

To: Oneida School Community Advisory Committee

From: Steve Bociolatt

Re: Meeting Notes – Meeting of February 16, 2023

Date: March 10, 2023

**In Attendance:**

Committee Members: Jennifer Armlin, Matt Archer, Erin Belanger, Alana Boylan, Alex Cafalone, Holly Cafalone, Hannah Cleveland, Michele Farwell, Gretchen Ironside, Megan Kelly, Michelle Kinville, Drew Laube, Nicole LaVeck, Adam Litwak, Kate Plunkett, Megan Rose, Megan Rice, Jim Rowley, Bernie Sharlette, Matt Shene, Cindy Smith, Kathy Zangrilli

Consultant: Stephen Bociolatt

Resource: Matthew Carpenter

Location: Durhamville Elementary School

Note: A building tour was conducted prior to the committee meeting by Megan Rose, Principal of Durhamville Elementary School.

1. Mr. Bociolatt began the meeting with a review of the agenda for the meeting
  - Introduce New Committee Member(s)
  - Questions/Comments from Building Tour
  - Review Minutes from 1/26/2023 Meeting
  - Review/Update any Enrollment Information
  - An Overview of the District Facilities
  - Review of Executive Summary from 2018 Study
  - Public Questions/Comments
  - Next Meeting Dates/Locations/Topics
2. Introductions of new committee members
  - Matt Arthur - teacher from Durhamville Elementary School
  - Gretchen Ironside - parent from Seneca Street Elementary School
3. Questions/Comments from the building tour
  - Do we know how the staff feels about shared classrooms, modifications and accommodations?
  - Do all of the buildings have to share spaces? Yes
    - WP - OT/PT/Speech are in one space
    - special education classrooms at DV and WP
  - Music and Art in one room struck me

- As a classroom teacher, it is hard to see OT/PT/Speech happening in the same space. I would rather have the students back in my room because these different services in the same room become a distraction to the student.
- It is nice that there is a gym and a cafe

Mr. Bocciolatt: It is not unusual for support or related service teachers to share a space. Due to space constraints, there are schools that unfortunately have teachers on carts. That is not the case in this district. How spaces are shared can be reviewed. Some support services do have reasonable size rooms. For instance, the academic intervention (AIS) has a nice size room.

- Which elementary building can be built upon? The district is meeting with the architect to develop long range building plans in conjunction with this study.
- How many special education classrooms are there in the district?
  - (1) 6:1:1 self-contained classroom at WP
  - (3) 12:1:1 self-contained classrooms at WP
  - (3) 15:1 classrooms at DV
  - (4) resource rooms - one in each building
- Is storage space an issue at DV? - Yes

4. Review of minutes from 1/26/2023 meeting notes – no changes

5. Mr. Bocciolatt gave a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the following items:

- Review of enrollment history and projections from the previous meeting.
- Celebrate Success – a word cloud was created based on the committee’s response from the previous meeting to their own points of pride in the district. “Students” were the most prominent or frequent word from the committee’s responses.
- The purpose of the study was again reviewed. “In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future?”
- An overview of the Oneida school buildings was given that included the age of the buildings, square footage and current enrollment
- A review of the 2020 building condition survey (BCS) cost summary was given for each of the buildings in the district.

