

McMinn County Board of Education

Board Workshop

January 21, 2020 at 4:30 p.m.

The McMinn County Board of Education met for a workshop on Tuesday, January 21, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. at the McMinn County Center for Educational Excellence.

AGENDA

4:30 p.m. McMinn County Sales Tax Referendum Information

4:50 p.m. Schematic Diagram Planning Option for McMinn County Schools Facilities-Phase 1

Mr. Parkison reviewed a power point presentation of the County Sales Tax Referendum with the board. He stated he was concerned how we as a board (school system) can be involved in getting the necessary information out to the public. Mr. Parkison stated he had referred our position on this referendum to our board attorney, Sarah Kennedy, for guidance. He then shared the correspondence with Ms. Kennedy which stated the board can assist with getting the “facts” out to the general public by providing information and not being persuasive in the ballot decision.

Mr. Parkison shared some statistical information in regard to the proposed sales tax referendum. He said 75% of all sales tax collected in McMinn County is collected in Athens City. He said the tax increase proposal has passed by the City of Athens with the additional local portion already in place. He stated the vote on March 3 is how this income will be shared. Based on last year’s collections, Mr. Parkison said that a projected additional annual revenue of approximately \$1.75 million could be generated for the school system.

Mr. Parkison said the facts of this referendum is the safe zone. The School Board can do a little more as far as getting the facts out to their constituents but according to the board’s attorney, they need to stick to the information. He informed the board that early voting begins on February 12.

Mr. Parkison then referred to the meeting from the feasibility presentation from our architects back from the fall. He introduced architect, Sam Moser, with Mainstream Studio Architects, to review the proposal presented to the board and to assist with answering their questions. Mr. Parkison stated our buildings are over 50 years old and some of our portables over 40 years old. He said he is concerned with what is beneath our buildings with some of our septic and drainage issues with these old buildings. He said his hopes were to get this information fresh on their minds and would entertain a proposal to get this on the agenda at next month’s meeting to get this proposal going.

Sam Moser with Mainstreet Architects along with Bill Stevenson with MBI Architects reviewed the feasibility study and Phase 1 proposal of design renovations with the board. Ms. Moser reminded the board that with this proposal, the needs rankings were as follows: Riceville School the highest needs, Calhoun School with the medium needs, and Rogers Creek with the lowest needs. Mr. Moser said the needs assessment includes: ADA compliance, overall needs, HVAC/mechanical, plumbing, and electrical services as well as security and functionality.

RICEVILLE SCHOOL

Sam Moser stated the highest needs with Riceville School that popped out or rather concerns are security, highest portable buildings, roofing leaks, perimeter walls, site drainage, and playground location.

Sam Moser showed the diagram of the proposed new school onsite with the current structure stating there is enough area for a 90,000 square foot new building for a middle school based on 400-500 plus students. Mr. Moser said during the construction phase, they could indicate car drop off verse's bus drive through to help with traffic concerns. He pointed out the use of the old/current areas being used for conversion of FB/soccer field, playground, picnic areas, baseball fields, etc., and pointed out the new school could be built in its entirety in keeping the current building open.

Denise Cunningham pointed out the current enrollment of 562 at Riceville would not completely reflect the enrollment of the middle school grades.

Tony Allman asked if TDOT would be involved in the redirection of traffic with two entrances at Riceville. Sam Moser said yes, they would need to get their input. Mr. Parkison stated we also have this issue with MCHS located on the same highway but with less parents picking up students.

Mike Cochran asked if this was a one-story complex. Mr. Moser said yes, this proposal is reflecting what a 90,000 square foot proposal would look like.

ROGERS CREEK

Sam Moser said the highest concerns with Rogers Creek are roof leaks, security issues, underutilized spaces, and a problem with windows and improper head flashing. He said the student capability is 341 students with current student enrollment at 252. Mr. Moser said included in the proposal was a new secured entry, cafeteria expansion, and new media center.

Mr. Parkison stated Rogers Creek has a good core structure left so minimal changes proposed here as we want to use what we can.

Rob Shamblin asked how much input the schools had with the survey. Sam Moser said the principals were confronted and needs discussed along with surveys performed with some of the employees at the school.

