

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BRANDYWINE HEIGHTS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

March 18, 2019

The Special Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Brandywine Heights Area School District was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by President Bryan Rothermel.

The meeting opened with Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Recording Secretary called the roll:

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|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| ✓ Mr. Bieber | ✓ Mrs. Huhn | ✓ Mr. Sterner |
| ✓ Dr. Carter | ✓ Mr. Rothermel | ✓ Mr. Tomasi |
| ✓ Mrs. Grossman | ✓ Mr. Scheetz | ✓ Mr. Wagaman |

Administration Present:

- ✓ Mr. Andrew Potteiger, Superintendent
- ✓ Mr. Matthew Dziunycz, High School Principal
- Mr. Jamison Barnhart, High School Assistant Principal
- ✓ Mr. Robert Farina, Intermediate/Middle School Principal
- ✓ Mr. Scott Geist, Director of Athletics
- Mrs. Carolyn Hanych, Director of Brandywine Virtual Academy
- Ms. Stephanie Kelly, Elementary School Principal
- Dr. René Reese, Director of Pupil Services
- ✓ Mr. Thomas Voelker, Assistant to the Superintendent
- ✓ Mr. Michael Wetzel, Director of Buildings and Grounds
- ✓ Ms. Carly Worman, Intermediate/Middle School Assistant Principal

Solicitor: Mr. James Mancuso, Esquire

Visitors: Marge Rumbaugh (Reading Eagle), Erin Clark (Mertztown), Tracy Fandl (Mertztown), Kurt Showalter (Topton), David Wartenluft (Mertztown), Crystal McCarty (Mertztown), Craig Neiman (Bethlehem).

Mr. Jeff Straub, Crabtree, Rohrbaugh & Associates, presented a summary of the Facility Improvements Options that included the scope of recommended projects. The presentation included overhead concept diagrams for each building property noting areas for improvements.

Mr. Potteiger described the administration recommendations for the facility project considerations based on the community survey, student input and administrative team support. High School students were surveyed and the majority prefer to play and host athletic events at the High School. Mr. Geist spoke about the significance of the students voicing their preference for the High School as the main athletic field location and also stressed it would be an advantage for High School athletes to practice and play games on the same field. Considering student support for the High School to become the main “hub” for athletic events, Mr. Potteiger described the possible reconfiguration of the athletic area behind the High School to include a parking lot and athletic entrance access.

Mr. Potteiger presented the project options for Board consideration:

1. Elementary reconfiguration including the change of the library to class space, the current gym to a library and a new gymnasium. Included is the option/bid alternate for 4 additional classrooms.
2. Intermediate and Middle School Interior renovations including the auditorium, LGI space and hallway improvements. Included is the option/bid alternate for loading dock, wrestling/community room and outdoor learning spaces.
3. Outdoor Renovations
 - a. Intermediate and Middle School Outdoor renovations including a new stadium, new lights for the field and overall upgrades to the grass field.
 - b. High School Outdoor renovations including new lights for the field, overall upgrades to the grass field, parking loop/parking lot addition for accessibility, ADA field accessibility and softball field reconfiguration.
 - c. Intermediate and Middle School Outdoor renovations including a new stadium, new lights with turf field and synthetic track upgrades.
 - d. High School Outdoor renovations including new lights for the field, parking loop/parking lot addition for accessibility, ADA field accessibility, softball field reconfiguration with turf field and synthetic track upgrades.

Board Discussion

A slide showing the Intermediate and Middle School renovation project was presented corresponding to descriptions 1. and 2.

Mr. Bieber expressed concern about the location of the bleachers and size of the field on the diagram. Mr. Potteiger and Mr. Straub clarified that the illustration is simply representation of what it might look like. Mr. Straub also noted that the bleachers pose a safety concern. Mr. Bieber asked if we kept the current grass field would we have to redo the baseball field. Mr. Straub answered yes, and explained the bleachers would be brought up to safety code, and walkways would be added. He also added that the project photo is not accurate, it is just a representation of possibilities.

A slide of the High School renovation project was presented corresponding to descriptions 3.b. and 3.d.

Mr. Bieber commented that moving the High School softball field to the front would prompt concerns for athletes looking into the glare of the sun or the glare of the parking lot. Mr. Straub noted that if the field were moved we would need to orient the field in that location to best accommodate glare for athletes.

Mr. Bieber asked if a retention wall was included in the price for the lot next to the building. Mr. Straub answered that they would work with the natural grade to accommodate the design of the lot.

