

Minutes of the Elmbrook Enrollment
Balancing Task Force Meeting

- Present: Bill Aslin, Mark Hansen, Kori Hartman, Lisa Mellone, Paul Neumeier, Heather Paradis, Silvia Paquini, Thomas Schaefer, John Schnabl, Jeanne Siegenthaler, Danny Thomas, and Karen Wolff
- Absent: Andrew Farley, David Frank, Jean Lambert, Bridget Mangan, Franklin Onwubuariri, Lisa Rettler, Sarah Sagert, Stephen Taipala, Daniel Westfahl, Scott Wheeler, Jeff Wurster, and Liz Zmuzinski
- Also: Glen Allgaier, Linda Boucher, Jennifer Roskopf, Erin Walcheske (arrived later and left earlier), and Kathryn Wilson

The meeting began in the Board Room of the Central Administrative Offices at 6:06 p.m. Mark Hansen explained that Deb Nustad and Mike Thompson were on vacation. The meeting's objectives would be to receive feedback on the Task Force's draft report, reach consensus on the report's contents, discuss an architectural update, review the recommendations, and consider the planned communications.

The tentative community forum is planned for Tuesday, September 20. The expected decision by the Board of Education could be as early as October or as late as December. A question was raised concerning whether the deadline had passed for families to choose a different school for 2016-17 (the District will have a new deadline for transfer requests of August 26 at 5:00 p.m.).

Talking Points

The revised Task Force talking points for communication with the community were reviewed. Suggestions included having more verbiage on the "why," explaining what would happen if no action was taken, advising that the issue includes more than just Swanson, stating that some schools are over capacity while others have space available, to set the table at the top that we have an imbalance and a need to rebalance, and to change enrollment gains to enrollment growth.

Architectural Update

The latest report from Eppstein Uhen showed the possible addition options at either Brookfield Elementary or Dixon (existing or expanded footprints). Enlarging to five sections is close to capacity for common spaces, while going to six sections would exceed capacity. Adding classrooms would cost about \$250 per square foot, and there would be impact on both playgrounds and parking. Both Burleigh and Swanson could be expanded, with common space limitations at Swanson. Tonawanda is not recommended for any expansion. The costs of a new five-section elementary school were estimated at \$22 million, with a six-section building costing closer to \$32 million. Questions included the feasibility of having four lunch periods and if Hillside's reopening should be reconsidered in light of the costs of building a new school.

Recommendations

Members reviewed both recommendations (Erin Walcheske arrived). It was agreed that the second recommendation should be used because it addresses the need to continue to monitor the District's potential capacity and to plan ahead for any budget needs. The plan was seen as being

the least disruptive while helping to balance enrollment the most. Concerns included how the families moved five years ago would be impacted, if grandfathering would only apply to fourth and fifth grade students or their siblings also, what the cost of providing transportation instead of requiring parent transportation would be, whether there should be a further attempt to move more students to Burleigh, if we are sure that the recommendation will handle capacity issues at Swanson and Brookfield Elementary for a full five years (need for dashboard going forward), and where the limits/ceilings are that need to be watched.

Capacity Expansion Monitoring

Jen Roskopf presented a flow chart showing the leading indicator measures that would need to be monitored. Use of square footage versus class sizes in determining capacity was discussed. A long-term plan that could change annually with new data may be advisable. Enrollment for 2016-17 was questioned (down now but August is traditionally when we see new enrollees).

Draft Report

Members were asked for feedback on the draft report. Requests included”

- Not much about the why of the tracts chosen (nearness to Dixon);
- why a tract was split (relieve pressure on Brookfield Elementary);
- how recommendation will affect enrollment (before and after narrative and visuals);
- executive summary is missing highlighting of accelerators as key points;
- more depth about accelerators needed;
- need to include that there is growth other than at Swanson;
- key graphs (legend or screen shots);
- communications time line should not mislead about when decision may be made (as early as October but, if necessary to continue dialogue, as late as December);
- need to list what feedback is needed;
- critical success factors should be shown as being adopted by the Board and refined by the Task Force (worked closely with the Board on critical success factors);
- concern about level of detail (perhaps reference but place in appendices);
- what was looked at when making decisions;
- looking for a longer executive summary and ability to drill down deeper;
- appreciated historical perspective;
- do not make the report appear overwhelming (links to data elsewhere);
- include tract map;
- include before and after tract maps;
- show the importance of geography;
- list justification for how the Task Force ended up at this recommendation;
- highlight the merits of the recommendation;
- tell how the recommendation hits the critical success factors within limited resources;
- include how many scenarios were studied and why the recommendation works best;
- check to take out any jargon or acronyms or abbreviations;
- prepare each section as an individual document;
- define what a tract is;
- have some trusted people look through the report;
- highlight the tract changes so people can see the streets;
- split of a tract (neighborhood);
- dividing or combining tracts for future flexibility;
- capacity by area section is confusing – which are we using? (for the purpose of this Task Force, we used architect square footage and Board class sizes);
- change “xx” to the actual class size maximum;
- Capacity analysis summary is confusing (need chart?) (Erin Walcheske left).

Communications Plan

Feedback from members concerning the proposed communications plan included:

- Will Board of Education weigh in before public feedback (timing requires parallel process);
- if additional ideas/recommendations come out of the community forum, the Task Force may need to reconvene to modify the recommendation or conduct further analysis;
- opportunities for input other than the community forum need to be explained by September 6 when the forum invitations are issued;
- responses to feedback outside of the forum may be addressed directly if easy answers are possible;
- make the forum as efficient as possible by answering concerns already addressed by the Task Force ahead of the forum if the number is reasonable;
- use Parent Link for contact instead of e-mail (crisp, clean and short);
- provide saturated communication so that everyone knows this process is happening;
- have a summary letter available on registration days/information nights;
- add Brookfield Elementary when dates are known;
- add September 13 Elmbrook Parent Network instead of September 26;
- perhaps add Elmbrook Parent Leadership Council;
- have information available at all elementary schools;
- issue a press release after the report is released;
- please change Swanson principal chat to not conflict with the October 11 Board meeting (possible change to September 15);
- develop a frequently asked questions document (before and/or after public input);
- alternative scenarios – show why rejected);
- need for transparency;
- make it easy to find information;
- September 15 Dixon PTO and principal chat (special invitation to affected families moving to Dixon);
- special open house at Dixon or other marketing for new families; and
- if Task Force parent members should be a part of the communications plan.

Other Topics

Members were asked if they felt that another meeting was needed before the release of the report. The consensus was that the members would be contacted digitally with the results of the study on grandfathering of all siblings. If that data shows no need to discuss the recommendation further, the August 9 tentative meeting will be canceled. The revised draft of the report is expected to be sent to members by Friday, August 5.

Thanks You's

A number of thanks you's were extended to those who have been instrumental in the work of the Task Force over these last months.

The meeting ended at 8:42 p.m.