

## **DRAFT North Greenbush Common School District Community Advisory Committee – September 25, 2019**

The North Greenbush CSD Community Advisory Committee, the group convened to advise the Board of Trustees as it develops a capital project proposal, held its second meeting on September 25.

### **Reports on Homework Assignment**

- Committee members were asked at September 4th meeting to reflect on what was presented and to initiate conversations on the proposed land purchase and building project. Overall, committee members reported positive responses from the community.
  - Respondents indicated that they wanted to keep the North Greenbush Common School District intact. They liked the idea of planning for future growth yet preserving the small school community feel.
  - Others appreciated the focus on safety, including parking and separate traffic lanes for cars and buses. They were surprised that the district did not own beyond the footprint of the Little Red building.
  - Some residents expressed concerns about taxes and paying for the project.
  - Concerns raised if we would need to or be made to merge in the future.  
(Note: There is a process for merging school districts. Reorganization laws were amended in the 1990s to require a successful vote in each district for a school district reorganization (merger) to be successful. This gives equal voice to all participating districts regardless of size. Higher costs and an increase in property taxes (along with a loss in identity) makes this highly unlikely (and very undesirable) for the North Greenbush Common School District Community.)
- There was a question about whether taxes could go down (due to the additional revenue through new, additional property assessments) if the district did not pursue the capital project.
  - Note: While it is possible that a short-term decrease could occur, it is more likely that taxes will go up over time, due to additional tuition being paid to neighboring districts for increased student enrollment (right now about 55 percent of the overall budget is tuition for students in grades 2-12). The district has a window of opportunity because of new revenue coming in and the ability to set aside funds to pay for a capital project and in keeping the tax rates stable.
- Some residents had questions about second grade coming back in-house. (Noted were that Little Red did have a K-2 program in the past and needed to move 2<sup>nd</sup> graders out of Little Red due to increased enrollment. Superintendent Hamill will develop a list of reasons why this makes a lot of sense for us to consider at this time—both for programmatic and fiscal reasons)
- There was also discussion about how additional space (including flexible or breakout space) could further support the quality of students' education and services offered.

## **Update on Progress**

- Ed Anker, Architect with the Phinney Design Group, provided community advisory members with an update on the project, including draft floor plans his team is working on in response to community and school district feedback.
- Community advisory members reviewed an aerial view of the property that will be acquired by North Greenbush CSD, pending voter approval. Anker took members on a tour of the property behind the Little Red and indicated the proposed boundary line between North Greenbush CSD and LaSalle. A full survey of the property is being conducted.
- Anker discussed two floor plans – the first was a very traditional plan and does not fit the unique setting of the Little Red. In reflecting on this with the superintendent, the architect went back and designed a second drawing. The second concept sought to provide maximum flexibility at the minimum square footage. Instructional space would be located on the backside of the building, facing away from Route 4. Offices would be on the Route 4 side. With the design of the space, the district should be able to reduce the overall square footage needed for the office (compared to what is rented across the street). The proposed plan also includes flexibility for a multi-use breakout room with a divider that can be opened and closed. The proposed space also includes a centrally located kitchen area to serve lunches and a conference room (for Instructional trainings, Committee on Special Education and other district meetings).
- The addition would allow the district to eliminate some of the mechanicals in the schoolhouse (pipes, air units, etc.). Anker indicated that the architect will incorporate designs and unique qualities from Little Red (i.e. materials which mimic the tin ceiling and other fixtures). The Little Red School also needs some minor renovation work, which will also be included in the project scope and budget.
- The architect is recommending a barn-like design for aesthetics and to better fit the community. A glass atrium would connect the addition in the back of the Little Red School. The new addition would have a secured entry where parents and visitors would be buzzed in after the start of school. There are some well-developed trees and vegetation that would be left to enhance the overall design of this addition. The trees would also be important to function as a sound barrier from the route 4 corridor.
- Anker indicated that he would like to replace the paved parking lot/driveway with green space (that reflects the building's past). An entry way off Route 4 that would separate bus and car traffic is being planned, along with a full parking lot which will be a huge improvement for both convenience and especially safety. At this time, we are also looking to see about developing a road that would run through the acquired land and possibly securing a better exit, away from the busy route 4 traffic. Anker indicated that his firm will continue to refine the drawings and prepare renderings for the Oct. 16th Advisory Committee meeting.

## **Advisory Member Questions/Comments:**

- How the district presents this is important – how to maintain the small concept but provide additional things not possible now.
- One member, suggested that this is a unique opportunity to be able to create the space that is needed to go from good to fabulous.
- Request made for there to be break out spaces and room for more work to happen in small groups or 1-1.

- Another member said we need space to plan for the ebb and flow of enrollment fluctuations in the future.
- A member asked about how the two spaces will connect—will the addition have some of the features that we love about Little Red such as the tin ceilings.
- Superintendent Hamill said Little Red is a small, unique community school with a great program and we want that to keep that but have more space.
- Community members will need to know the financial impact of doing this; particularly the tax rates.

### **Summary and Homework Assignment**

- Community advisory members will seek feedback from their family, friends and neighbors in advance of the next meeting on Oct. 16. Please send us any questions in the meantime.