



A Community of Learners

Informational Memo: Facility Sub-Committee Report; Advancing the EMFP - Citizens Task Force Input

TO: School Board

FROM: Trisha Kocanda, Superintendent

June 22, 2021

Background

- As part of a comprehensive public engagement program, District 36 assembled a Citizen Task Force comprised of 23 district residents to vet possible funding proposals to address the District's capital facility needs. The Task Force included business, civic and educational leaders; District 36 parents and non-parents; long-time residents and newer homeowners; taxpayers for and against the 2019 Referendum; and other community members.
- To date, the Task Force has been asked to review background information provided by the Board of Education, district staff and consultants, and to provide feedback as to why the 2019 Referendum was not successful as well as thoughts and recommendations regarding what new funding proposal(s) should be shared and tested districtwide this fall?
- The Task Force met virtually four times from March through May 2021. Following is summary of the main topics reviewed and discussed at those meetings:
 - Meeting 1
 - Purpose and role of the Task Force
 - Public engagement process
 - Overview of the District (facilities, enrollment, finances, etc.)
 - Details of the 2019 Referendum

- Discussion of why the previous referendum was not successful
- Meeting 2
 - Planning efforts following 2019 Referendum
 - District's values and commitments
 - Updated facility improvement proposals, including a comparison of 2007 Referendum upgrades versus improvements tied to the new proposals
- Meeting 3
 - Recap of public engagement process
 - Board's philosophy and approach
 - Additional details regarding financing options
 - Further discussion of anticipated educational benefits
 - Breakout group and committee of the whole discussion of three funding scenarios
- Meeting 4
 - Recap of Task Force's thoughts and recommendations from Meeting #3 and feedback received from Task Force members between meetings
 - Review of 5-8 model from principal's perspective
 - Additional breakout group and committee of the whole discussion of the three funding proposals and possible testing of a back-up proposal
 - Straw polls conducted via Zoom
 - Discussion of next steps
- The Task Force meetings included presentations made by the Superintendent of Schools; Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Chief Financial Officer; Director of Innovation, Teaching and Learning; Principal, The Skokie School; and representatives of Perkins&Will (architect), PMA Securities (municipal advisory), and Beyond Your Base (public policy consultant).
- Two representatives from the Board of Education also participated in the first four meetings of the Task Force, including providing details on key steps taken following the 2019 Referendum as well as the Board's philosophy and approach.

- Between meetings, background information was shared with the Task Force members. This included further details regarding:
 - Educational Master Facility Plan
 - Demographics, enrollment and capacity studies
 - Proposed capital improvements, issues tied to their needs and estimated costs
 - Three-year critical facility plan (projects already underway)
 - Anticipated educational and financial benefits of the proposed improvements
 - A comparison of the use of proceeds of the 2007 Referendum and the current funding proposals being considered, and how they work hand in hand
 - Further details regarding improvements to and the use of The Skokie School under each of the three scenarios
 - Efforts to work with the Village on stormwater management
 - Changing community dynamics (lunch, before- and after-school care, accessibility, security) and their impact on facility needs
 - The use of alternate revenue bonds and debt certificates
 - Tax impact analysis

- An online poll was also conducted between the first and second task force meeting to gather additional feedback from Task Force members on the reasons why the 2019 Referendum may have failed.

- Three funding scenarios were presented to the Task Force:
 - Scenario 1: Essential Upgrades
 - Health/life safety, safety/security, HVAC, and related upgrades
 - Total project costs: \$50,300,000
 - Use of fund balance to reduce size of request: \$7,300,000
 - Potential referendum: \$43,000,000

 - Scenario 2: Essential Upgrades + Elementary School Additions/Renovations
 - Essential upgrades
 - Elementary school additions and renovations
 - Total project costs: \$71,500,000
 - Use of fund balance to reduce size of request: \$7,300,000
 - Potential referendum: \$64,200,000

