

DRAFT North Greenbush Common School District Community Advisory Committee – October 16, 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 third meeting on October 16.

Reports on Homework Assignment

- Committee members were asked at the September 25th meeting to reflect on what was presented and to initiate conversations on the proposed land purchase and building project. Once again, committee members reported positive responses from the community. Members also noted the following questions they had received:
 - What is the plan for staffing? Do we need to hire another teacher for second grade? What will second grade look like if it comes back to the district?
 - Note: We have budgeted for additional staffing, if needed. Ultimately, how we staff will depend on student enrollment and needs. Our unique school setting and size does not mean we need a full-time teacher for each grade. However, we do recognize that additional teaching support, such as a part-time teacher or assistant, may be needed in the future.
 - How would the district do multi-age teaching with three grades? How do we improve education at the same time we are improving the facility?
 - Note: We would work with our teachers on the best approach, just as we do now. For example, our English language arts (ELA) instruction is center based where students are set up in flexible groupings based on skill levels. Because of our unique setting and small size, instruction is personalized, and teachers really get to know the students and are able to respond to their individual needs.
 - Have we looked at the expense side of new construction and renovation? How would we respond to additional needs for operations and maintenance (such as mowing and snow removal)? What would this cost?
 - Note: preliminary construction and renovation-related expenses are noted in Ed Anker's presentation. The district has budgeted for additional operations and maintenance expenses in the future.
 - What are the terms of our lease for office space across the street?
 - Note: The district currently pays \$24,000/year for this space. The proposed project allows us to design space that better fits our needs and makes more efficient use of space.
 - Why is one of the new classrooms bigger than the other? Why not do two classrooms of equal size? What happens if there is a bigger class?
 - Note: Our average grade size is about 11 students. The state requirement for a new classroom is 770 square feet. We do not want to under- or over-build. It is about the way we teach. This is why we decided to go with flexible or multi-purpose space, both for instructional purposes and to respond to class sizes that vary by year. If there is a larger class, we would have additional space to move these students rather than the one room we now have with Little Red. We also would have room to better accommodate the related services that we provide on a regular basis such as Speech & Language Instruction, English

Language Learner Teacher, Special Education Teacher, PT or OT Therapist in these spaces as well.

- What happens if these residential properties stall? Has the district planned for this? What would be the worst-case scenario for taxes if the economy declines and housing is not built?
 - Note: While this is possible, development is progressing at a rapid rate. We are working closely with county and town officials and have been in contact with the developers. Many of the residential units being planned are already under contract. It is also possible that additional residential and commercial development will be approved in the future.

Update on Progress

- Ed Anker from Phinney Design Group provided community advisory members with an update on the design process. Please see his PowerPoint for visuals of the draft floor plan and schematics. These are not yet finalized.
- Please note that land purchase cost is not included in the proposed costs shared in the PowerPoint.
- The school administration and architect met with the Town Planning Board Chair to present their work to date, and to discuss other considerations for the project. For example, the district learned that the town is planning a roundabout at Williams/ Route 4 which would better move traffic in this area, however, with better traffic movement, it is noted that this would make it more difficult to enter or leave the LR building due to the steady stream of vehicles passing regularly. In light of this, the project is proposing to divert traffic from the Route 4 entrance to South Drive. The new, proposed entry and lot on the north side of Little Red would include parking for up to 28 cars during the day, but with the opportunity to park up to 40 spots for afterschool events, such as concerts or open houses.

Summary and Homework Assignment

- Superintendent Christine Hamill recapped that the district has been researching this project for more than a year. This project includes the purchase of 3.2 acres of land adjacent to the Little Red School, repairs and improvements to preserve the Little Red School and to build an addition to accommodate an increasing number of students. This research included discussions at Board meetings, meetings with town and county officials, assessors, developers, LaSalle Institute, financial consultants, attorneys, architects and others.
- The district commissioned an independent study to look at the impact of future enrollment (which projects a 17 percent growth due to the level of residential development underway) on both Little Red and the impact on the district's future budgets. The results of this research and study show that we also will see additional taxable assessments adding to the tax rolls over the next 3 years or so.
- We know that the property tax growth from the increase in taxable assessments from these 300 new residences over the same time period will be able to pay for this project and also keep the tax rates where they are.
- The district can afford to do this project and keep taxes stable. If the district decided not to move forward with the project, there would still be additional costs via increased tuition to other districts for our additional students, particularly as we

currently have very limited capacity at Little Red. Many of our partner schools are also experiencing enrollment growth and capacity issues themselves which could affect our ability for being able to offer full open choice in the future. The Little Red School would also need some repairs and improvements in order to preserve it for the future.

- The community advisory group agreed to move its next meeting from November 20 to November 6 to collect additional feedback to share with the Board. The Board is currently looking at a December 11th referendum vote.
- Community advisory members were asked to complete another homework assignment – to gather additional questions, including what items the district needs to further clarify and share with the public. This may include information on the project scope, costs, student enrollment growth, how instruction is delivered and how the project addresses safety. It was suggested that the district prepare a question and answer document for residents in advance of the public hearing (to be scheduled).