

Notes:

Greenacres School Building Committee Meeting
Tuesday, October 27, 2015, at Greenacres

Stuart Matthey, Assistant Superintendent for Business, convened the meeting at 9:10 am. After introductions around the table, Mr. Matthey reviewed the composition and role of the reconvened committee, and gave an overview of the work done by the original committee.

He noted that this committee is charged with identifying and prioritizing issues that face Greenacres, and continuing the exploration and discussion of possible solutions that resolve those issues. The original committee was convened during the course of Districtwide planning of the December, 2014 Bond Referendum; at that time it was decided that the scope of work contemplated for Greenacres would need further study, and be addressed in a future bond. The committee met during the 2014-15 school year to review concerns and consider possible options.

Russ Davidson, partner in the District architectural firm KG&D, reported on the work of the original committee, which focused in large part on a feasibility study conducted by KG&D that outlined three possible options that could be considered for addressing Greenacres challenges.

In conducting its study, KG&D began by giving Greenacres a “physical exam,” a visual survey of the entire structure from foundation to roof, and determined that the building has been well-maintained. Careful maintenance has extended the “useful life” (parameters set by experts in the field) of various components of the building, such as the slate roof.

Then a checklist was reviewed of building code compliance issues and expectations, including State-mandated minimums for classroom square footage; ventilation and air quality; fire safety; toilet facilities and plumbing; ADA accessibility (including door widths, obstructions, counter heights, etc.); and energy efficiency.

This review revealed a range of deficiencies in the present building. One of the most problematic is the small size of classrooms, relative to state requirements and also in comparison with other Scarsdale elementary schools. Teaching approaches have changed significantly in the last 100 years; for example, classrooms are no longer set up in rows but in clusters; extra room is needed for science and other projects and use of technology; and special needs inclusion practice requires adequate space for both the children and their aides.

Mr. Davidson noted that the three design options presented to the original committee were not to be taken as choices to select from, but rather as a jumping-off point for discussion. Option “A” called for limited renovations, necessitating a reduced school population. Option “B” called for extensive renovations that would more or less match the features of Option “C,” which was construction of a new building.

Other factors taken into consideration in the feasibility study included field space and placement, parking spaces, and building access at arrival and dismissal times.

Mr. Matthey then opened the meeting to questions concerning this previous work, and the process going forward. The following information was elicited through questions and discussion:

- Options “B” and “C” are roughly equivalent, but not exact – for example, Option “C” includes a regulation-size gym and Option “B” does not.
- Most of KG&D’s work in schools entails renovation rather than replacement; the buildings most often replaced date from 1890-1920. The Post Road School replacement in White Plains cost \$37 million in 2007. The previous building there was constructed in 1915. KG&D has successfully renovated other schools dating from about the same period.
- Some very preliminary cost estimates were included in the feasibility study. However, Mr. Matthey noted that costs are not the focus of this committee, which is tasked with determining what approach best addresses all the issues. The Board of Education will review the totality of District needs and determine cost-benefits.
- A major challenge facing Greenacres renovation is the high water table at the school’s location. The dirt crawl spaces underneath the building generate significant humidity, combatted by constant use of dehumidifiers. For comprehensive remediation, it would be necessary to drill monitor wells in order to pinpoint excavation. The moisture problem is greater at Greenacres than in any other District building.
- Concerns about mold throughout the District are addressed by outside expert inspections. Mustiness at Greenacres could be alleviated somewhat by replacing carpets with hard flooring, and by use of air conditioning.
- Adding a floor to the present building would require a site variance from the NYS Education Department, which had previously ruled that the present building footprint and structure was inadequate for that, but has since indicated that it would consider a variance.
- Closing Huntington Avenue, which is a public road, requires State approval in the form of legislation. This in turn would require detailed traffic studies and other work, which could not be accomplished in time for the bond referendum window.
- The previous committee rejected a “do nothing” option.
- It is not clear whether enrollment projections indicate little fluctuation or a decline. Demographic projections for schools are complex, and are based not only on birth demographics, but also on the economy and the housing market. The projections can be revisited and updated. The number of class sections at Greenacres has held steady at 19-20 in recent years.
- Equity across the District for such amenities as air conditioning need not be taken into account in considering how best to address deficiencies in this building.
- Before the next meeting, KG&D will look at variations of Option “B” for the committee to consider, and will also present additional information and sketches on the proposed configuration of fields in option “C,” and what the neighborhood would look like. Option “C” would include a field behind the new building as well as a field across Huntington Avenue; the configuration would mean a small decrease in total acreage but an increase

in usable playing fields and in parking spaces. Also to be delineated is the juxtaposition of fields to existing homes, and the use of landscape buffers.

- Option “C” would have two sides of the building abutting streets as compared with the present building’s three sides, but would include a drive lane that in effect doubles the street access on that side.
- Greenacres might qualify as a historic building and thus be eligible for State funds, but those funds would be small, and with strings attached.
- Community members of the committee are looking to the staff members of the committee for their professional view on what is best for the students, which should be of paramount importance.
- When the committee is done with its work, communications will be key, especially in countering misinformation. Various approaches will be explored.

Arrangements will be made for a tour of the Greenacres building.

The committee was asked to review the evaluation criteria carefully, as everyone will be asked to weigh in on how various options and approaches meet those criteria.

Mr. Matthey adjourned the meeting at 11:03 am.

Respectfully submitted,
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