

## **Jeffco Facilities Usage Committee- Meeting Notes**

Meeting held September 28, 2009 from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m.

### **Opening of Meeting**

Justin opened the meeting. He covered the planned agenda for the meeting which will start with committee discussion of the public forum comments. He thanked committee members for attending the forums. He stated that next, the committee will be given an update on the state and district budget and the implications of additional cuts based on the new state projections. Third, the committee will discuss potential options by articulation area; these options were created by APA and district staff and are simply a starting point for the committee's discussion; these are ideas that can all be changed and modified per committee direction if needed. Fourth, the committee will decide how it wants to look at options over the next couple of meetings. Finally, the committee will discuss next steps.

Justin asked the committee if they had heard any rumors or comments that should be shared with the group.

One committee member said she heard that one school thought it was going to be closed because it was currently being audited as part of the state and district facility audits. This is unfounded as all schools are currently being audited for these two purposes.

Another committee member said that Home Owner's Associations (HOAs) are getting involved. Some HOAs are highly organized and have been involved in other facility discussions before.

Justin then reviewed the committee's norms that the committee had previously adopted. He explained that they will now be given all of the materials and data that had been working documents before to take home with them. They will also get a handout with the options created by APA and district staff. This means that there are school names out there now tied to this work, and that this changes the dialogue and the community's reaction. Committee members need to respect each other's opinions and the confidentiality of the committee member's individual statements. Communication with the press will now be more likely; he reminded the committee all communication should be handled by the co-chairs and the district communication department. This will ensure that the message is consistent. He concluded by saying they should treat everyone with respect and remember that everyone has positive intent even if they do not personally agree on options.

### **Discussion of Public Forums**

Justin commented that most committee members attended at least one public forum.

Justin focused on the feedback obtained from the forums that were relevant to the six criteria recommended by the committee. He said that there were not a lot of specific responses in regards to the criteria, but that there was a general sense of overall agreement. Most feedback was around

including academic performance (both for and against) and there was a general theme the committee needed to make sure they were taking into account, socioeconomic issues.

A committee member thanked the chairs for attending and taking the brunt of any public reaction and for representing the committee well.

Another committee member said she had mixed feelings about whether academics should be left in after attending the forums and thought this was something the committee should discuss. The committee member also questions whether choice should be net, or weighted by who is choosing out.

Addressing the comments made about Arvada Middle School (AMS) at the forums, a committee member said that the AMS community wanted to make sure academic achievement was not included because they thought they would be punished for being in a low economic area. They also thought their capacity utilization would look low because they have other non-district programs using space in their building. He said he agreed that he didn't think schools should be punished and that the committee needed to consider how much a school is a resource for a community. He added he thought that maybe academic growth should take precedence.

Going back to the inclusion of academic performance as a criterion, a committee member asked whether it should be left out entirely because it could be considered a staffing issue and not a facility issue. She questioned whether the committee should instead be focused on the physical building.

Justin noted that there was a public comment about three criteria being more relevant to closing buildings (building condition, operation costs, and capacity utilization) and that the others being better for repurposing. He suggested that this might come back to the idea of layers of criteria, with the first to identify options then second to evaluate identified options. He also said that the growth model could play a role one way of measuring academic performance, because it identifies both absolute performance and the growth of schools.

Another committee member said that after the forum he thought that academics should not be criteria, but then he thought about it more and that he now thinks this could be a credibility issue if they do not include it. He said that the most important goal of the district is student performance.

A committee member added that she thought that leaving it out would not be fulfilling their mission. She also said that existing research says that there should be a mix of performance levels in a school, and that a homogeneous population of low performing students leads to declining performance. She then said that she thought "repurposing" should be the word to use, not "closure." Justin said that all buildings would be evaluated for repurposing.

Another committee member said he heard a board member express concern that charters were not reviewed and that the committee needed to be able to say why charters were not looked at. The decision was made at the beginning to leave them out because they are not housed in district owned buildings (with some exception) and more importantly charters have their own boards that plan facility usage.

A committee member then said that she heard a comment that they were suspicious of numbers, specifically related to Title schools. That person said that there were mandated student-teacher ratios at those schools that could affect their capacity figures. It was indicated that this is wrong, Title 1 schools have school-wide plans that might have set ratios, but these will vary from school to school and are not federally mandated. Title schools will have more adults in the school being used in different ways and that there will be greater usage of the building.

