

**Auburn School District
School Improvement Committee
October 25, 2017**

Committee Members Present: Peter Miles, Chair; Jason Tyburski, Vice Chair; Alan Villeneuve, Mike DiPietro, Tom Gonyea, Jim Headd, Diane Proulx, Jennifer Anderson, Melissa Prunier, Lori Collins and Dr. Phil Littlefield.

Also Present: Keith Leclair, Sandra Leclair, Joanne Linxweiler, Terry Coll, Michael Rolfe and William Herman

Mr. Miles convened the meeting at 6:00 PM.

Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Gonyea moved to approve the minutes of the October 11, 2017 meeting as printed. Second by Mr. DiPietro. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion carried.

Community Survey:

Mr. Miles asked if there was an update or re-cap of the survey effort. Jennifer Anderson reported there was nothing new to report since the last Committee meeting. She noted the top three relevant issues to a project proposal identified by the survey was:

- Value for Price
- Cost of Project
- Tax Impact

Mrs. Anderson verified with Keith Leclair the survey report had been placed in the online file share for the committee members, and Mr. Leclair confirmed it was. Mrs. Anderson felt one item did stand out to her as an opportunity to educate the public on issues, and that was on why only one plan or proposal will move forward to the voters instead of offering multiple options.

Review of New Options:

Mr. Miles noted tonight's meeting is focused on the Committee discussing the potential project items and determining what recommendation it would make to the School Board for the project.

Mr. DiPietro felt the general consideration for the Committee was a minimum project of approximately \$13 million, a mid-range project for approximately \$14.5 million or a maximum project at approximately \$16 million.

Mr. Gonyea indicated he did not believe the project should include the demolition of four current classrooms that he felt were a solid structure and functional. He opined that not much is gained if they are removed except to open up the area to grass and the play area. Mr. Villeneuve indicated the removal of the four classrooms was the only way to access the back part of the property. He estimated the space gained would be about 4,000 square feet, and the school district would not have the ability to move busses in off the road without making that change.

Mr. Tyburski indicated he had a similar sentiment about not removing solid space and asked if the area could be used for kindergarten. He indicated they were big rooms with bathrooms, and it was possible that kindergarten should be separated from the other grades. Mr. Villeneuve indicated that would be something for the administration to work out if the classrooms remained. He observed not including that portion of the project does not stop it from happening in the future similar to a gymnasium.

Mrs. Anderson asked what the Committee's responsibility would be for remaining renovations to the existing portions of the school building that would might not be included in whatever building project is recommended. Mr. Villeneuve indicated that would be a budget issue for the School Board and not for the School Improvement Committee.

Mrs. Anderson asked whether voters are asked to approve a specific plan or just a budget number. Mr. Villeneuve and Dr. Littlefield indicated the formality of the warrant article has the voters approving a budget number for the project, but the number is based on an overall plan that would be presented as part of the process. However, that still provides flexibility to the School Board if the project is approved to work to make adjustments as necessary during the project as long as they stay within the approved budget number.

Mr. Miles indicated the Committee can't lose sight of the dollars in this effort. He noted the three highlights from the online survey indicating value for price (which he felt indicated we shouldn't demolish functioning classrooms); project cost and tax impact.

Mr. Gonyea indicated he has generally received positive reaction from individuals he has informally talked to when he indicates the proposed project will likely come in between \$14 and \$16 million. He said he hears "that is something we can work with". Mr. DiPietro and Mr. Rolfe both indicated they had similar reactions from individuals.

Mrs. Anderson moved the School Improvement Committee recommend the School Board move forward with the classroom & lobby addition and proposed interior renovations as a minimum project for an estimated cost of \$12,827,725. Mr. Gonyea seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Anderson moved the School Improvement Committee recommend the School Board move forward with the cafeteria and kitchen additions &

renovations for an estimated cost of \$1,691,237. Seconded by Mrs. Prunier. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Anderson moved the School Improvement Committee recommend the addition of four classrooms to the new addition and remove four classrooms from the front of the current building to open up the parking lot area for an estimated cost of \$1,200,528. Seconded by Mr. Gonyea.

Mr. Miles indicated he was not in favor of this option now. He felt from individuals he spoke with there would not be agreement to tear down space and re-create it elsewhere on the property when the current space is structurally sound and functional. He also noted it could be done in the future, but felt it raised the project cost now to a level that could be difficult to support.

Mr. Gonyea felt whatever is done for a project, something has to be done with that space. He felt there was a safety risk in having a few students in that portion of the building while everyone else is in an entirely different wing. He also felt there were renovations to that space required if they remain classrooms. Mr. Villeneuve indicated the improvements necessary would be part of the renovations that will occur in the front portion of the building.

Mr. Tyburski indicated he was in favor of the removal of the four current classrooms with the addition of four classrooms elsewhere in the project. He felt this is the conduit to allowing the school district to address parking and the removal of that portion of the building is the gateway to addressing busses and parking.

