dubil, Kim Durbin, Jim Eadie, Becky Eberts, Tony Falcone, Lisa Forshey, Patricia Fox, Tim Freeman, Brian Gottfried, Pam Griebel, Ed Hack, Karen Herzberger, Tony Jones, Dan Kalish, Dan Keenan, Jan Litterst, Carolyn Maciag, Andrew Mangels, Kim Mather, Julie McCallister, Michael Medoro, Christina Meecha, Russ Milan, Duane Miller, Paul Misterka, Dr. Pete Mogyordia, Patricia Needham, Loni O’Neill, Mark Pepera, Bob Plantz, Dave Puffer, Bob Ramer, Rudy Ringwall, Carolyn Rummery, Nancy Schill, Steve Schill, Kobe Tabbaa, Bud Tetzlaff, Kurt Thonnings, Melisa Yeoman, Tom Mays

WELCOME & 20/20 REVIEW: Superintendent Dr. Daniel J. Keenan Jr. gave an overview of the Westlake City School District, our tradition of excellence, report card ranking. Our challenges are classrooms in alternative locations (wire closets, hallways, stages, storage areas, restrooms), partitioned classes, etc. The district chose to pursue a data-driven system to determine if there was a problem with facilities (Ohio Facilities Commission facilities survey, Lesko land use study, enrollment projections). Held community forums, conducted telephone surveys, organized a focus group, established a 20/20 Vision Committee. The Committee made recommendations to the Board of Education, offering two plans for consideration, acknowledging there are serious problems with facilities and imploring the board to move forward quickly and include maintenance in any bond issue.

We have communicated through newsletters, facilities web site (www.wlake.org/facilities), newspaper articles, 20/20 blog. Now we’re looking at what to place on the ballot and how to sell it to the community.

Q&A:

1. Lakewood Schools project: Lakewood Schools did an OSFC project. They are bigger and had half of their buildings were paid for by the state. They did a three-phase project.
2. Have you considered a campaign with local businesses to help fund the project? We will look at that, the sale of land and alternative funding sources.
3. Are we on par with other schools to prepare our students for a global economy? Our students will be competing on a global level for technology-driven jobs. It’s difficult to install technology in buildings where roofs leak or there are floods every time it rains.
4. Can we consolidate for a better business model? In some ways we are doing that. We share career tech education with Lakewood. We are part of the Ohio Schools Council for more purchasing power (energy, gas, electric).

5. Will you be expanding the photos for each of the schools? We'll be updating the photos and the video.
6. Are we going to tour the buildings? You are. There are opportunities to tour Dover Elementary on Saturday and Wednesday. There will be a tour of WHS at the next meeting. Future tours will be held at Parkside and Bassett.
7. Offering tours after something is placed on the ballot will pique more interest from the community.
8. Hasn't the state mandated all-day kindergarten for next year? They have. We have put it into our budget and forecast. We plan to add 5 more modular units to make space for kindergarten. The state is earmarking money for all-day kindergarten, but it is not enough to fully fund the program, meaning something else will need to be cut to provide it.
9. Request to breakdown # of families with kids in public schools, private schools, no kids or adult kids out of school.

PROJECT FINANCE 101: (refer to handout)

1. Bond financing

- a. Characteristics: Always require a vote of the people. Issued to finance construction (building new buildings, renovating). Similar to home mortgage (securing debt to pay off a large liability). Millage is not assessed until the bonds are sold. Levies are requested in terms of mills for specified term. Requests can be combined with a permanent improvement (PI) levy. With a bond issue, the principal is obtained up front. It raises money annually needed to satisfy the debt. The Ohio Schools Facilities Commission offers funding, we are considering community partnerships and a permanent improvement levy.
- b. Structure
 - i. Traditional: one bond issue requiring one vote. Permits the district to finance and/all of a master plan, including phasing.
 - ii. Multi issue: Take a project of significant size and split it up into two bond issues with one vote each. Obtains approval for financing a portion of a master plan. Can include a PI component.

2. Project Context

- a. Millage: A mill is 1/10th of a penny or .001. Tax per \$1,000 of assessed value (35%).
- b. Costs
 - i. Master Plan 1: Total project of 5.48 mills would cost a \$100,000 homeowner additional \$168/year. Phase 1 = 2.96 mills or additional \$91/year. Phase 2 = 2.86 mills or additional \$88/year.
 - ii. Master Plan2: Total project 5.61 mills or additional \$172/year. Phase1 = 2.96 mills or additional \$91/year. Phase 2 = 3 mills or additional \$92/year.
 - iii. Master Plan 3: Total project of 5.44 mills means additional \$167/year. Phase 1 = 2.96 mills or \$91/year. Phase 2 = 2.81 mills or \$86/year.

