

HOPEWELL VALLEY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Pennington, New Jersey

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Future Planning Committee (FPC)
From: Liz Gutierrez
Date: July 23, 2014
Re: Meeting Notes of July 23, 2014

The meeting was convened at 9:00 am in the Board Meeting Room and adjourned at 11:00 am.

Discussion / Action Items:

The minutes from the July 9 meeting were reviewed and approved by the Committee. (Minutes will be posted on the district website.)

An update of kindergarten enrollment was presented - no changes since the last meeting.

The goal for this meeting was to begin sharing the ideas of the sub-groups and how their findings impact the options being studied by the other groups. There was an analysis of benefits, issues, impact on district families and a critique of recommendations.

Recap: At previous meetings of the FPC it was agreed that Option A, B and C would not be considered.

Option D – Full-Day Kindergarten and D1 - Pilot of Full-Day Kindergarten:

The spokesman for this sub-group recommended that the district move to a full-day K for the 2015 – 2016 school year. The sub-group concluded that it would not be practical to pilot such a program since most districts in NJ are already offering full-day K and the State of New Jersey is moving in this direction.

Pros:

- Elementary schools have sufficient space for full-day K (TGG may have some difficulty)
- Minimal disruption
- Savings by eliminating midday bus runs
- Full-day K makes the district more competitive
- Improves the social skills of students
- Students would have more access to specials
- Students would have added exposure to math and reading
- Students would have more “play” time
- Students would experience smoother transition to full-day school
- Beneficial to families where both parents work
- No need to move 5th graders to TMS

- Will not impact the PEECH program
- No need to redistrict but some students could be shifted to Bear Tavern.
- The community wants full-day K

Cons:

- Would require additional staff at approximately \$500K per year
- Not all teachers would be able to make the switch
- Bathroom situation would need to be examined
- Potential additional cost for the reconfiguration and restructuring of trailers

Note:

The availability of space at each elementary school was analyzed by the sub-group using the recent Demographer's report. Also, the lack of revenue from the Kindergarten Extension Program was not factored in. Dr. Smith stated that this program brought approximately \$75K per year into the district, however, creative ways could be found to make up for this loss.

Option E – Relocating Administration Building Offices to Bear Tavern Elementary:

The sub-group studying Option E obtained additional information on Bear Tavern from building principal, Bruce Arcurio.

Pros:

- Sell Administration Building and property (valued at \$1.2MM eight years ago) due to approximately \$400 - \$800K in repairs that are needed on the building
- There is space at BT (trailers) for administrative staff and/or on the grounds for a new structure
- There is potential office space available at the Merrill Lynch location (it is not known if the Maintenance and Transportation departments can be accommodated at this location)
- There is a possibility that the Maintenance and Transportation departments can be located at the Township buildings.
- The Technology department can be located in one of the schools

Cons:

- Moving administrative offices to BT would be disruptive to programs
- Would force SPED to move out of trailers into less space
- BT/trailers do not have meeting space for large groups/teacher training, etc.
- Trailers/rooms would need renovation for administrative staff
- Would not meet the public requirement/building code for rest rooms
- Staff would not fit into trailers and may result in breakup of administrative team (per architect analysis)
- Additional parking at BT would be required
- Cost of office space at approximately \$100K per year
- BT is not centrally located

The recommendation from this sub-group was not to relocate the Administrative offices to Bear Tavern Elementary School or build a new structure. Office space at the Merrill Lynch center is still under consideration.

Option F – Redistricting:

This sub-group included one representative from each elementary school. The spokesperson for this sub-group suggested moving a relatively small community of students (89 – K–5) from one elementary school to Bear Tavern beginning in the 2015 – 2016 school year.

Pros:

- Students in their last year (5th grade) could stay at their schools
- Redistricting would not affect full-day K
- Families currently using subscription bussing may like “mandated” bussing

Cons:

- Some families may be disappointed
- Redistricting may need to be revisited in 5 – 7 years
- Moving the Administration Building may be affected
- Would require two additional busses
- Available classrooms with bathrooms would need further analysis

Note: Additional data will be needed regarding facilities. Further discussion should include building principal to discuss ways redistricting would impact BT.

Option G – Moving the 5th Grade to the Middle School (TMS):

This sub-group interviewed a teacher in another school district whose middle school included 5th graders to arrive at their recommendations.

Pros:

- Moving 5th grade to TMS will coincide with the testing structure (Grades 3 – 4 and Grades 5 – 8)
- Space is available at TMS for 5th graders
- Greater opportunity for clubs and advanced learning

Cons:

- Would require a review of the 5th grade program
- Highly qualified teachers are required to teach middle school
- Increased cost for bussing
- Disruption of school schedules/bussing
- 5th Graders getting up an hour earlier

The spokesperson of this group recommended additional discussion and analysis for this option.

Option H – Expansion of Magnet Programs:

Pros:

- Makes HVRSD more competitive
- Offers more diverse curriculum

- HVRSD can support magnet programs up to 50 students per elementary grade
- Well-implemented programs are an advantage – choose programs carefully
- Participating students are more advantaged
- Can be viewed as a “voluntary” redistricting to balance school populations
- Offers additional options including “immersion” programs

Cons:

- Startup costs, teacher training, materials, additional staff in some programs
- Additional transportation costs
- Some programs are at a higher cost

The recommendation of this sub-group includes the distribution of a survey to district parents in August to gather additional data on whether or not to expand magnet program offerings. The Committee would like to see more concrete evidence of the benefits of magnet programs before a decision is made to expand the programs.