



Westlake Board of Education

Board Notes from Monday 11/29/10, Special Meeting

TREASURER'S ITEMS:

1. Approved a resolution to authorize CFO/Treasurer to enter into an investment management agreement with Baird Public Investment Advisors.

DISCUSSION ITETMS:

2. Exterior elevations & style of new high school – presentation by Todd Wroblewski from MKC Architects.
 - a. Went through a series of buildings in the city now, including Westlake Historical Society, Westlake City Hall, Westlake Recreation Center, Westlake Fire Station on Crocker Road, Porter Public Library, Westlake Police Station, Westlake Post Office, Turning Point office building, University Hospitals building at Clague & Detroit roads, LaCentre, Crocker Road office buildings, Crocker Park. Hard to say one style/flavor is most prominent, other than public buildings.
 - b. Walked through floor plan and site plan for new high school. New addition goes where current parking lot is. Go back and demolish old high school and finish parking and landscaping.
 - c. Trying to making site plan more compact and economical.
 - d. Two concepts
 - i. Traditional/collegiate – cupolas, chimneys on roofs, narrow/tall windows
 - ii. Contemporary – shallower roof pitches, wider/deeper overhangs
 - e. Tried two schemes that could work. Both have traditional elements. One is expressed in a more contemporary way.
3. Comments:
 - a. Will lighting be more traditional, gas lighting on traditional concept?
 - i. Try to send light down.
 - b. Flying saucer above the main entrance, possible to square it to look more hexagonal?

- i. Might simplify the look.
 - c. Which one brings in more light?
 - i. Both schemes, doing a conscience effort to bring more natural light into the building. Schemes are equal.
 - d. Didn't see cars parked out front. How landscaping will prevent sight lines from just seeing cars.
 - i. Screens will be used. Trying to raise the building up higher than the parking lot.
 - e. Retention pond. Does it have to be there?
 - i. Moved it back behind girls' softball field. Current retention there now. Will expand and enhance area to do storm water retention in one area.
 - f. Are more classrooms gained from one scheme over the other?
 - g. Attributes of each design and what stands out, in terms of functionality?
 - i. Traditional has more classic caps, cupolas. Modern scheme more contemporary.
 - h. One style pricier than the other?
 - i. If estimates are too high, we go back and look at costs.
 - i. Can we have a cost estimate before making a decision?
 - j. Feedback?
 - i. We've looked at 6 or 7 combinations; these two provided the best feedback.
 - k. Duane vanDyke: Got two handsome designs to work with. Tough decision. Plan works well. Liked how educational wing separated from extra-curricular area. Like how main space is used for cafeteria and multi-function space. Big issue is PAC. How does the rest of the school and the PAC relate. Think about costs. Traditional scheme is handsome, comfortable, timeless. Prairie style is more transitional, not contemporary. Better addresses the PAC. Can blend in more. Could some prairie elements come out in front of the PAC?
 - l. Debra S: Artist, art teacher, background in architectural drawing. Main concern was the PAC. Hidden in illustrations and could be an eyesore on the end of the building. Both buildings are nice. Traditional, stay away from any red brick. Like more craftsman style, fits more with community. Like color and lineage.
 - m. Angela Wanhainen: Concern with columns and dormers. Green will be outdated quickly. White or tan trim will make everyone happy.
 - n. Bob Plantz: Like the prairie design. Wonder if it's practical to have the architects give us a design to focus just on where the PAC meets the rest of the building. Restrict funds solely to the high school and not work with the PAC? [Protecting academic spaces first, but anything on the site is part of the project. Issues with altering back part of the site to accommodate the neighbors. [Looking at bus loop change to be further south. Met informally with the city. Until we present a plan, still subject to change. Doing the best we can.] Main entrance showed a walkway right to the front, like that.
 - o. Carol Winter: we'll be posting information on the blog and website.
4. Bond accountability proposal

