

I. Welcome and Review of Minutes

Dr. Becky Berg, Marysville superintendent, welcomed committee members, saying it was wonderful to see that people keep coming back and thanking them for their dedication: “We appreciate it immensely.”

Facilitator Dick Withycombe added his appreciation for the group’s good attendance, saying, “It squares with the importance of this work.” He asked people to review the minutes of the May 5 meeting, which they adopted as printed for the meeting. These minutes included one change from those emailed to committee members before the meeting, under the heading “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%~~ **67%** of participating community members favored replacing the Marysville Pilchuck cafeteria at a different location.

II. Tour of Marysville Middle School

Principal Angela Hansen provided background information before the committee toured Marysville Middle School. This year, they have moved as many students as possible from portables; three of the eight portables are no longer used for instruction. The relocation of another special program enabled the behavior program and an eighth-grade special education class to move from portables to the main building. The school also took steps to improve traffic safety by clarifying the school’s entrance and drop-off area and by blocking local traffic through the campus.

Built in 1960, Marysville Middle School enrolls approximately 825 students in grades 6-8. The school feels “spread out” because it was designed to house each grade in a separate wing. Angela said technology is an issue. The school has one lab (“with pretty old computers”) for the entire school. This year, it added computers on carts for math instruction and for the Smarter Balanced assessments.

The classroom in which the committee met is one of two impacted by the school’s three lunches, each with about 300 students; the noise in the hallway impedes instruction. One lunch period is split: students spend 30 minutes in class, eat lunch, and return to class for another 30 minutes.

Angela said the HVAC system is so old parts are no longer available. It sometimes goes on during the night, and teachers arrive in the morning not knowing whether their classrooms will be too hot or too cold. Sometimes students must wear coats in class; other times, the teacher must open all of the windows. Other concerns related to the age of the building and its systems include the probable existence of asbestos and the intrusion of pests. Concerns related to the design of the building included:

- an intercom system that doesn't reach the school office, counselor offices, lunchroom, or commons, which means the 16 adults in these areas would not hear a safety announcement;
- the location of the office in the center of the school, without a sightline to the main entrance; and
- the number of exterior doors, which makes it difficult to control access to the school.

Angela concluded by saying, "The great thing about this school is the staff... even with the facility challenges, they come in every day and work as hard as they can."

Dick asked board member Pete Lundberg, who served as the principal of Marysville Middle School for 18 years, for his reflections. He said the school's greatest lack is flexible space that would support instructional groups of different sizes, differentiating instruction by subject, and implementing innovative practices. Among the building's physical shortcomings, the one that most directly affects instruction is the difficulty of running wiring for technology because there is no space above the ceiling.

Vice Principal Dan Alderson, Assistant Superintendent Ray Houser, and Facilities Supervisor Greg Dennis joined Angela in answering committee questions.

Questions Before the Tour

- *Is Marysville the biggest middle school?** No. Cedarcrest enrolls approximately 860 students. Totem is smaller than Marysville, with about 650 students.
- *Is there a problem with students skipping school, because of its layout?* It's a challenge because we don't always have good sightlines; but we have two security officers who help with that and an attendance secretary who tracks attendance every period and sends someone to look for missing students.
- *Is there a camera system here, or in any other middle school?* No.
- *How many students are there per classroom? Does it need more teachers, or more classrooms?* The school can house all of the kids in its attendance area. All district middle schools are staffed at the same level; because it's larger, Marysville Middle School has more teachers. The number of students per classroom varies. Secondary schedules are complex; class size may depend on how many students sign up or on the subject taught. You may have some classes with 33 students, but you will also have others with 22 or 24 students. PE and choir would be large classes; intervention would be a small class.
- *Are the hallways too narrow for the enrollment?* It feels that way. Some schools in other districts have eliminated lockers, to lessen congestion and to minimize the time students spend in hallways; and that's something we may consider here.

* 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 have been edited for brevity and clarity.