Mr. Moser said before any of these projects would move forward, there would be more in-depth studies that would need to take place with our principals down to the janitors, especially, with construction of a new school. He said we would also look at the programming by meeting with all end user groups, obtaining student counts verses use of buildings, gyms, etc. regarding square footage. Mr. Moser said this is used for HVAC, plumbing, electrical space needs, etc.

Bill Steverson said at Rogers Creek, they are hurting in their core spaces to handle their students.

Rob Shamblin asked if the auditoriums are being utilized throughout our schools as this would be a good place to convert seating. He said it would be fast and easy with modular seating.

Mike Lowry said the mechanical needs are in the gym area and is very hard to get to. Mr. Parkison said we still have a sewage plant located at Rogers Creek. Mr. Moser said they will be meeting soon with information regarding the septic system. Mr. Parkison said we were told of immediate needs there that must be remedied or else they will shut the system down.

Mr. Parkison said nice thing about the school is the location as it would be very easy to add extra classrooms onto with growth.

Bill Irvin asked if there is an estimated cost. Mr. Moser said initially between \$4-9 million range for Calhoun and Rogers Creek.

CALHOUN

Ms. Moser said the needs for this school were security with students having to go outside between buildings, it has the oldest gymnasium, no lab areas for upper grades, smallest kitchen, and the traffic pattern at school dismissal.

Ms. Moser said the school has our second sewer plant (pumping station). He said included with the renovation proposal was a new gymnasium, connectors from existing corridors which would loop circulation, and then look at the existing gym. He said if you demo the classrooms at the gym and build back five classrooms then the accommodations of student capacity would then be 371 students. Mr. Moser said also included in the proposal would be to expand the library, media center, increase kitchen and cafeteria with these renovations. This would allow a completely secure area for the students. Mr. Moser said this would also decrease the cafeteria to two serving times.

Mr. Moser said with the overall proposal, this would eliminate 25% of portables within the school district.

Mr. Parkison thanked them for the presentation, and this is a broad overview of this first phase proposal. He said if we can get a building going, our county will take off with growth. He said we must come together as a board and agree with a plan. He said this plan would work as presented and would be the least cost we will have. Mr. Parkison said if the board desires to proceed on with the plan, then we would go to the county commission with this.

Rob Shamblin asked what that would look like. Mr. Parkison said we would need a solid plan and then concentrate on getting a building program going.

Sam Moser said if you look at the three proposed projects, Riceville is the highest need, Rogers Creek is the most under-utilized, and Calhoun has the highest need with core areas. He said the classroom portions are in good shape, but the core component has the highest need.

Mr. Parkison said he is proposing this and would like to have a committee to assist with this proposal. He said it is the board's decision if we want to pursue and then how to pursue. Mr. Parkison said he had a USDA loan officer to come speak to him regarding the financing piece of this. He said that the project as presented is doable. He further shared that Sam Moser has worked with this individual many times with USDA rural development projects. Mr. Parkison said the flexibility is phenomenal for county

projects. Mr. Parkison said Mr. Moser and his team have done about six projects with USDA development.

Mr. Parkison said it is time we take a step up with providing a good educational environment for our students. He said that we are glad that we are debt free as that means we are ready to go. Mr. Parkison said he feels as though we have the means and will increase our student attendance with new buildings. Mr. Parkison said it has been 28 years since we have built a new school. He said the presentation shows that we can do all this construction while school is going on. He said we must use our buildings during the process along with some of our portables as we do not have another choice.

Mike Cochran said his concern is taking one assessment without having two or three other options that would serve the county best. He said as with the project proposals on the other side of the county, you are pulling schools out of their communities. Mr. Cochran said he would like to see other plans.

Mr. Moser said these are a first pass proposal of the system's highest needs. He said in phase two and three, there are a lot of variables that could change. Mr. Moser said there are further discussions that will have to happen before moving forward with these two proposals.

Mr. Cochran said his fear is that if we look at the other plans and change them, this could affect the proposed plans.

Bill Irvin said so the \$4-9 million dollar cost would be putting money into our oldest schools and then combing them, correct?

Sam Moser stated the classrooms are in good shape, the oldest components (core elements) would be a minimal cost.

After several other questions from board members, Mr. Parkison said all were good questions as this is part of the decision-making process. He asked the board to soak in this information and then come back with further questions. He thanked the board and the architects for contributing their time to attend this meeting and if any of them had further questions or comments to please reach out to him or Sam Moser and his team.

Chairman's Signature

Director of School's Signature