

Thursday, October 23, 2014

Proposal to PASD Board of Directors by the Capital Facilities Bonding Committee regarding bonding recommendations and the partial replacement of Port Angeles High School facilities

Brief background:

In early 2013 a Long-range Facilities Task Force of more than 60 community members began meeting to assess the facility needs and structure of the district in the coming decades, and to recommend a way forward.

With a large list of capital needs and limited funding, the LRFTF developed three guiding principles to help prioritize the needs and develop a plan.

Guiding Principles:

1. All recommendations hold student success as the number one priority
2. Recommendations are responsive to the local community
3. All recommendations must meet the criteria of simplicity, fairness, transparency, and acceptability to as many community members as possible.

The committee made a slate of recommendations, including grade redesign and the serious building needs in many of our elementary schools. However, after more than a year of work, the outcomes of this committee boiled down to one starting point:

Rebuild Port Angeles High School

The primary driver of this recommendation was simple: kids should only to go to school in a construction zone once. If we start at the high school and work through the younger grades, PASD students are more likely to pass through a construction project quickly as they progress to higher grades, and as the projects progress to lower ones.

The second driver was cost. Our district simply doesn't have the bonding capacity and our citizens can't be asked to shoulder the burden of tackling everything at once.

As you know, the Task Force's recommendations were adopted by the board of directors.

As a result, a smaller committee was appointed by the board to work with McGranahan Architects to develop a conceptual design and cost estimate.

This committee and McGranahan Architects, who have been excellent guides in the process, has spent approximately six months providing input, gathering community feedback, holding open houses, and working with design concepts. The result is the work Chris Lilley has just presented.

Remodeling of the existing school was considered, and would be preferable if the facility offered an iconic or coherent starting point. However, because it is so structurally and mechanically aged, it would require massive updates to meet current seismic, ADA, fire safety, and numerous other safety codes. Experience shows this would reach 90% or more of the rebuilding cost, and still would leave us with a

shorter-lifespan facility spread out over more than a dozen buildings, and that does not address in any way how education will evolve in the coming decades.

It is important to note that the original cost estimates ranged as high as \$121 million, which would have included replacing the PAHS gyms. However, the committee felt strongly that the burden to taxpayers should be respected and minimized, and that tackling the entire project would use too much of the district's limited bonding capacity. That capacity should be kept available if an urgent need arises at another school. While it makes tremendous logical sense to rebuild the gyms now, because funding will never cost less and buildings will only cost more in the future, it was more important to be sensitive to other needs and to what the community is willing to support.

Therefore, the difficult decision was made to recommend no major work on the gym building with local bond dollars. If state assistance funds are available at the end of the project, a portion of them can be used for cosmetic upgrades, but still the major overhaul should be tabled, and the bulk of any state assistance funds be used for other critical needs in the district at the middle or elementary levels.

The committee felt equally strongly that the current level of service and curriculum, including our very robust Career & Technical Education capacity, should be maintained. The decision was made to build for our existing enrollment rather than for more, and that a footprint for expansion be designated should the need arise. Square footage of the concept is slightly larger only because the passages between buildings that are currently outdoors are now hallways indoors under the consolidated building design. Classroom, staff and student space is essentially the same.

The Performing Arts Center is also a promise to the community that must be kept, and the committee was firm that, while an overhaul is necessary, it will stay in place. Emphasis was put on the student commons and library being public spaces that enhance the Performing Arts Center, and which are more available for community use.

Based on the last two years of study and hundreds of hours of community, staff, and professional input, the Capital Facilities Committee recommends that the PASD board of directors adopt the proposed PAHS reconstruction concept, and that acceptance from district residents to issue Municipal Bonds not to exceed \$98,750,000, be sought with a term of either 20 or 25 years.

Respectfully Submitted on behalf of the Capital Facilities Committee,

Steve Methner
Stephanie Dudley