- Scenario 3: Essential Upgrades + Elementary School Additions/Renovations + Skokie/Washburne Merge
 - Essential upgrades
 - Elementary school additions and renovations
 - Washburn additions and renovations (within existing footprint)
 - Total project costs: \$92,400,000
 - Use of fund balance to reduce size of request: \$7,300,000
 - Use of alternate revenue bonds or debt certificates to reduce size of request: \$20,400,000
 - Potential referendum: \$64,700,000

Details of Scenario 1

- Scenario 1 would address some of the District's highest priority capital facility needs, including Health/life safety, safety/security, fire protection, ADA accessibility, HVAC, electrical, water piping, plumbing and interior finishes districtwide.
- What the proposal would not address include:
 - Mobile classrooms remain at Crow Island
 - Lunch provided in the auditorium and foyer at Hubbard Woods and Crow Island
 - Need for fewer school transitions
 - Crow Island's Library Resource Center not updated (47 years since last update)
 - No added gym space for community use at Crow Island

Details of Scenario 2

- In addition to essential upgrades, the proposed elementary school additions and renovations included as part of Scenario 2 include:
 - Crow Island
 - Secure vestibule
 - Classrooms addition to remove mobile units
 - Library resource center renovation
 - Multipurpose room
 - Gym
 - Greeley
 - Secure vestibule
 - Hubbard Woods
 - Secure entry vestibule
 - Multipurpose room/cafeteria

Details of Scenario 3

- The key differences between Scenario 2 and Scenario 3 are as follows:
 - \$9.3 million in essential upgrades to The Skokie School would not be addressed (although ongoing general repairs and maintenance projects at the school would continue)
 - 5th and 6th grades would be moved from Skokie to Washburne, requiring \$30.2 million in improvements to Washburne

Task Force's Feedback Regarding Why the 2019 Referendum was Not Successful

- The Task Force identified a variety of possible reasons why the 2019 Referendum was not successful. Following are some of the overarching reasons identified:
 - Benefits were not identified. The value proposition was missing.
 - The request was too large and too complicated. The price tag was simply too big.
 - The proposal appeared to include too many wants versus needs.
 - Issue framing and messaging was complicated and confusing.
 - There was a very strong organized opposition.

Overview of Citizen Task Force's Thoughts & Recommendations Regarding Funding Proposal to Share and Test Districtwide

- The focus of the Task Force's fourth virtual meeting on May 27, 2021, was on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the three possible scenarios as well as providing final thoughts and recommendations on what proposal should be shared and tested districtwide.
- The Task Force reached a consensus on two important issues:
 - Scenario 1, which is focused on repairs, maintenance, essential upgrades and HVAC, should not be the main proposal shared and tested this fall. The Task Force felt that this proposal did not go far enough in addressing the District's capital facility needs. None of these improvements were identified as a low priority item.
 - Future public opinion research should be focused on one main proposal versus attempting to gather feedback on both a Plan A and Plan B.
- Based on the breakout group discussions and online straw polls at Meeting 4, a majority of the Task Force members supported sharing and

testing of a hybrid proposal, best described as Scenario 2-Plus (Enhanced). Those in favor of this approach appeared to support the proposed improvements included in Scenario 2, but also felt additional improvements were needed at The Skokie School and/or Washburne to enhance collaboration and related benefits tied to Scenario 3.

- A large percentage of the Task Force members supported the District sharing and testing Scenario 3. Among the benefits of Scenario 3 that Task Force members mentioned included the ability to physically separate 5th and 6th graders, while providing integration when beneficial; operating efficiencies; the possibility of a capstone program; and added collaboration in terms of both students and staff.
- Task Force members in support of sharing and testing Scenario 3 mentioned that the bar would be raised for the public information program. Supporters of Scenario 3 recommended the messaging be concise; customized for various audiences; focused on the educational and financial benefits of a Skokie/Washburne merge; go beyond broad-brush benefits to identify new programs, electives and other new opportunities made possible by the merge; and eliminate concerns about protecting The Skokie School and its future use. Proponents of Scenario 3 also mentioned the need to simplify messaging associated with the more complex financing plan involving alternate revenue bonds or debt certificates, allocating additional time to roll out the public information program, and stress that a follow-up referendum will not be needed in the near future.
- Supporters of Scenario 3 realized that Scenario 2 could more easily garner voter support but felt that the merge of Skokie/Washburne better met the current and long-term educational and financial needs of the District.
- Supporters of Scenario 2-Plus (Enhanced) mentioned the importance of keeping The Skokie School open, identified a variety of hurdles that a Scenario 3 might pose, and challenged the District to develop cost-effective solutions to providing more collaborative spaces at Skokie and Washburne without closing Skokie. Below are some of the key arguments made in support of Scenario 2-Plus (Enhanced):
 - The desire to protect and fully utilize The Skokie School, and the emotional connection that many residents have to this building
 - The complexity and total cost of Scenario 3
 - Concerns about future enrollment growth and the need for Skokie

