

I. Welcome and Committee Business

Assistant Superintendent Ray Houser welcomed committee members and, on behalf of the superintendent and the school board, thanked them again for undertaking this important task.

Facilitator Dick Withycombe asked them to review the April 21 minutes, which they approved as submitted; these will be posted on the district website to help keep the community informed about the facilities planning process.

Dick told committee members one of their number had said there were Cascade parents who would be interested in sharing information about their school at tonight's meeting. He said he suggested they give that information to the Cascade principal instead, so she could summarize their input for the committee. He did this, he said, not because he was uninterested in parent input, but because he felt it would establish an expectation for parent panels at other meetings and the meeting agendas are very full. He felt that sharing parent concerns through the principals would fit more easily into available committee time. Dick said he would make sure parents at other schools to be visited are aware of that input opportunity. Cascade Principal Teresa Williams reported that she had not received parent input for the committee.

II. Presentation: thoughtexchange

Ray played a one-minute video about thoughtexchange, an organization the district has twice used to gather input from stakeholders, most recently to learn that 77% of participating community members favored replacing the Marysville Pilchuck cafeteria at a different location. Ray described it as an electronic alternative to a town meeting, which reaches many more people: "It would be very difficult to get 1,900 people to come to a board meeting to give input." Community members receive emails asking for their input; and the district receives both visual summaries of the data and a compilation of individual responses (which it does not release). (More information about thoughtexchange is available on their website: <https://thoughtexchange.com>. The video is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQRUmjHQ6x8>.)

Ray said he and Superintendent Becky Berg have talked about the possibility of using thoughtexchange to gather feedback about alternative scenarios the Citizens Advisory Committee develops, not to test possible recommendations but simply to get the pulse of the community

Dick told committee members this information was presented tonight in order to keep the commitment to transparency: "I want to make sure you all know that something like this may be used as an element of our process." He said he had taken part in a conference call with thoughtexchange representatives, in which he said that he was pleased to know they're available and have been used effectively in the Marysville community and that the committee may choose to involve them if they determine doing so would contribute something meaningful and timely to the

process. Dick said whether and how to use thoughtexchange is something the committee will work on together.

III. Tour of Cascade Elementary School

Facilities Supervisor Greg Dennis provided a brief overview before the committee toured Cascade Elementary School. Built in 1955, the school occupies multiple buildings and was designed as an open-classroom school. Classroom walls were added later; however they don't go all the way to the ceiling and are open to the hallway. A remodel in the 1980s closed in the covered play area, which was replaced elsewhere on the site.

Teresa told the committee that Cascade enrolls 480 K-5 students; approximately 60% of them qualify for the federal Free and Reduced Price Meal Program, 33% for English Language Learner services. There is one full-day kindergarten classroom and three half-day ones; four first-grade classrooms; and three classrooms each in the other grades. She described Cascade as a "community school" because of the history of the building and the stability of its staff: "Five staff members have taught here for 30 years or more, and all are highly regarded in the community."

However there are challenges. Teresa said the school is not well suited for students in wheelchairs (uneven surfaces and heavy doors) and noise between classrooms is an issue.

Questions and Discussion

- *How do energy costs here compare with those of other elementary schools in the district? Cascade is very inefficient. Its older HVAC system struggles to maintain adequate heat and runs at a higher cost.*
- *Were any updates done after the fires here? Two years ago, C pod caught fire on the first day of school, the result of an electrical short. As a result, all of the lighting both here and at Liberty were replaced, because they were of the same vintage.*
- *Wow, Cascade and Grove are so very different from each other: night and day.*
- *What about air quality? I was getting stuffy, before the tour was even over; and I'm pretty healthy. I wonder if kids and teachers get sick more often, being in the building so much longer.*
- *This facility inhibits the teaching process. I can't see how it could be otherwise. The classrooms lack adequate power, heating, ventilation, and lighting.*
- *I do like the larger classrooms. Compared to Grove, that's very noticeable.*
- *You can tell the teachers love being here. It's homey; there's a sense of excitement; there are lots of things on the walls. They've done the best they can with what they have.*
- *It does feel like a community-based school.*
- *What's Cascade's capacity? If all the portables were used as regular classrooms, it could house 550 students. But that would mean serving lunch for two hours, which would mean no access to the gym for two hours; and gym access already limits the PE program.*

- *The four portables seem really disconnected from the rest of the school. That may be okay for a music classroom, but it seems like it would be a problem for kids in regular classrooms. Music occupies one portable; the school counselor, occupational therapist, physical therapist, and ELL coordinator share one; and the other two are fifth-grade classrooms.*
- *I think it would be annoying to not have classroom doors, especially with the classrooms so close. There's no separation. I can see distractions for kids, frustration for teachers.*
- *The assumption underlying that model was that open classrooms would facilitate team teaching and collaboration. The design reflected significant thought on the part of educators and architects about what constitutes an effective instructional environment.*
- *It must be a problem for students with special needs: a difficult and stressful environment.*
- *When you do fire drills, with all the kids moving around at the same time, is that chaos? No. It's a tribute to our teachers' strong management skills that we have all students lined up along the fence where they should be in an average of two minutes.*
- *Sometimes I felt I was in a fun house because so many surfaces are uneven, slanting, or concave. Not just the main building — the portables too. I am concerned about the safety of students who have mobility issues when we add a resource room next year.*
- *I wonder about the air quality. I noticed soot on a bookcase under a vent and was told they have to dust it every few days. Is that a residual effect of the fire? It's not from the fire. All the ducts and vents were professionally cleaned after the fire. The old HVAC system is full of dust, and ducts deteriorate over time.*
- *We were told that, if you turn off the lights in one classroom, it turns off the lights in other classrooms too. And we saw a hole in the sheetrock so you can get to a light switch.*
- *There are no light switches in this library. You have to go into a nearby classroom where there are four switches, two for the library. That's the way it is for the whole building: switches tucked away in odd corners.*
- *Is parking an issue? I've noticed cars in the church parking lot across the street, and I could see tonight there isn't enough parking for our committee. Parking is a challenge, and sometimes there are safety issues.*
- *Why are the ceilings in some rooms lowered? This building has two halves. There is a lot of piping behind the dropped ceiling in the library and other rooms on this side of the hall. The electric and data wiring runs along the other side.*
- *It's evident this teaching staff cares greatly for the kids here. This is a population that needs more support, not less support; and it amazes me that you are able to do that for these children despite what you're dealing with here. We have a mandate to address the needs of these students, and housing them in these conditions is not conducive to meeting their learning needs.*