- a. Presented by Nate Cross. Issue came up in July. Talked about a process to proactively ensure no questions raised and desire to make future decisions fully vetted to make sure potential conflicts do not exist. Key observations:
 - i. Extensive contractor checklist has evolved
 - ii. Making sure at least 3 firms are considered
 - iii. Posting information on websites
 - iv. Ranking firms
 - v. Owner/consultant agreement signed
 - b. We've strengthened the process and communication of the Board. Voted on a resolution about the investment management agreement. This is the type of effort our treasurer went through. Discussion benefited the treasurer, architects and the Board. Because of these measures and processes in place that have evolved, these are sufficient to warrant non-consideration of a bond accountability council. Individual members should still reserve judgment on a case-by-case basis.
 - c. Carol Winter: As was the case from the minute the bond was passed, tremendous amount of communication. Conversations where we are discussing enhanced accountability measures is always good for the Board. RFQ and RFP process is run by the Ohio Revised Code and hasn't changed. Pleased with accountability and transparency measures provided by our district administrators and Board members becoming more comfortable with those measures is good.
 - d. Andrea Rocco: I'm the only one that was on the Board when the community passed the PAC bond issue. Many steps we are incorporating now we have to under the law, but these are the same steps Turner Construction oversaw on construction of the PAC. Some of these issues had to do with members who had never been through a construction process. I've always found Mr. Pepera to follow safe thought processes. He is conservative in nature and never see him straying from his processes as far as the decisions he makes on behalf of this Board and district. We understood together what we are undertaking.
 - e. Tim Sullivan: Co-manager process did not involve RFP process. Questions weren't asked the first time and that was wrong.
 - f. Rocco: Respectfully disagree with your statements.
 - g. Winter: Mr. Pepera followed ORC when he made recommendation to the Board via his brief. He did nothing wrong.
5. Cost per pupil
- a. Winter: ongoing discussion began at annual retreat with lengthy presentations on our costs and neighboring districts. We heard the goals of our administrators. Focus on specific suggestions from Board members on meeting budgetary goals relating to our core philosophy moving forward. Goals presented need to be maintained. Eye on continuing to join consortiums, collaborative with other school districts, keep administrative costs low, maintain integrity of our educational program and offering a world-class education for our students.

- b. Sullivan: Dr. Keenan and Mr. Pepera do a great job keeping costs down. We tend to spend about 90% of our time on 10% of annual costs to operate the district. Elephant in room is salaries we pay. We need to focus on costs that constitute 85% of what we spend each year – salaries and benefits. Goal to have our district at or below average cost per pupil of ODE similar districts. Should bring average down, not up. Bringing it up about \$1,200 more a year than similar districts. Don't agree ODE numbers aren't valid because they don't take into account exceptions we face. We spend a lot more per pupil than similar districts. Would like to set a goal to have Westlake bring down average costs per pupil per year among similar districts. We shouldn't be overspending our competitors.
- c. Winter: What should we do to get there?
- d. Sullivan: Look at 85% of costs that constitute operating budget. Federal government is freezing salaries for 2 years.
- e. Winter: won't be renegotiating teacher contracts for a year and a half. So you want us to reopen negotiations?
- f. Sullivan: Other districts gone out to their unions. Give yourself a generation or a half a generation, you can accomplish it. If we don't address this now, now is the hardest time to address it, not professional enough to not start taking strong measures now to deal with rising costs. We have a higher obligation.
- g. Thomas Mays: We need to continue with efficiencies. Great to set a goal. In addition to looking at where you decrease expenses, we also have to look at where to increase revenues. Limited. Look at naming rights, school names, wings of schools, classrooms, baseball/softball fields, WHBS, kitchens, PSLs, sponsorships. We're going to be building this new gym for our high school. Set aside 100 or 200 seats and make them reserved seats. Get businesses that can think out of the box.
- h. Sullivan: Great idea. We can try anything we want to increase revenue. I have trouble seeing how we'll bump our revenue up by more than a percentage point. We get our income from property taxes. Best thing to do over time is to sell ourselves as a fiscally responsible community that is a good place to do business and live in, and people buy houses and businesses move in.
- i. Mays: Not insinuating it will take away all of our bills. We're leaving money out there we shouldn't. If it will protect programming, that's what we have to look at.
- j. Cross: A dialogue that will need to continue based on what's happening with the state budget. Went through a lot of the data. A story behind each number. Need to be careful comparing apples to apples. OSBA ran a chart on our district, showed revenue will stay flat and expenses will rise. Total per pupil comparison shows we continue to go up compared to similar districts and the state average. Want to look at bringing new dollars in, but need to set goals. Will forward chart to other Board members.
- k. Rocco: Agree bulk of our yearly budget is in salaries and benefits. Unlike Eaton or other businesses, have to abide by collective bargaining laws. We signed off on our agreements with our teachers' and non-certified agreement. Only way to change that is to ask for mid-term bargaining. Unions can't be forced to do that. I don't support that