- Educational space utilization was reviewed for each of the four elementary buildings in the district. Highlighted were the number of full-size classrooms in each building for grade level and special education classrooms. Also highlighted were smaller size classrooms and how they were utilized for other instructional and non-instructional purposes.
  - Building usage question/comment for DV
    - New York State has room size requirements when a district builds new classrooms
    - There is room/land to build an addition at DV
    - DV has a bus loop, playground, and a lot of space for fields
    - All 15:1 classrooms were not always located at DV. Previously, (K-3) 15:1 classrooms were located at DV and 15-1 classrooms in grades 3-6 were located at Oneida Castle
  - Building usage question/comments for WP
    - Half of the building is not from the WP neighborhood
    - WP also services students at St. Pats
    - PreK conversation - full day vs half day program
    - United Cerebral Program (UCP) - Is it there for a benefit? Yes
      - From Mr. Carpenter - part of the stipulation of the district's Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program (UPK) grant is to partner with a community-based organization. UCP students include district students. The UCP program also rent rooms from the district. However, they are not guaranteed a space in the district. The lease is renewed annually.
    - Special education population is increasing in all school districts. The history of special education services at WP was discussed by committee members. It was stated that WP was built for special education services and/or early elementary classrooms. There are large bathrooms in many classrooms throughout the building
- Two Common Approaches to Organizing Elementary Attendance Zones
  1. Neighborhood School Concept - Each elementary school contains all elementary grades and is generally organized around "neighborhoods."
  2. Grade Center Concept (Princeton Plan) - Each elementary school is generally organized around grades, often creating primary schools and intermediate schools within a school district.

Question/comments:

  - Declining enrollment vs program growth - how are spaces currently being used? How efficient is the use of the spaces?

- Review of Executive Study from the 2018 study and possible options discussed in the study
  - Status quo
  - Grade center
  - Close one of the elementary buildings
  - Due to low enrollment at WP, reduce one section in grades K-2. The district reduced all K-5 grades from two sections to one section.
  
- General questions/comments
  - Shared spaces have always been an issue. Even when 6th grade was in the elementary buildings, we had to share spaces and people were on carts.
  - Why was Willard Prior BCS cost summary so much?
  - With the declining enrollment, will the district continue to reduce sections? Yes - # of sections will continue to be reduced based on lower enrollment trend
  - Is that good for the students? Such a large class size? And when the learning gaps are so large
  - Smaller size is nice, but the numbers being referred to are manageable
  - The district needs to look at sharing of staff - especially OT/PT/Speech - and scheduling
  - Benefits of grade level buildings? (HS graduation rates, attendance...) Mr. Bocciolatt will follow-up at a future meeting
  - The overall reason for the building study is.... decreased enrollment and grade organization.  
 From Mr. Carpenter: The 2018 study set the trajectory. Then the pandemic happened. Then in 21/22 – the district reviewed the enrollment numbers again and decided to conduct a new study to make sure we were doing what is best for kids, financially smart and based on the condition of the buildings
  - An example was given of a grade organization in a neighboring school that included neighborhood schools for grades Pre-K – 6, looping and departmentalization
  - Parent expressed concern over daughters being in two buildings
  - Socioeconomic divide within the district was discussed
  - The way that Oneida Castle closed was not good
  - Parents see differences in schools. There are programs that are happening in different schools. There are different mascots... There is not equity.
  - Request: Cons of the existing structure
  - You cannot tell the difference between children from Oneida Castle vs NB anymore... The buildings are becoming more equal.
  - Conversation about grade level days/opportunities to collaborate
  - It is very important that this study presents research information
  - It is important that this committee/district develop and communicate the why
  - Transportation - There are already difficult issues - how are we going to address transportation in any change.
  - Is maintaining 4 buildings, as is, an option? No decision has been made. The study analyze the pros and cons of all options. Mr. Bocciolatt will make a recommendation(s) to the Board of Education.
  - The grade center approach could have sister schools for grades K-2 and grades 3-5

- Do we have the operating costs per building?
  - Anxiety of transitioning from K-5 to the MS. As the students get older, it is more difficult to transition.
  - Half of the number of students in WP are not from the WP neighborhood
  - WP also services students at St. Pats
  - Pre-K conversation - full day vs half day program
- Upcoming School Community Advisory Committee meetings
    - Monday, March 13, 2023 at Willard Prior Elementary School in the cafeteria
    - Thursday, April 27, 2023 at Durhamville Elementary School in the gym.
- Note: Optional tours will precede each meeting and will begin at 5:45 pm. Meetings will begin at 6:30 pm and last no longer than two hours.

Note: The meeting notes will be reviewed at the beginning of the next meeting and any changes can be made at that time.

C: Matt Carpenter