

I. Welcome, Review of Minutes, and Meeting Overview

Facilitator Dick Withycombe welcomed committee members and asked them to review the minutes of their October 6 meeting, which they adopted with the following correction to page 3.

Scenario B

- Cascade Elementary School replacement (\$25 m)
- Liberty Elementary School replacement (\$25 m)
- Critical major maintenance and health/safety projects at specific schools (\$20 million)
- ~~Totem~~ Marysville Middle School replacement (\$50 m)
- Full replacement of Marysville Pilchuck High School (\$90 m)

Dick told them they would be considering two kinds of recommendations, those related to bond projects and three additional ones dealing with related issues. He said he would prefer making decisions by consensus and would try to help them find agreements they could all support.

He also told them he had genuinely enjoyed the opportunity to work with them. “This kind of work has embedded in it an opportunity to create a real legacy,” he said. “Replacing schools is enormously important work, for students and also for the community.” Dick also thanked the district staff members who provided support and technical assistance and the principals who opened their schools to the committee.

Superintendent Becky Berg echoed Dick’s appreciation for the committee’s work and thanked the three school board members, Dr. Tom Albright, Bruce Larson, and Pete Lundberg, who had come to listen in order to better understand the committee’s recommendations.

II. Thoughtexchange Findings

Three thoughtexchange representatives presented their methodology and findings by phone. Committee members received copies of their PowerPoint presentation, which focused on describing the way the process worked and demonstrating how to use the resulting information.

The process comprised three steps: “share,” “star,” and “discover.” In the first step, people were asked to identify both “concerns” and “positive things” about each of the two scenarios the Citizens Advisory Committee developed for this purpose. They were also asked: What else would you like to say? The second step asked people to consider the “thoughts” submitted by others in step one and to put stars next to the ones they liked best. More than 1,000 people (1,077) participated, contributing 2,756 thoughts, which garnered 71,405 stars. Sixty percent of the respondents were parents or guardians, 35 percent district staff members. Community members accounted for four percent of the participants, students for less than one percent.

The thoughtexchange representatives said people with similar interests star thoughts in similar ways. The third step discovered three “starring groups,” associated with scenario A, with scenario

B, and with a shared interest in attending to the needs of additional elementary schools. (In the graphics, the three bubbles represent these starring groups; the shaded dialog balloons represent thoughts, their sizes reflecting the number of stars they attracted.)

Their analysis also identified “common interest thoughts” and “specialized interest thoughts” based on diversity of appeal. Three of the common-interest themes were: learning environment, replacing aging facilities, and safety and security improvement. Three of the special-interest themes were: Totem Middle School replacement, Marysville Pilchuck High School full versus partial replacement, and adding other elementary school projects.

The thoughtexchange representatives demonstrated how to access and use these findings online (<http://bit.ly/msvlproject>) by performing several queries requested by committee members.

Questions

- *Are some comments associated with a particular school?** We do the input process by school, and then take the top 300 thoughts from each school to create a consolidated district report.
- *The two scenarios included a common set of major maintenance projects. Is it possible that, if people knew where those projects would be done, there wouldn't have been so many concerns about the needs of other elementary schools?* It's a delicate balance, between providing enough information and too much information. If we had been able to provide more detail about that part of the plan, it might have lessened that concern. People do tend to focus on what's missing.
- *Was this a large enough sample size to be representative of our community?* People do compare us to a survey, but this is different; we don't get into representativeness and validity. The better comparison is: If you had 1,000 people show up and speak at a meeting, would you feel you had heard from your community?

III. Updated Pricing Information

Becky reviewed a December 9 memo she had prepared for the committee, comparing previous and updated cost estimates for the school replacement projects included in the October 6 scenarios. The previous cost information was based on statewide averages. This fall, the district hired a firm of professional cost estimators to update those estimates to take into account factors including inflation, site-specific costs (e.g., demolition and site preparation), soft costs (e.g., architects fees and permit fees), and district standards (e.g., for furnishings and equipment).