step at this juncture. A time to look at that is well off. Won't happen this year. Making a statement to lower the average we spend per student is a good goal but not necessarily a realistic goal. You have to take the amount we spend here and figure out how it's spent. While we compare selves to other districts, look at how many students are there, transportation, special needs, ESL, etc. Those add to our bottom line. ODE figures are just figures. You can use them any way you can to prove a point. Higher number of children with serious special needs will cost a great deal more than a rural district that doesn't have students with those types of needs. This district has been very fiscally responsible to the taxpayers. Live in a city with a low tax base. Wouldn't be successful if public schools were not as strong as they are. No thriving city has an average school district. People move here because it's a good community and the schools are great. We are lucky to have the staff we have. They are compensated fairly.

- l. Winter: hearing an opening to a conversation that needs to continue. Affirm the direction Dr. Keenan and Mark Pepera are going. Maybe schedule another conversation about this. Don't support re-opening contract negotiations with teachers at this time. Need to revisit what Sullivan and Mays suggested.
- m. Board agreed to have Mays look into revenue enhancement in January. Mays will gather examples from other school districts and bring it back to the Board.
- n. Sending Board and district representatives to a roundtable on school finance in January, as well as a meeting with Rep. Nan Baker.
- o. Dr. Keenan: suitable goal is to bring cost per pupil down. Staffing is 85% of any school district. We need to pick the most relevant data set. Get serious about who we want to compare ourselves to. Always looking at staffing costs. Want to be in bottom end of top 1/3. We have 16% + in special education (4% more than state average), 27% in transportation (compared to state at 9%). Having informal discussions on how to drop costs down. Ask the Board to consider goals instead of specific strategies. Give us that input and let us work with it. That should be an administrative level activity.
- p. Winter: Should revisit this in January at our work session.

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC:

- 6. Christie Wiedt: CAC did a project on per pupil spending 3 or 4 years ago. Caution to decrease pupil costs. Hard to have a service and then take things away, such as high school busing. What about properties on Bradley Road and Hilliard Road? Could be another source of revenue. What about student fees? Many surrounding districts have them. We have some high needs with some of our kids. I agree cutting down fee per pupil is great, but look at what you might be taking away.
- 7. Tony Falcone: Cost per pupil and interesting metric. Would like to know more about it. To attack teacher salaries is short-sighted and simple-minded. I work in the business world. You determine your goals and decide how you spend your money to reach your goals. Deciding on cost per pupil and managing from there is backward. I live in Westlake because of the school district. You can get to a number by attacking the 85% of what goes into that number, but result would be

you get what you pay for. You establish goals and decide how to spend the money you have at hand. It's not all a cost question, but a revenue question as well.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

8. Executive session for the purpose of reviewing negotiations. No action was taken following the executive session.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: The next regular meeting of the Board will be Monday, Dec. 13, at 5:30pm at the Westlake Schools Administration Building.

For more detailed information on these items, visit

<http://beta.westlake.k12.oh.us/boe/meetingschedule/default.aspx>