Mr. DiPietro indicated the estimated project cost is less than 10% of the total project cost, and would only get more expensive over time.

Mrs. Anderson asked if, like the roof replacement effort, this part of the project could be done in pieces over time. Mr. Villeneuve answered that it could.

Mr. Villeneuve indicated he was not in favor of adding four classrooms and leaving the original four classrooms in place. He believed the Committee and School Board should leave this for someone else to handle in the future.

Mrs. Prunier indicated she is torn on this item because there is not an awful lot wrong with those existing classrooms and we don't know what the additional site work would cost and if it would help or hurt the chances for passage of the project. Her concern was they could demolish those four classrooms and there may only be grass left as a result. Mr. Villeneuve noted what is not included in the cost estimate for the 'remove four and add four' classrooms was the cost for site work to develop the parking lot and bus lanes. He estimated the design, permitting, site work and paving necessary would likely be another \$500,000. He felt that could be getting the total project cost too close to the former project's cost. Mrs. Prunier said that was exactly her concern and why she was struggling on this item.

Mr. Rolfe agreed with Mr. Villeneuve. Although he wouldn't guess at a cost, he said there would be a lot of cost due to the abutting wetlands and the Shoreline Protection Act. He felt it would be expensive to develop a parking lot in that area.

Mrs. Anderson asked if the parking lot work could be funded through the school operating budget as re-roofing and other renovations will be. Mr. Villeneuve indicated that was certainly possible.

Mr. Headd suggested his sense from conversations he has had is that \$15 million is a psychological platform for many people with this project. A project that costs \$15 million or less would have an easier time gaining the necessary voter support for passage, while a project that comes in higher than \$15 million would have a more difficult time gaining the necessary voted to be approved.

Mr. Leclair indicated it had been suggested leaving students in the four existing classrooms in a different part of the building from the other students would be unsafe. He wanted to assure everyone that would not be the case and that no student would be in unsafe conditions wherever they are in the building.

Mr. DiPietro indicated he would agree with Mr. Headd on the \$15 million brick wall, but he also recognized there is a time value of money where it is possible to keep the term of the bond a little shorter with a lower cost project or, if over \$15 million, could go a little longer on the bond and save on the tax rate impact. Mr. Villeneuve indicated it is an interesting discussion because what is the important number to the voters – total project cost or tax rate impact. He felt different people look at the same thing differently, and ultimately both numbers are important.

Mr. Gonyea observed not changing the front of the building means a lot to a lot of people. He felt having the current façade remain in place is huge to many people who like the Auburn Village School. Mr. Rolfe echoed his agreement with that sentiment.

Mr. Miles called for a vote on the motion, which is:

Mrs. Anderson moved the School Improvement Committee recommend the addition of four classrooms to the new addition and remove four classrooms from the front of the current building to open up the parking lot area for an estimated cost of \$1,200,528. Seconded by Mr. Gonyea.

Voting in favor: Jennifer Anderson, Mike DiPietro, Jason Tyburski, Diane Proulx and Tom Gonyea. Voting opposed: Alan Villeneuve, Peter Miles, Jim Headd and Melissa Pruiner. The motion carries.

Mr. Villeneuve reported this recommendation will be presented to the School Board at their next meeting which will be on Tuesday, November 14th.

Mr. Miles indicated the Committee will now have to work on selling the project to the voters and, in his opinion, that work has just been made harder by the scope of the project. Mrs. Anderson indicated more than half the voters have supported a \$24 million project previously and the Committee has reduced the project cost by a significant amount.

Mr. Villeneuve provided initial bond estimates to the Committee members of their review and information. He indicated these are not firm and only representative of general information. He indicated the options to be considered with be a 10-year pay back, 15 years or 20 years. The School Board would not likely consider anything longer than 20 years. Following a general discussion, the general sentiment was a 10 year bond would have too high a tax rate impact to be practical, so the decision should really be between a 15 year and a 20 year bond.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting dates previously scheduled for the Committee are November 8th and November 29th. It was felt with the School Board not meeting until November 14th, it made more sense for the Committee's next meeting to be on November 15th after the School Board has made their initial decision.

The next four meeting dates for the Committee will be November 15th, November 29th, December 13th and December 27th.

Communications Message:

It was felt the next meeting should begin to focus on communications and message.

Mr. Villeneuve suggested part of the message could be the Committee's work cut the project cost by \$10 million and time for the bond by 15 years.

Mr. DiPietro felt the basic message is the project is a modest addition that retains the facade of the front of the building with a project cost of approximately \$15 million and a bond time frame of 15 years. He suggested it was a little more than half of the last proposal.

Mrs. Anderson indicated she remains concerned about leaving approximately \$5 million of needed renovations throughout the existing building on the table to be handled over time.

Adjourn:

Mr. Headd moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 PM, seconded by Mr. DiPietro. A vote was taken, all were in favor, and the vote was passed unanimously.