The Board discussed foot traffic flow for events at the High School. Currently patrons either walk around the building or through the school to attend athletic events. Mr. Bieber shared that for most other Berks County schools, the parking is out front and the patrons walk to the back, so he is not in support of spending money on a new lot just for convenience. Mr. Sterner noted that older people and those with young children need to walk quite a distance from the lot to the athletic field. Mrs. Grossman added that there are portable toilets out front.

Mrs. Huhn supports the High School students who wish to have athletic events at the High School. She supports additional parking in the back closer to the field and noted that many times parents pick up students who are coming back from games at night and there should be a safe way to allow people access to the back of the

building. Mrs. Huhn said she is not a fan of adding parking due to maintenance costs; she supports the idea, but not the design.

Mr. Rothermel noted that the design elements are for the future, but funding is the topic of discussion for the evening. Mr. Wagaman added that he has no issue with the design, for him it is a funding issue. Mr. Straub noted that in future meetings there will be approvals for specific elements for each site. The funding for the buildings is the focus. The approval of the options noted on the agenda are intentionally broad. Design development and bid components are separate. Mr. Potteiger added that there is a two-tier funding approach, with one initial loan followed by the possibility of another in the future if needed.

In response to a question about a timeline from Mr. Bieber, Mr. Potteiger explained that plans for this summer include the High School roof and the Elementary School entrance. Next summer includes the Elementary School outside area, and the following year would include the Intermediate/Middle School projects.

Mr. Bieber expressed concerns of borrowing money now for projects that are planned three years from now. Mr. Potteiger reiterated that there will be the option to obtain more funding if necessary.

A slide showing the Elementary School renovation project was presented corresponding to description 1.

Mr. Bieber asked why there are additional classrooms planned in the Elementary School when our enrollment has declined. Mr. Potteiger explained that in the past year we added special programs to curb number of students who are identified in Special Education and these programs have been successful and require smaller classroom space. Mrs. Huhn supports adding classroom space at the Elementary School because it would allow increased implementation of Pre-K program to invest in youngsters.

Mr. Bieber asked for the rationale behind enlarging the gym at the Elementary School. Mr. Potteiger explained that due to enrollment, there is a required capacity of 500 students for events and assemblies, concerts, etc. Currently the Elementary School gym cannot accommodate entire school events. Also, a larger gym would allow better management of outside groups activities, especially those that require a full size gym. Mr. Bieber asked if it is possible to expand the existing gym. Mr. Straub noted it would be more expensive to expand the gym due to the existing structure and consideration of existing mechanical items. Mr. Bieber asked where people would park for access to a new gym that would be in the back of the building. Mr. Potteiger noted there is limited space, therefore parking will remain in the front of the building and people will need to walk around the building or through the main corridor of the building for events.

Mr. Bieber asked why recommend people walk through the Elementary School for gym events, while the recommendation is to construct an athletic entryway and parking lot at the High School to prevent people from walking through the building. Mr. Scheetz commented that a walkway could be added at the Elementary School to lead people outdoors, from the parking lot around the building to the gym. Mr. Straub added that inside the building there would be lockdown doors in specific areas to allow people to walk through using a direct path.

Mr. Wagaman asked about the Middle School facility proposal as presented by the administration. If a Board member is in favor of replacing floors, but not in favor of improving the auditorium, is it possible to vote for individual improvements? If the vote is as presented with several improvements in a group, what if the bids come in too high? Mr. Potteiger noted that the project can be modified based on bids.

Mr. Wagaman commented there are big dollar amount differences between general improvements like floors and specifics like athletic lights. Mr. Scheetz shared that a past Elementary School expansion project went all the way to the end of the planning phase and did not get the votes for execution. Alternatively, the buildings were reconfigured by grade level. Mr. Scheetz added that each step of the way there will be an opportunity to vote, and

if something is voted down, other options will be presented. Mr. Rothermel shared that based upon an informal survey they can reconfigure the item descriptions. He reminded the Board the goal is for a general consensus.

Mr. Sterner questioned what High School sports other than soccer are played at Middle School. Mr. Geist answered that soccer is the only sport, as well as off season practices. Mr. Sterner commented if athletics were moved to the High School the teams will play on the same surface. He is concerned about the integrity of the grass surface and if it will hold up. Mr. Sterner noted he was very surprised the community survey gave little support for a turf field and asked Mr. Potteiger to provide more information about the survey respondents. Mr. Potteiger shared there were over 230 survey responses and felt the survey was a fair representation of community. The three facility presentations were announced by email as well as a postcard mailed to almost 5,000 individual households based on the property tax household and per capita address lists.