3. Q&A

- a. These numbers include inflation and a probably time schedule for construction.
- b. Historically, has the district put on multiple issues or one vote? Historically the district has requested projects with one vote. The 1996 bond issue had multiple renovations, but it encompassed only one vote.
- c. You can offer the lower millage in the beginning and increase it as you go. There are pros to one vote, but there needs to be a comfort level. We need the community support.
- d. What kinds of taxes are currently imposed on the community to support the schools? Are there any levies that will fall off so it's a more saleable proposition? We took advantage of that during our last levy. In 2018 there is some debt service millage dropping off.
- e. What's our valuation? \$1.4 billion total valuation, a little over \$300,000 in commercial property.
- f. What about creative financing? Can we as part of the verbiage in the levy say we will pay off some of the existing bonds, which will reduce the millage at a certain time? It's a possibility. Every year we look for refinancing opportunities to refinance debt. Most of the interest costs the district is paying now is historically low. We'll work with our bond counsel to run scenarios that makes the most sense for the community at the lowest cost.
- g. Our school budget is about \$50 million. Based on that, a little over 2 mills to raise \$50 million/year. That's the difference between an operating levy and bond issue. We receive operating money annually.
- h. This is over 28 years with the possibility to extend to 40 years? The law permits you to extend it that long, but must take weighted average of a useful life of everything you are going to improve. Computers and furniture don't last as long. How much would this change to extend it? It doesn't change the millage considerably. You'll pay more interest costs, but it might give you a better price point.
- i. With a one-bond, phased in project, is there a limitation on how long you can wait before you issue the second bond? Not sure there's a limitation to assess, but once you start collecting, there's a required time limit for spending.
- j. Request for data: Compare what community is paying for their schools and compare it to other districts.
- k. Is there a plan of what will happen if the enrollment dramatically decreases? We would hate to have new & beautiful buildings that are only half full.
- l. Our binders show levy and bond issue history with actual numbers of voters for/against the issue. These numbers are not given for Westlake. Can we get them to give us an idea of our opposition?
- m. You need to remind those who are (or seem to be) against the grade configuration buildings – we are doing it now (almost). We are asking for the students to make one new move, and that would be in the younger years.
- n. What's the maximum building size before you become inefficient?
- o. What are the cost savings going grade specific? Building and operating?

- p. What are the benefits of grade specific Consistent grading? Social development?
- q. Balancing optimum learning/efficiency?
- r. Excellence/improvement in delivery of education?
- s. Are both models equal or what is operationally better?
- t. Do teachers favor one over the other?
- u. How will you reach out to those citizens that don't have their kids in school or don't have kids at all?
- v. What is state of the art (including technology)? Learning model optimum layout?
- w. Does it affect or benefit if we change to grade specific?

EDUCATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: Don't forget to check out the web site (www.wlake.org/facilities). There is now a blog to post questions or comments on that site.

Three people who came from other districts with grade level configuration.

Sherry, principal at Avon East (1st & 2nd grade building with 615 kids). We are a fast growing community, which is why we went to grade-level configuration. I taught in a neighborhood school. Both designs can be highly successful and have challenges. 14 sections of each grade. We've had 9 years of Excellence on the state report card. That tells you all designs will work. With good educators and great parents.

Michelle & Tamara from Kenston: We have 1-3 with 10 sections of each. Both have only experienced the whole grade-level buildings. Some pros are collaboration with our grade-level teachers. Consistent with pacing and standardized at each grade level, common assessments. A colleague went through a neighborhood school and she liked knowing all the kids in the neighborhood growing up and going to school together. In grade-level configuration, moving up to middle school is not so much of a transition because they already know everyone. Each grade is housed in a pod so they are housed together and mingling just with their peers. Teachers push each other to excellence. Concerns about PTO and parent involvement. Ours is very involved. Their meetings are during the school day in a classroom. Our open houses are overflowing with parents in our classrooms.

Q&A

1. Any problems with transitions? Teachers suffer more social/emotional problems because they don't want to see them go. We do an excellent job of transition. Parents also experience the same movement as the kids. Have to get to know the new building and rules and staff.
2. I am looking at this seeing a different kid at 4 different schools with 4 different starting times. How would that be a benefit? Kids are picked up at the same time K-5 or 6. Open houses are staggered to allow for parents with children at multiple schools.
3. A district calendar ensures nothing is scheduled at the same time. Volunteering usually happens in primary grades. It works. You have 4 different buildings to see how things are run differently and the same.
4. Did you go from neighborhood schools to grade-level configured? Yes. In Avon 18 years ago we had a neighborhood school. As we grew, to keep class sizes the same we went to a

campus/grade specific design. One challenge was stocking the school library with appropriate materials. We staggered the grade level configuration by having one grade come over each year.

5. How did the special education program transition? We do field trips to see the school and run the schedule. In August we do it again and take them in to get to know their teachers. How much time is spent on transitioning? A field trip type program. Collaborate as a grade level when placing kids the following year so there is a nice bell curve. It's a team effort and that information goes up to the next building. Dialogue going back and forth.
6. Did you have before/after school care at all the buildings? Kindergartners are bused to another building. We have more reservations than children, who are very resilient.
7. Do younger students miss the older role models? We charge the 2nd graders to be role models for the 1st graders. You can empower any child to be a role model.
8. How do you handle 600 kids eating lunch? Lunches begin at 11:30 and run 30 minutes. Switch off recess and lunch periods. Youngest kids eat first.
9. Avon started with a large building that was added onto.
10. Performers don't have to go from school to school because all the kids are together.
11. What's the cost effectiveness of grade level configuration? Busing and transportation is a big savings.
12. Request for data: How much weight does the district have to give to potential changes in the valuation of housing stock in Westlake? What happens if the overall valuation drops in Westlake over time?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS: Millage amounts of three plans are close. There is evidence that grade-level schools and neighborhood schools can work. Question: As we continue to discuss data and considerations to move toward consensus on a master plan, what community values and expectations of the WCSD should we consider?

**Next meeting is Nov. 4 at WHS. Tour at 6:15pm, meeting at 7pm.
Meeting topics will include operational issues and site considerations.**

