

To: Oneida School Community Advisory Committee

From: Steve Bociolatt

Re: Meeting Notes – Meeting of August 29, 2023

Date: September 18, 2023

In Attendance:

Committee Members: Jen Armlin, Matt Archer, Holly Cafalone, Hannah Cleveland, Eric Coriale, Gretchen Ironside, Megan Kelly, Kate Plunkett, Megan Rose, Jim Rowley, Matt Shene, Cindy Smith, Stacey Tice, Kathy Zangrilli

Consultant: Stephen Bociolatt

Resource: Matthew Carpenter, Jason Benedict

Location: Costello Training Center

1. Mr. Bociolatt began the meeting with a review of the agenda for the meeting.
2. Minutes from 7/24/23 meeting were distributed to committee members prior to the meeting.
3. Comments from tour of Costello Training Center
 - Cubicle areas/half walls were very nice
 - Independent of the facilities study, it would be a nice space/area for the DO
 - It is approximately 6,000 square feet
 - When busses come and go - it might cause an issue
 - This space is currently being leased by BOCES for ten years. If the district is interested in utilizing this space, it would need to investigate how best to proceed with BOCES.
 - Could the parking lot be extended?
4. Mr. Bociolatt began a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the four grade configuration options discussed to date.
 - Four Elementary School Buildings
 - Option 1: Status Quo; Remain as four K-5 buildings
 - Option 2: Grade Center Plan (K-2, 3-5)
 - Transition from four K-5 buildings to four buildings with the following grade center configuration:
 - (2) buildings: grades K-2
 - (2) buildings: grades 3-5

- Three Elementary School Buildings
 - Option 3 - Close an Elementary School - (3) K-5 Neighborhood Schools
 - Option 4 - Close an Elementary School - (3) K-1; 2-3; 4-5 Grade Center Schools
 - Transition to a Grade Center Plan
 - (1) School - Grades K-1
 - (1) School - Grades 2-3
 - (1) School - Grades 4-5
- Other Possible Options, if any – To Be Determined
- Reviewed two key questions on grade configuration
 - Is it prudent to keep four elementary school buildings?
 - Educationally
 - Financially
 - If so, in which configuration?
 - If not, which elementary school should the district close?
 - If an elementary school is closed, should the district
 - Keep it for district use (i.e. Pre-K; district offices, other)
 - Lease it to another organization
 - Sell it
- Reviewed draft building maps for two grade configurations that showed how the classroom space could be utilized for each option.
 - Grade Center Configuration Option – four school buildings
 - Two Schools: (K-2)
 - Two Schools: (3-5)
 - Grade Center Configuration Option – close an elementary school
 - Transition to a Grade Center Configuration – three schools
 - (1) School - Grades K-1
 - (1) School - Grades 2-3
 - (1) School - Grades 4-5
- Reviewed a summary of full size classrooms for each elementary school.
- Reviewed a history of the district’s declining student enrollment and the corresponding reduction in the number of classroom sections for each of the four elementary buildings. In the 2017-2018 school year, elementary student enrollment was 858 students with 48 classroom sections. In 2022-2023 school year, elementary student enrollment had declined to 733 students with 40 classroom sections. For the 2023-2024 school year, there are 38 classroom sections and it is projected that there will be 36 sections for the 2024-2025 school year.

- In addition to the number of full size classrooms used at the various grade levels, the number of full-size classrooms available for other programs needs to be considered in determining the amount of space available in each building. In particular, in the delivery of special education services and in the new full day Pre-K program. Currently, in the 2023-2024 school year, there are nine full size classrooms used for various separate special education classrooms (three 15-1 classrooms, three 12-1-1 classrooms, two 8-1-1 classrooms and one 6-1-1 classroom). In addition to these classrooms, there are two full size classrooms used for students in resource room.
- Financial

A summary of **2024-2025 estimated savings** was given for each grade option. These cost savings used an **average** salary for the various staff categories. Use of average salaries, may make the estimated savings higher or lower than the actual savings depending on the circumstances of a particular staff position (retirement vs. reduction of a staff position with a lower salary position).

5. Questions/Comments regarding the grade configuration options.

- Grade Center Configuration: K-2; 3-5 option: Four schools are being used, 9 classroom sections per building (36 sections).
 - How does the grade K-2; 3-5 grade configuration (sister schools) work?
There would be two attendance zones rather than four attendance zones. For example, in one attendance zone, students in a K-2 Seneca Street School would stay together when they transition to another school, for this example, Durhamville. Students in a K-2 Willard Prior School would then stay together when they transition to the other grade 3-5 school, in this example, North Broad.
 - This grade configuration (sister schools) does not solve all the attendance zone problems. There is a concern, some of the community-based issues that exist by attendance zone would not be solved or could get worse (i.e. different areas and different educational needs).
- Status Quo: Keeping the four elementary buildings in its current configuration would not be the best option. How long can we sustain 4 buildings? From a financial perspective, it will be difficult to sustain at the present spending levels over the next few years given that the district used additional fund balance during the current school year and that the district and all school districts across the State will lose a federal grant ending in the 2023-24 school year.
- Grade center options
 - Benefit of having all grade levels in one building (i.e. all Kindergarten, all first grade)
 - Equity, access to all kids
 - More transitions with the K-1, 2-3, 4-5 grade configuration

- K-5 grade configuration
 - Students “growing up” in the same building
 - Mentorship, K-5
 - Getting to know the students
 - Short range/long range plans – might be a difficult change if a building is closed and also change the configuration to a grade center plan.
 - Does the district need three separate full-size classrooms for its 15:1 program, or can these services be delivered in the grade level classroom through a co-teaching model (special education teacher in the classroom with the regular education teacher) or through a push-in program/ consultant teacher model.
 - When special education programs are brought back to the district from BOCES in the lower grades, it is difficult for the district to continue the program in subsequent grade levels based on enrollment and classroom space.
 - Are students ever exited out of 15:1 programs?
 - What will be the focus of the community forums?
 - Will there be one recommendation or options given?
 - When will a recommendation be given?
 - If a school building is closed, does the district need a vote by the community? It is our understanding that a vote is not needed. Mr.Carpenter will confirm this answer with the school attorney.
6. The committee asked to hold a meeting prior to the September 28th scheduled meeting to revisit the common themes previous developed by the committee if an elementary building is closed. This meeting would address the K-1, 2-3, 4-5 grade center configuration and then, time permitting, the K-5 grade configuration. It was suggested a meeting could be held the week of September 18th.
7. Upcoming School Community Advisory Committee meeting
- Additional meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, September 19th at 6:30 pm at the Costello Training Center
 - Thursday, September 28, 2023 at Otto Shortell Middle School in the gymnasium
 - Thursday, October 26, 2023 at Oneida High School: Location to be determined
- Note (1): An optional tour will precede the 9/28 and 10/26 meetings and will begin at 5:45 pm. The business portion of the meetings will begin at 6:30 pm and last no longer than two hours.

C: Matt Carpenter