Mr. Bieber stated that he had been in favor of turf previously, but now he feels the cost for the field, as well as the maintenance and grooming costs are excessive. The cost to the taxpayers would be concerning, and he does not support raising taxes for turf. He would rather put funds toward academics.

Mr. Rothermel noted that in the future we may be able to transition to turf with sponsorships. The breakdown is approximately \$3,000 per game just for soccer. Mr. Sterner stated that if we are going to use the turf field as a multi-use field we must include other sports to figure out the per game field cost. Mr. Rothermel stated that if we want the athletes to play on turf we could consider renting the field at Kutztown University. Mrs. Grossman commented that she does not support using taxpayer dollars for a turf field, and if the community wants turf, they will organize a campaign. Currently, the community has not voiced that need. Mrs. Grossman added if the Middle School field is not going to be the hub of the district, she suggested eliminating the concrete bleacher structure rather than renovating it. If the focus will be on High School, they could scale back renovations to Middle School. Mrs. Huhn is in favor of investing more in High School and less in the Middle School because she is not convinced the Middle School requires the amount of renovation suggested.

Public Comment

Mr. Rothermel asked for comments from the public.

Ms. Erin Clark (Mertztown) asked how survey results were tabulated, and if we know the affiliation of each person who took the survey. Mr. Potteiger replied that the survey results were from the total responses received. Mrs. Huhn added that she went through the responses and she felt they represented a cross-section of the community; there were various comments like focus on academics and education, mental health, turf, no turf, no loading dock, no classrooms due to declining enrollment, etc. Ms. Clark appreciated the answer and just wondered who in the survey results supported or opposed different items. She shared that her children are athletes and feels that emphasis should be on athletic facility improvements.

Ms. Crystal McCarty (staff, Mertztown) stated that she had attended an earlier facilities meeting, however she did not hear anything this evening about security and safety issues at Elementary School. Mr. Rothermel informed her that the Board previously approved the Elementary School entryway project that included security enhancements.

Mr. Rothermel asked for other comments from public. There were no other comments.

Board Comment

Mr. Rothermel asked for comments from the Board.

Mr. Tomasi asked about the financing package. Mr. Rothermel noted we would secure funding based on the projects voted on. Mr. Tomasi asked for clarification on the duration of the loan and expressed concern about the broad scope of projects. Mr. Potteiger suggested \$14 million as the target for the loan, and explained that if the project is estimated to be about \$10 million, the first loan would be taken out for that amount and another loan taken out later based on need. Mr. Straub shared that there are advantages for staying under \$10 million, including more flexibility to narrow the scope of the project. With each phase of project there will be a schematic, design concepts and vote. Mr. Potteiger noted that RBC will present at the April 1 meeting to detail funding options and answer questions.

Mrs. Huhn asked if the Topton Borough grant is incorporated with Elementary School project? Mr. Wagaman shared that the Borough grant money will be used over a 10 year period and includes improvements to the pool, fields, walking trails, but has nothing to do with the school. Mr. Potteiger mentioned that he sits on the Borough Board and will be sure there is no duplication of projects.

Mrs. Huhn asked about the status of the grant that will be used to fund the Elementary School entryway project. Mr. Potteiger reported that the grant has not yet been awarded.

Mrs. Huhn asked about the possibility of solar power at the High School. Mr. Potteiger said solar power was considered years ago, but it was ruled out because it would not be worth the investment, plus there is not a tax credit available.

Mrs. Huhn asked if there had been any consideration in investing or purchasing real estate surrounding the High School. Mr. Potteiger affirmed there is an interest in the land surrounding the High School, and noted it would be a disadvantage if the High School was landlocked like the Elementary School.

Dr. Carter commented that he did not see figures presented to describe debt. Mr. Potteiger noted that the current payment is \$3.5 million and expires in 2023. If the district obtains new financing, the old loan will be restructured or refinanced.

Informal Board Survey

Mr. Rothermel took an informal Board survey for each facility project item to gauge a consensus. Each School Board Director was asked to respond “yes” to support or “no” to oppose the item presented.

1. Elementary reconfiguration including the change of the library to class space, the current gym to a library and a new gymnasium. Included is the option/bid alternate for 4 additional classrooms.

The survey consensus supported Item 1. with 9 in favor.

Mr. Tomasi commented he is unsure about the alternate classrooms. Mrs. Huhn commented that she is in support of the alternate classrooms to allow the increased implementation of the Pre-K program.