The committee member followed up by asking if that means that Title schools need to be considered differently in terms of how a capacity criterion would be applied to them. Justin said staff was looking at that to determine the right capacity figure for them.

Another committee member asked about how special programs housed in certain schools, such as clinics, were funded. Tracie said that she also questioned that and that they still need to look into it.

Justin added that in these cases they need to figure out what is causing what and whether low capacity utilization was causing outside programs to come in because space was available.

Another committee member asked about security issues related to non-district programs being in the school and adults coming in. Someone who works at one such school answered that that adults in the English Learning program or the clinic come in through a separate entrance while students are in class, or they check in at the office. She said that there were no security problems due to these programs.

Finally, a committee member said that the issue should be raised as to whether ownership was by the school or district to inform them about how much programs can be moved around.

Justin said that there should be more attendance at the next round of forums.

### **Update on the Budget**

Lorie Gillis gave a brief update on the budget based the state's most recent projections. She said that there was no good news. \$11 million in emergency reserve is going back to the state, with an additional \$15 million to be cut next year. This may be the first time the district will get less revenue than they received the year before. She reiterated that the committee's work was very important to solving the budget issues. She added that the cuts of \$15 million are only expected to go up.

### **Discussion of Options**

Justin explained that the options are not in any specific order. Tracie, Justin, Cheryl and Pete met for seven hours to identify options by looking at each articulation area. Then they walked through these with cabinet (Supt, COO, CFO, four community superintendents, and a JCAA representative) before the meeting today because they are the most familiar with the district.

A committee member asked if the charter community superintendent was there. No, he did not attend. Charter schools are not district facilities and instead operate out of their own facilities; the committee's charge is to look at district facilities.

Another committee member asked whether options schools were included. They can be since they are in district facilities.

Justin added that in a couple areas staff considered options across articulation areas.

Justin then walked the committee through the possible options. Again, these are just a starting point. Please refer to the handout in this week's materials. For each articulation area, the handout shows the number of temps as well as the elementary, middle, high school and overall capacity utilization in the area. Then the possible options for each area are given. Options listed individually (unless otherwise specified) are mutually exclusive, so implementing one option would preclude the implementation of the second option for the area, the materials include a spreadsheet with all of the data sorted by articulation area.

A committee member asked what the mobility rate was. It is the percentage of new students coming in/leaving during the year; a measure of how much movement there is at a school.

The committee was told that this info and data is now public knowledge. The same materials were sent to all district leadership and the board today with the clear message that the options presented are only possibilities not recommendations or decisions.

A committee member asked whether they could be provided an inventory of vacant land and buildings in the areas. This can be provided.

Cheryl explained that on the spreadsheet, the schools shaded in light orange in the "free and reduced lunch" column are Title schools or those on the bubble. However, Cindy said that there is no real definition for bubble schools, so she recommended that the committee only use Title I schools. A corrected list with only Title schools will be sent out.

Justin then went through each articulation area and the possible options.

### ***Alameda***

First thing that you notice is elementary capacity utilization is high, with more choice out starting in middle. With that in mind, staff thought the first option to consider was grade reconfiguration. Then the question is whether to move all 6<sup>th</sup> graders up, or just some. In option 1, move all 6th graders to O'Connell, with savings coming, in part, by eliminating temps.

A committee member commented that it does not actually amount to big savings by eliminating temps and that there would only be significant savings when done on a large scale. You would be saving on maintenance and energy costs.

Justin said that it would also increase efficiency for other facilities.

A committee member added that the main benefit here is balancing capacity, not that temps are being eliminated.

Cheryl added that some temps might be able to be sold. A committee member asked how such sales would work, whether they would be sold onsite or moved somewhere else first. The committee member was concerned about cost of moving temps. Temps would be sold where they are at and if they are not going to be sold, they would be demolished on site.

There is also the comment that there could be savings in the long term by not having to expand building to move kids out of temps at some point, meaning capital savings later.

One committee member said she knew a teacher who loved teaching in a temp. A maintenance worker on the committee said that he hated them, and that they can require a lot of repairs after storms.

A committee member thought that there were other options not being shown, such as moving 9<sup>th</sup> graders down or closing Carmody, which is the most central middle school and students could easily be moved here. She added that she thought it would be preferable to look at all middle schools together than figure out which one(s) should be closed.