- Concerns regarding mixing 5th and 8th graders (maturity, interests, development, etc.)
- Added congestion, both inside and outside of Washburne, created by a Skokie/Washburne merge
- The benefits that Skokie provides in terms of space to address COVID issues
- Questions being raised about the District moving to a new middle school model not previously pursued in its history
- While not identical, Scenario 3 feels very similar to the failed 2019 Referendum
- Too many opportunities for voters to find a reason to vote no if Scenario 3 pursued and consequently greater opportunities for the opposition to wage strong campaign against the proposal

Next Steps

- The next key step will be for the Board of Education to identify a proposal to share and test districtwide. Below is a summary of key dates associated with the proposed public information program based on a June 28, 2022 Election Day:

○ Develop Informational Mailers	Jun-Aug
○ Develop Mail Survey	Aug-Sept
○ Informational Mailer #1 (Letter/ Attachment)	Oct 13
○ Informational Mailer #2 (FAQ Newsletter)	Oct 25
○ Open houses	Oct-Feb
○ One-on-one/small group meetings	Oct-Feb
○ Presentations to local organizations	Oct-Feb
○ Website landing page/ongoing updates	Oct-Jun
○ Ongoing communications with parents/staff	Oct-Jun
○ Mail Survey	Nov 11
○ Develop Hybrid Poll	Nov-Dec
○ Hybrid Poll	Dec 4-7

- It will be important for the Board of Education to provide direction on a proposal to share and test this month, allowing enough time to craft the core message and public information materials.
- If Scenario 2-Plus (Enhanced) is pursued, it would require working with the architect in identifying additional improvements to Skokie and/or Washburne focused on promoting collaboration and related benefits tied to Scenario 3. The added costs would also need to be determined.

- Even though the date of the mid-term primary election moved from March 2022 to a later date, it will be important for the District to refine the proposal this summer and begin developing informational materials (e.g., frequently-asked-questions document, direct mailers, PowerPoint, website updates, etc.) so that the proposal can be rolled out this fall and then tested via a mail survey and hybrid poll (phone and email).
- Certain Task Force members have mentioned a desire to be involved with issue framing and message development this summer, which District staff welcomes.
- After a public information program is rolled out this fall and public opinion research is conducted, the Task Force will be reassembled to review and discuss the polling data and other public input. The Task Force will be asked to develop final thoughts and recommendations for the Superintendent in terms of the timing and composition of a possible referendum.

Facility Subcommittee Recommendation

The Facility Subcommittee met on June 14, 2021, to review the Superintendent's Citizen's Task Force Report (memo above) to make a recommendation to move forward with a facility and funding scenario, aligned with our Educational Master Facility Plan, to be shared and tested community-wide this fall. The Facility Subcommittee decided to recommend sharing and testing **Scenario Two Enhanced with *reasonable* renovations at Skokie and Washburne Schools for collaborative spaces.**

Details of Scenario 2

- In addition to essential upgrades, the proposed elementary school additions and renovations included as part of Scenario 2 include:
 - Crow Island
 - Secure vestibule
 - Classrooms addition to remove mobile units
 - Secure vestibule
 - Library resource center renovation
 - Multipurpose room
 - Gym
 - Greeley
 - Secure vestibule
 - Hubbard Woods
 - Secure entry vestibule
 - Multipurpose room/cafeteria

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the School Board approve the planned timeline and resource allocation to provide information related to Scenario 2 Enhanced and poll the community.