The firm's updated cost estimates were higher than the generic estimates. In part, this reflects their conservative approach, taken to protect school districts from underfunding projects. The district staff reviewed the firm's project estimates and developed estimates that fall between those and the previous cost estimates, which they believe balance the community's dual interests in cost effectiveness and schools they can be proud of.

* The comments of committee members appear in italic print, those of the facilitator, technical team, and presenters in regular print. Unless enclosed in quotation marks, comments are edited for brevity and clarity.

Becky added that the district's updated cost estimate for replacing Marysville Pilchuck High School assumes that three large spaces will be refreshed rather than replaced (the pool, auditorium, and gymnasium).

Jim Baker, Executive Director of Finance, told committee members they could estimate the local cost at 60 percent of the updated cost of school replacement, because the district expects to receive approximately 40 percent in state matching funds for these projects. (The major maintenance projects do not qualify for state match.) He also provided a handout summarizing the district's 2015 assessed valuation and estimated tax impacts for bond authorizations of different amounts.

IV. Final Bond Recommendation

Dick reminded the committee that scenarios A and B were developed to support the thoughtexchange process and suggested they begin their deliberations by considering the identified bond elements independently. The committee discussed each of the school replacement projects and the districtwide major maintenance project, separately and in combination, before reaching a final agreement.

The Citizens Advisory Committee adopted unanimously their recommendation that the Marysville School District place on the ballot a bond measure totaling \$196.3 million to fund the following projects:

- the replacement of Liberty Elementary School;
- the replacement of Cascade Elementary School;
- the replacement of Marysville Middle School;
- the replacement of Totem Middle School;
- the replacement of Marysville Pilchuck High School with modernization of the pool, auditorium, and gymnasium; and
- districtwide major maintenance projects.

Committee Discussion

The following synthesized statements illustrate the nature of the discussion leading to this recommendation.

- Each older school that is replaced frees up money in the major maintenance bond element to address the needs of other schools. The district can identify in advance the kinds of projects to be completed at each school if the bond measure passes.
- Both middle schools should be replaced; both have significant needs. They are also located close together. We should recommend that both be replaced, but not specify where — so the district has the option of relocating one of them, in order to better serve all of the students in our community. However, we don't support replacing the two middle schools with one very large middle school.

- Many people consider the quality of schools when they choose where to locate their families. Better schools will encourage the development of new family housing in our community.
- Quality schools are a critical element of community pride — and also an investment in the future.
- This bond package would replace the worst of the elementary schools and make significant improvements at several others. It would also offer most current elementary parents the prospect of new secondary schools for their children.

V. Additional Recommendations

The committee also adopted three supplemental recommendations based on proposals drafted by individual committee members. These appear below as revised, and then adopted unanimously. The committee will also submit the original, full-length proposals to provide further context.

RECOMMENDATION: PRESERVATION OF SCHOOL IDENTITY

The Citizens Advisory Committee recommends that, when modernizing or replacing an existing school, the District collaborate with the school community to ensure the preservation of its identity, culture, and traditions. This effort should include both protecting and reintroducing physical features and artifacts and collecting and celebrating the school's history and stories.

RECOMMENDATION: MAINTENANCE OF SCHOOL DISTRICT BUILDINGS

The Citizens Advisory Committee recommends ~~that the District allocate a portion of the state matching funds associated with a successful 2016 bond measure to addressing deferred maintenance needs in order to ensure safe and functional schools districtwide.~~ Further, the committee recommends that future annual budgets include sufficient maintenance funds to prevent the return of a state of disrepair among schools.

RECOMMENDATION: LONG-RANGE SCHOOL REPLACEMENT PLANNING

The Citizens Advisory Committee recommends that the District develop a long-range plan to replace all school facilities ~~before they reach the age of~~ as they age beyond 50 years.

VI. Final Thoughts

At the conclusion of the meeting, Dick gave committee members an opportunity to share their final thoughts about the experience of serving on the Citizens Advisory Committee.

