



PUBLIC FORUM NOTES

Date: November 18, 2013

Project: RSU #19 Major Capital Improvement Projects

Subject: Newport/Plymouth Elementary School Public Forum

Discussion:

1. Darren Briggs gave a quick introduction of the process and timeline and explained that it is a 100% state funded project.
2. Greg Potter explained pre-concept and concept contracts with OPA and how that money is reimbursable if the public votes yes for the project.
3. Rob Tillotson introduced OPA and explained how important it is for us to have public input and hear their ideas. Also, we would like to know how the public uses the building. He explained funding and how we can build a great building solely funded by the state but also how local fundraising can enhance the building.
4. Rob explained the straw poll and referendum process and how the concept and budget cannot change once it has been approved and accepted by the voters.
5. Several times during the presentation the point was made that if RSU19 does not accept this “gift” from the state, the monies will go to the next community on the school construction list.
6. Education programs offered by the district are also influenced by the public forum process, so input by the public is important.
7. Greg introduced the school board and the building committee.
8. The floor was opened up for questions:
 - Q. How can we raise money for enhancements if we don’t know what the state funds?
 - A. OPA gave a brief overview of typical spaces and the sizes the state allows and also offered to provide a list of common enhancements other districts have fundraised for.
 - Q. Is there a standard size for classrooms and specials?
 - A. Yes, 800 SF for general classrooms, 1000 SF for kindergarten, and larger rooms for art and music.
 - Q. Does the state give extra square footage to account for possible population increase because of the new school factor?
 - A. No, but they do allow a small buffer for growth. Historically, we have not seen major increases in population in this region due to a new facility.
 - Q. Is there a timeline for the construction?
 - A. Not at this time. We are currently doing analysis and will have a timeline in the near future.
 - Q. Will there be sub-committees for planning?

- A. Yes, we will have break-out groups.
- Q. If the town gives land to the school, do we get a refund?
- A. No.
- Q. Is the current elementary school site being looked at as an option?
- A. No, it has poor emergency access because of the train tracks.
- Q. How do you get students involved?
- A. We will include a panel of students in our interview process and we can also supply drawings and information for the district to post on their website for students and the public to see the process and progress of the project.
- Q. Will we ask elementary students questions about the high school?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What kind of space does the state allow for playgrounds?
- A. The state provides two well-appointed playgrounds at the elementary level. Some districts use playground enhancements as a fundraiser.
- Q. Will we let the public know how the new facility affects future operating costs?
- A. Yes, we will provide projected costs.
- Q. What do we get for technology?
- A. There is a separate budget for technology to provide infrastructure and equipment such as computers, projectors, iPad labs, etc.
- Q. Do you think voters are skittish?
- A. Yes, that is why people need to talk to their friends and neighbors and tell them to join in the process!
- Q. How many times does the public need to vote during the process?
- A. Three, two straw polls and the final referendum. The straw polls must pass for the project to advance to the next level.
9. Meeting adjourned. Public was thanked and encouraged to spread the word about involvement and that the project will not impact their taxes.
10. Additional written comments from the public:
- Put the lights in the gym and cafeteria on retractable cables so they are easy to change.
 - Pre-K: Provide child size sink and water fountain, space for water/sand table, space for art and exploration, in-room storage for coats and backpacks.
 - K: provide sink and bathroom in classroom and storage space.
 - 1st grade: Provide lots of bulletin board space, wall space, storage, large classroom space, bathroom and sink in the classroom.
 - 2nd grade: Provide sink in the room, hang coats and backpacks in the hallway, larger classroom space, storage.
 - 4th grade: provide sink and bathroom, ceiling mounted LCD projector, storage space, natural light, built-in shelving for classroom library.
 - Provide nurse office near main office.
 - Music: provide classroom functional for music class for younger kids and band for older kids, shelving, locked storage space for instruments, acoustic paneling, smart board and mounted LCD projector, wall space.

- Special Ed: provide storage, bathroom with changing area for students with physical disabilities.
- Provide better security: locked doors, visitors/parents being buzzed in to enter the building, guard on the premises.
- Williams Road is a great idea for the time of learning and central heating.
- Provide separate entrance for the PAC for better security and build it on an outside wall to provide for later expansion.
- Have you considered a building-related blog that isn't Facebook (perhaps on rsu19.org) for people who want to comment/read comments but who don't want to join Facebook?
- Make building as high in energy efficiency as money will allow. This pays back for the indefinite future.
- As much as possible, plan for expansion of the facility and upgrade of equipment.
- Design slide-outs like a camper to allow for expandable space.

11. Additional email sent to Superintendent's office:

- I love the location of our current school. It is convenient to the highway (for those that work away), central to Newport and to Plymouth. I have heard that it is risky to have a school on the opposite side of the tracks from our fire, rescue and police departments (in case of having to wait for trains during an emergency), so I would love a spot on the other side of the tracks, but still central to the town with plenty of fields for play. I am not sure such a location exists, or if this is even up for consideration.
- The current school seems to have a few safety flaws as far as control over access to the building is concerned. I hope the students will not have to leave the building to get to lunch or gym in the new facility.
- It would be great if outside access was limited, forcing all traffic through the main office (instead of having all of the open wings that our current school seems to have) with key card access to any other outside doors required.
- Parent pickup at the current school could be improved in the new school. Currently, parents wait in the lobby and several teachers stand in the entryway helping to be sure the right kids go to the right parents. The teachers do all that they can to make it work (they seem very careful and work hard to make sure kids go with the right parents) but it seems there could be a better setup for picking up kids at the end of the day (really, a better place for parents to wait without access to the students).
- The current parent parking lot/student drop off is not quite large enough. If we had a bit more space, it seems this might be safer. It is a real zoo around drop off and pickup time!
- I would really like for there to be a nice space for music classes, art, library, etc. (for both the high school and the elementary school) I am not sure this is possible with the funding available, but maybe there would be opportunity for local fundraising?