- *Do you have a computer lab? What about state testing?* We don't have a lab. We have Chromebooks on carts, which can be moved around the building.
- Chromebooks look like laptops, but they have much less storage and operate off the cloud so they're less expensive. The new state testing is all online, and now some district testing is too. The COWs (computers on wheels) and charging stations are rolled to whatever classroom needs them for testing, starting this year. The kids are becoming quite adept with the Chromebooks. Thanks to the technology levy, our students are learning in different ways. This is the first phase. The next phases involve upgrades to teaching stations, and then to student devices. Our goal is not for every student to have a device, but for students and teachers to interact with content using devices and the internet. The issue will be providing the infrastructure to support the increased use of technology.
- This year, when Cascade lost its heat and had to rely on space heaters, we couldn't use the computers because we didn't have enough power for both.
- *I saw a lack of storage all over the school, boxes stacked in the halls.* It's a challenge, especially first thing in the morning when kids are taking off coats and backpacks. It's crowded, with everything out in the hallways. I'm encouraging staff members to do some clearing out in their classrooms.
- *I'm concerned about the lack of natural lighting and ventilation; several rooms have no windows at all. Windows would be healthier and would save on lighting costs.*
- *I saw pull-down screens in the classrooms, not promethium boards (interactive whiteboards).* That was a decision of the former superintendent. The technology levy will allow us to acquire current instructional technology; we will actually leapfrog over some of the things other districts adopted earlier, such as Smart Boards.
- *The kitchen staff has to go outside to a shed to get refrigerated and frozen food, and they aren't even commercial refrigerators.*
- *I didn't see any handicapped restrooms, and the stalls in the restrooms are very small. Each section of the school should have an accessible restroom.* We have just one accessible restroom, in the health room in the office area. When we had a student in a wheelchair, it meant paying for a fulltime paraprofessional to ensure that she could move around the school safely and access the restroom.
- *The cafeteria is so small, it's not the best working environment for the staff; and we all saw safety and security issues as we toured the school.*

IV. State of Elementary School Facilities

Greg reviewed the elementary portion of the handout he created to summarize the structural, mechanical, and electrical deficiencies at district schools. Committee members received copies of his chart; supplemental information appears below.

- The chart identifies only major needs in these areas, projects that are beyond the scope of routine repair and maintenance.

- Outdated mechanical systems lead to poor air quality and higher energy costs. In many cases, the systems are so antiquated that parts are no longer available.
- When a heating system has no controls, it means that it's running at full capacity all of the time. It can't be programmed to reduce heat in some areas or during some hours, so it's very inefficient.
- Leaking water loop fittings cause ceiling damage.
- Upgraded fire alarm systems identify the exact location of the activated smoke detector and also prevent false alarms by warning of detectors that need cleaning.
- The intercom systems in several schools are not audible in all areas of the building.
- Liberty and Cascade have some of their original glass-fuse electrical panels.
- Some key systems are so old, spare parts are no longer available.

Questions and Discussion

- *How can the intercom systems in 20-year-old buildings, as well as 40-year-old buildings, need upgrading?* In both cases, parts are no longer available.
- *What's the maintenance program to prevent deterioration of wooden ramps?* Part of the problem is that they didn't always use pressure-treated wood back then; but with any wood, you'll have deterioration, whatever the maintenance. The aluminum ramps are better, but they cost \$7,000 per portable, so if the wood ones are salvageable we do what we can with them. We pressure-wash them, re-stain them, replace damaged boards, and apply nonslip coatings for safety.
- *Is it possible to go back to concrete floors, like the ones at Grove, to avoid the cost of replacing vinyl flooring at some of these schools?* That's typically a decision that's made when the concrete is poured; you choose either a finished or non-finished edge. So when you peel off the vinyl tile, you'd have to do a grind overlay to get the look we have at Grove.
- *There seem to be so many portables. Do you envision a day when we don't need them?* There were 121 portables when I started working in the district, and there are 100 now. They're not built to last 30 years.
- *Have you estimated the cost of making these improvements?* Not yet. We know the cost of some things, such as the aluminum ramps. Things like new roofs would have to go through a public bid process. Some other things, including the fire and intercom system upgrades, have been quoted, but that depends on the school, how much rewiring you discover you need.
- *It's difficult to understand how some of these schools pass inspections; this is not code.* Buildings have to meet only the code that's in effect when they're built; they don't need to keep current as building codes change.