- *Thank you for the opportunity. It's been a pleasure meeting everyone, and I'm happy to be involved in the community, and I hope that the bond goes well.*
- *Yes. I hope the bond goes through; we need it very badly.*
- *I kind of ditto that. Yes. Agreed.*

- *I think this is a good example of how things can work. I think our committee has shown that people can get together and have differing opinions and still be able to reach a consensus. I think it's a good example for other groups as well.*
- *It was nice to be a part of this committee and have the level of involvement that the district allowed us to have. It was very positive. It would be nice to be involved more often. Thank you.*
- *It's great. I was glad to be a part of it. It's cool to see so many different perspectives and actually learn a lot. I came to find there's a lot you just don't know because you aren't out there hearing it and being involved in it. So I appreciate everyone's comments and feedback and the kind of the perspectives I gained from it.*
- *Number one, walking through the schools and all of this, was the pride our district has in its teachers and the pride teachers have in their students. That was an eye-opener, and I really hope there's a way of capturing that. I hope we can capture that we really do have a lot of pride in our community. I know a lot of things go wrong in our community, but there are many other things going on in this community; and I think this has helped show those things to me.*
- *Just thank you for letting us all be a part of this.*
- *Thank you very much for allowing this, Dr. Becky, and for the staff and everything you provided, and for doing everything we asked of you — and the transparency. It has made me feel proud to be a part of this. My hope is that, having been given the facts firsthand, when this is a proposed bond, we go out in the public as a team to give the truth and the facts — play a part in helping pass it so our hard work doesn't go unheard or unpunished. I look forward to opportunities like this again, when we could do something else to provide for our school district and our community.*
- *I just thank you for allowing us to be a part of it and to feel like we're part of the community and have a say. I look forward to having more opportunities like this to have a voice in our community.*
- *I just appreciate the thought process and the thoughtfulness, and the honesty of it all.*
- *I want to thank you all for your work, but I would like to make the observation that the Lakewood School District struggled to pass a bond just to build the high school. So to pass a bond in this town for this amount of money is going to be a lot of work. Hopefully the campaign committee will do everything possible to get every yes vote.*
- *I just want to thank all of us for our work. Thank you for believing in the students in schools that have been on our list since I came here in 1998: Cascade and Liberty. Those are the kids that live in the greatest poverty and face some of the toughest challenges; and now they are going to get facilities that support their growth and needs so they can learn. I am grateful for that, so thank you.*
- *I just appreciate that, unlike that other Washington, we were able to listen to each other and compromise, and build consensus. I think this was a great committee.*
- *I just want to say thank you for this opportunity. Not being from Washington State, being here only 10 years and having kids in this school district, it's wonderful to be a part*

of this and know what the schools look like. I look forward to seeing the campaign signs and seeing folks out there supporting this bond — it's only going to be done by word of mouth. Everyone within this community has a lot of great ideas and they want to see all of these schools succeed — elementary, middle school, and high school. I love education, that is what I strive for. So, thank you for this opportunity.

- *I think everything that could be said, has been said.*

Becky thanked committee members, saying, “The reason I really like this process is that it’s not for us to decide what needs to be done, it’s for people in the community to decide what needs to be done. I think the only way we build trust between the community and the school district is to listen to what the people who live here have to say — and then do what they ask us to do.”

She praised the committee for the quality of their conversation. “In not every community would people be sitting here with totally open minds, with their favorite issues but being willing to look at all kids, to look at our kids most in need. Never once did I hear you say “what about my school” or “if they get that, I want that.” We take that for granted, but that's how we are in Marysville. That’s something to be valued: our concern for all kids, about equity and giving kids a leg up.”

Becky added that, “Buildings are a statement to our kids, of what adults think of them, how much hope the adults have for their future, and how much hope we have for our community.” With respect to next steps in the process, she said district staff will verify the numbers and consult the district’s bond attorney before forwarding the committee’s recommendation to the school board. If the board decides to place a bond measure on the ballot, the district will develop an information package. The district cannot support a bond campaign; that must be left to citizen volunteers.

Dick reiterated his appreciation for the opportunity to work with the committee, which he described as “an extraordinary group of community leaders.” He told them, “You have performed so very, very well throughout the period of time we have been together. The involvement has been consistent, the quality of the questions and concerns has been really significant, and I am so very, very pleased that we were able to arrive at an agreement across all members of this group. Not an easy decision to reach, but a very important one.”