2. Intermediate and Middle School Interior renovations including the auditorium, LGI space and hallway improvements. Included is the option/bid alternate for loading dock, wrestling/community room and outdoor learning spaces.

The survey consensus supported Item 2. with 9 in favor.

In response to Board questions, Mr. Straub described the auditorium renovations to include replacement rigging, lighting upgrade to LED, repairs to the ceiling and possible seating. Mr. Farina added that the

auditorium space is heavily used on a daily basis for chorus, band, and presentations. Mr Straub clarified stage rigging and lighting would be the most significant cost, and recommended due to safety issues. He noted it is possible to consult with experts for each area of the project, but it would increase facility study cost. Mr. Straub also confirmed that air conditioning to the gym was included in the Item 2. estimate.

Mr. Rothermel announced that for the Outdoor Renovations Project, he would start with item 3.b., followed by items 3.a. and 3.c.

3.b. High School Outdoor renovations including new lights for the field, overall upgrades to the grass field, parking loop/parking lot addition for accessibility, ADA field accessibility and softball field reconfiguration.

The survey consensus supported Item 3.b. with 9 in favor.

The Board discussed the proposed drop-off area that would provide entry to the athletic area at the High School. Mr. Scheetz and Mr. Rothermel support Item 3.b. as presented. Mr. Tomasi, Mrs. Grossman and Mrs. Huhn are in support but unsure about the parking lot. Dr. Carter, Mr. Wagaman and Mr. Bieber do not support the construction of a new parking lot. Mr. Sterner does not support moving athletics to the High School.

Mr. Potteiger reiterated that there are accessibility issues at the High School. If the future vision identifies the High School as the primary hub for athletics events, it is necessary to initiate a plan for accessibility to the athletics area behind the school.

3.a. Intermediate and Middle School Outdoor renovations including a new stadium, new lights for the field and overall upgrades to the grass field.

Before the tally, Mr. Straub clarified that the bleacher renovations were recommended for safety compliance; removal is optimal, conversion is possible.

The survey consensus supported Item 3.a. with 7 in favor and 2 against.

As follow up to Board discussion, Mr. Rothermel took a tally of those in favor of or against keeping athletics at each respective school; the High School athletic games and practices at the High School and Middle School athletic games and practices at the Middle School.

The survey consensus supported athletics at each respective school with 8 in favor and 1 against.

3.c. Intermediate and Middle School Outdoor renovations including a new stadium, new lights with turf field and synthetic track upgrades.

The survey consensus opposed Item 3.c. with 9 against.

3.d. High School Outdoor renovations including new lights for the field, parking loop/parking lot addition for accessibility, ADA field accessibility, softball field reconfiguration with turf field and synthetic track upgrades.

The survey consensus opposed Item 3.d. with 2 in favor and 7 against.

There was brief Board discussion. Upon request, Mr. Geist shared that based on participation numbers and estimated costs, he does not support of artificial turf or synthetic track for the district athletics venues.

FUTURE FACILITY PROJECTS

A motion to authorize the administration to proceed with the necessary construction planning and financial commitments to execute Items 1, 2., 3.a, and 3.b. projects as amended under the Future Facility Projects Report, was made by Mr. Rothermel and seconded by Mr. Scheetz.

1. Elementary reconfiguration including the change of the library to class space, the current gym to a library and a new gymnasium. Included is the option/bid alternate for 4 additional classrooms.
2. Intermediate and Middle School Interior renovations including light changes in the auditorium, LGI space gym air conditioning and hallway improvements. Included is the option/bid alternate for wrestling/community room and outdoor learning spaces.
3. Outdoor Renovations
 - a. Intermediate and Middle School Outdoor renovations including a renovation to stadium seating and overall upgrades to the grass field.
 - b. High School Outdoor renovations including new lights for the field, overall upgrades to the grass field, parking accessibility options to be later presented.

Roll call was taken to authorize the administration to proceed with the necessary construction planning and financial commitments to execute Items 1, 2., 3.a., and 3.b. projects.

Y Mr. Bieber Y Dr. Carter Y Mrs. Grossman Y Mrs. Huhn Y Mr. Rothermel
Y Mr. Scheetz Y Mr. Sterner Y Mr. Tomasi N Mr. Wagaman

Motion Carried – 8Yeas/1 Nay

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr . Scheetz and seconded by Mr. Sterner to adjourn the meeting at 9:28 p.m.

Motion carried with all yeas.

Approval Date

Bryan Rothermel, Board President
Katharine Ege, Recording Secretary