Another committee member asked how building condition was considered. Justin said that it was considered during the staff's discussions, even though the final data coming out of the other facility condition review was not yet available.

A committee member suggested that in this case the staff took into account that Carmody had recently had a lot of new money pumped in, while O'Connell has not been updated recently; he thought that is why O'Connell was mentioned. However, Cheryl said Carmody was updated in the 1998 bond, while O'Connell was built as part of the 1992 bond. The committee member said he was wrong then; Creighton is the newer one.

A committee member commented that she thought that the committee had already decided that the committee would like to get rid of temps where possible. She thought it sounded like it is still under discussion.

Philip said that decisions like eliminating temps are a general direction, things like that underlie all options. Justin added that they thought that this is what the committee had decided and that the staff had proceeded operating under that understanding.

A committee member said that there seems to be some confusion about how the staff went from criteria to options.

Philip said he would like to see some sort of matrix that would show how criteria application led to criteria.

Another committee member suggested that she would like to see schools ranked for each criteria and see if there are a number of schools that jump out that way.

The committee member was also concerned that the options that could save the most money were not being addressed, like closing a high school. She said that to do so, you could move 9<sup>th</sup> grade down.

It was mentioned that there are significant issues with moving 9th grade:

- (1) Graduation requirements and college admission requirements, which are a 4 year issue and cannot be dealt with at the middle school level. To do so, would require restructuring middle schools.
- (2) Students would not have the same options at a middle school as they would in high school.
- (3) There would be issues around extracurricular activities, such as CHSAA requirements and transportation.

A committee member was concerned about having 7<sup>th</sup> graders on a 7-12 campus. There are differing opinions about 6<sup>th</sup> moving up, some committee members are concerned and some think it is a good idea.

It was mentioned that the idea can be scary to parents, but educationally and developmentally there is no reason sixth graders cannot do it. Only Jeffco and one other metro district have grades 7-8, the district has held off, waiting for the community to ask for it. Cindy said it still comes down to how good teachers are and the curriculum. Many urban schools do K-8 for continuity, while suburban schools do 6-8 more. There are more options for students in a 6-8 setting (electives) instead of just elementary school specials.

A committee member added that with only two grades, there is less parent involvement because there is less time to really be a part of that school.

Another committee member suggested that they needed to be open-minded; there could be separate areas in one facility for grades.

### ***Arvada***

In this area, they looked at the use of cottages, so the thought was to move preschools that currently are in cottages into elementary schools. They would then be able to sell off the cottages.

A committee member said that he supported this idea academically as well.

Another committee member asked what the savings would be. Justin said that the next step between meetings will be costing these out.

Another committee member asked if preschool counts included all students or just the ones that are funded. All students (funded and those that pay tuition) are included.

Justin pointed out that the option of moving preschools can be done with any of the other options. Selling a school is only mentioned if it's a viable option. The staff also tried not to create options that moved students across a big road, like I-70 or Wadsworth, which create natural barriers. The staff also

had not done many options across articulation areas; they thought they were honoring what the committee had wanted before (keeping articulation units intact).

The question was raised as to whether staff considered the impact of things coming at them further down the line, past the projections; for example, the impact of light rail development.

A committee member suggested that she would like to see an option that fills up the high schools.

### ***Arvada West***

A committee member asked about the possible impact on Title funding once students are moved to another school. The pros and cons were discussed, including Title dollars but the concern was that this is a bad reason to keep students in a school that might not be performing well.

There is a similar issue for moving Arvada middle to North Arvada middle.

The question was asked as to what programs were currently housed in the Allendale cottages. Two are used as special education day treatment programs and two are used by school.

A committee member asked if keeping Title dollars should be a guiding principal.

### ***Bear Creek***

No specific comments from the committee. Cheryl made one correction; the elementary capacity utilization figure should be 110% not 131%.

### ***Chatfield, Columbine and Dakota Ridge***

Justin said that Chatfield, Columbine and Dakota Ridge were looked at separately then together.

A committee member was concerned that if they moved 6th grade up that it would eventually put middle school over at some point. Staff responded that this is not a bubble effect of a large class of students moving through (such as baby boomer echo), it is just that two grades are in relatively large facilities.

Justin said that Poudre moved 9<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> up, which balanced middle and high school enrollment, as well as opened up capacity at the elementary level.

A committee member questioned why the school district could not go ahead and match other school districts grade configuration like they did with the calendar.