Questions and Discussion After the Tour

- *On a positive note, you can tell the teachers love what they do. They do the best they can with what they have.*
- *I saw a big crack in a beam in a classroom. It may be okay, but it looks scary to a parent.*
- *I agree there's a sense of community, which is obvious and cool. But the lack of technology in a middle school, which is when kids really start using computers for writing reports, is a problem. The computer lab is beyond sad, especially because many students here may not have computers at home.*
- *Will Marysville get more Chromebooks? Yes. The initial distribution was across buildings to meet the state testing guidelines. Before placing more devices in student hands, the district will make sure teachers are prepared to use them effectively. Before the last day of school, every teacher will have a new workstation to take home and learn to use over the summer. The rollout of student devices will begin in the fall.*
- *With just a few kids in the hall, we can hear noise; so I can imagine there's a problem during the school day. It would be difficult, not having the resources to spread middle school students apart in various ways. From a science perspective, it would be hard having so few outlets and computers.*
- *Despite the heating and cooling issues, it's nice to have the windows, the natural light. You don't feel so cut off from the world, so walled off.*
- *I'm surprised the gym isn't large enough to seat the whole student body. It's important for kids to have that; even if they're not athletic, there's a spirit side of it. A gym that's large enough would also be an asset for the community and possible revenue for the school.*
- *There are huge security concerns. The office can't see who comes in, and some parts of the building are isolated; you don't know what's going on.*
- *Is it okay with the fire department to have 300 students in the cafeteria for lunch? We have the fire marshal in every district facility every year, and they visit during the school day.*
- *What about fire-alarm performance? We can get everyone out and accounted for, start to finish, in 11 minutes or less. It takes two or three minutes to get everyone onto the field; and in the last drill, we had students lined up in five minutes.*
- *The school is such a huge building, but there seems to be so much wasted space.*

III. School Replacement or Modernization

Doug Nichols, Director of the Construction Services Group at Educational Service District 112 in Vancouver, provided an overview of the OSPI[†] School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP) in general and of school modernization versus school replacement in particular. Committee members received copies of his PowerPoint. Supplemental information and clarifications appear below.

[†] Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Washington State)

Becky, Ray, and Executive Director of Finance and Operations Jim Baker fielded questions specific to Marysville.

OSPI Construction Assistance Program

- *If the district passes a bond measure, what happens if it doesn't get the state money it expected?* School districts work with the state while they are planning bond measures to determine the state's contribution. They can be pretty confident they will receive the state money, but the state authorizes those allocations only once a year, in July; so districts have to decide how to use the state funds. If a district can pass a larger bond that allows them to put projects out to bid during a less busy time of year, it can save as much as 10%. Or districts can use bond funds to pay for an initial project, and then apply state dollars to subsequent projects. Another option is to fund projects with the bond and use the state money when it arrives to address additional needs. (Slide 4)
- Local validation is usually established through passage of a bond measure, although it may also be through impact fees paid by residential developers. (Slide 6)
- Services, such as architectural and engineering fees, and furnishings and equipment may account for 15% to 17% of total construction costs. (Slide 8)
- State funding assistance is based on a space allocation formula. The "eligible area" for a school more than 30 years old is typically the current square footage of the school. Eligible area is also allocated for "unhoused students" when districts need additional space for increased enrollment. The "funding assistance percentage" varies by district. (Slide 10)
- The state's Construction Cost Allocation is outdated. It doesn't reflect actual cost, but it serves to keep the state's contributions in line with available funds. (Slide 12)
- A district's funding assistance percentage is based on assessed property value per student. The range is 20% to 100%. Marysville's percentage is relatively high: 64%. Seattle's percentage is 20%. (Slide 13)
- Because state funds cannot be applied to all project costs and because the cost allocation is below market price, the actual percentage is lower. A district with a 50% funding assistance percentage may receive about 34% of actual project cost from the state. (Slide 14)
- *If bond projects come in under-budget, would the state get its money back?* That happens rarely. If the savings brought actual cost under the state's construction cost allocation, it's possible the state would seek to split the savings with the district.
- *Who decides what projects to fund with the state money?* If the district intends to pay for some projects with bond funds, and then apply the state match to additional needs, the school board will identify those needs in advance. In Marysville, that decision has involved a public process, and additional projects have been identified in the board resolution authorizing the bond measure.
- *Is there a maximum amount of state money a district can get?* The allocation is based on eligible area, rather than dollars: the amount of space eligible for modernization or replacement or the amount of space needed to house unhoused students. (The state considers students in portables to be unhoused students.)

When should a district rebuild instead of modernize a school building?

- Functional adequacy isn't as easy to see, things like all the classrooms being the same; but it does include capacity (i.e., crowding). (Slide 17)
- If major modernization costs more than 40% of the state's construction cost allocation, currently \$200.40/square foot, it is eligible for full funding. (Slide 19)
- If the cost of modernization approaches 80% of the construction cost allocation, a district should consider replacing the school instead. At 60%, it's a more difficult decision, one that may be driven by educational functionality. (Slide 20)
- *Has there been preplanning for Marysville Middle School?* There were discussions earlier, but this is a new committee; and it's for you to say what you find and what you recommend the district do about it.

IV. Role of the Citizens Advisory Committee

In the course of the discussion surrounding the above presentation, Dick clarified the role of this committee. The Citizens Advisory Committee is charged with studying the district's facility needs, setting priorities, and making recommendations. The school board will decide whether to run a bond, and for how much. Then a separate bond committee of community volunteers will form to help pass the bond. Individual Citizens Advisory Committee members may choose to volunteer for the bond committee, but that would be an entirely separate undertaking.