Justin said that a number of articulation areas were looked at in conjunction with one another, but this was the only one where a reasonable option came out of it.

A committee member asked whether it was appropriate to look at schools without their choice in population and if this was really their natural enrollment. She also asked if this would leave room to move up 6<sup>th</sup> graders; an example was Summit Ridge.

The question was also asked as to whether their objective should be to leave choice seats. Justin said that in Boulder they did this purposely to limit choice.

Another committee member asked whether they could change the rules around allowing choice. You cannot change the school choice law and that schools still tend to make exceptions even when they set limits on how schools handle choice. The affects of change to choice policies also takes awhile. Also families would not want the district to limit their choice if they thought another school was a better fit for their student. Staff said that it is good to have balance and that having some extra capacity to allow for choice is good.

A committee member asked whether looking across articulation areas in this case is a better option then looking at them individually. It is not necessarily better, just a different way of looking at them that made sense here.

### ***Golden***

A committee member asked Cindy whether it would cause less trouble with the community to close a high school or move 6<sup>th</sup> grade up. Cindy said she does not have an easy answer. High schools are symbolic of their community and are well used by the community, so she believes that there would be a lot of community outrage over closing a high school.

Justin said that having a range of options to take to the board is good.

A committee member asked if there was anything to be gained from previous closures. Cindy said that there would be negative reactions no matter what, so she said she thought they just need to decide, move on, and accept that there will be push back and unhappy people. If the rationale is good and there is a good plan in place to take care of the kids then that will help.

Another committee member said she thought that Englewood had good advice for how to bring community together when consolidating schools.

When reviewing Pleasant View, they looked at the “growth model” to see how the school was performing, based on this information (low performance, low growth portion of the grid). That school has been shrinking in enrollment and seeing lower performance. It has had a lot of additional resources put into the school as well as transportation has to be provided to give those kids the option of going to another school, as this is a requirement of NCLB.

### ***Green Mountain***

A committee member asked about closing Green Mountain High. Staff said that there is potential growth in the Green Mountain area.

A committee member asked why they are looking at building an elementary in this area if closing others. Staff said that this is an area where they foresee growth. This is similar to DPS where they are closing schools, but building a new one in the Stapleton area where there has been high growth.

A committee member asked whether you could limit choice in using temps. Yes, but there are issues of having one grade in temps, but open spots in lower grades, as well as families wanting to keep all their kids at one school.

### ***Jefferson, Lakewood, Pomona, Ralston Valley, Standley Lake and Wheat Ridge***

In the interest of time, Justin covered the Jefferson through Wheat Ridge articulation area options then allowed for discussion.

A committee member requested that they look at multiple articulation areas in relationship to Wheat Ridge.

### **Next Steps and Closing of Meeting**

Justin asked that committee members send in any other options they would like considered or general direction comments.

A committee member was concerned that we need to have more consensus around these options so that the conversation is not dominated only by the most outspoken and to capture quieter people's opinions. It may come down to going around the room and asking each person individually for their opinion.

Tracie said it comes down to how much room you leave for the board; this group is not voting on each one, just making sure that they have considered multiple options and that they are providing a wide range of choices for the Board to consider. She thought the committee should be able to accomplish this task.

The committee can provide a wide range of options from doing very little to having full efficiency.

Some committee members struggled with what they are presenting to the board being recommendations vs. options. They thought that there needed to be more agreement if they were recommendations.

Philip suggested that another way to look at it would be to create broad options, then list possibly impacted schools. Philip thought this might be a way for the group to come to better agreement.

A committee member asked when staff will be quantifying these options. Justin said that they hope to have this done by the next meeting as best as possible. They will not be quantifying every option but

identifying the relative costs of types of changes. He said it is hard to be exact because you do not know how facility will be used later, but that they have a good idea of the fixed cost savings.

Choice and charter schools were again brought up. Option schools can be considered because they are housed in district facilities, while charters are not. Cindy recommended that the committee just stay away from charters because it would muddy the waters too much and the costs of operating these facilities are not the district's costs, nor part of the charge.

A committee member asked what the recommendations that go to the community will look like. They will be similar to what they have been looking at tonight, but they will be more fleshed out and based on committee's input.

Staff asked whether there were any options that we shared tonight that should be left out. The committee said that there were none that should be eliminated based upon this conversation.

The meeting was adjourned at 6 pm.