

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
MINUTES OF THE GRANDVIEW HEIGHTS SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Meeting – July 29, 2021

The Grandview Heights Schools Board of Education met in special session in the teacher’s lounge in Stevenson Elementary School.

Call to Order: President Jesse Truett called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

Roll Call	Members Present:	Members Absent:
	Eric Bode	
	Emily Gephart	
	Kevin Gusé	
	Jesse Truett	
	Molly Wassmuth	

Discussion

Mr. Truett explained the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the following:

1. Discuss budgetary changes (project enhancements) to the current facility project;
2. Discuss master facility planning and next steps for Stevenson Elementary and the athletic facilities; and
3. Discuss and decide whether to hold a special meeting before the August 11, 2021 regular Board of Education meeting to discuss COVID protocols.

Ms. Wassmuth requested the Board discuss topic #3 first (special meeting to discuss COVID protocols).

Special Meeting for COVID Protocols

Mr. Truett explained that Mr. Culp proposed to hold a special meeting to discuss COVID protocols followed by a Board of Education vote on COVID protocols at the August 11, 2021 regular meeting. He stated that he knows where he stands on the topic and does not feel that a special Board meeting is necessary. He asked the other Board members for their thoughts.

Mrs. Gephart stated that based on the Board of Education discussion, community members may want to offer feedback on COVID protocols.

Mr. Gusé asked if a special meeting was held, whether public comments would be permitted.

Mr. Truett stated that typically at special meetings, no public participation is included. However, under these circumstances, public participation would be permitted.

Mr. Gusé stated that if the Board held a special meeting, there potentially could be a fair amount of public participation. Holding a special meeting may make sense to shift that discussion to a meeting separate from the regular August meeting.

Mr. Truett stated that he felt whether or not to wear masks was not a big decision.

Mrs. Gephart asked whether the Board would still hold both meetings or just the regular meeting on August 11, 2021.

Mr. Truett explained that Mr. Culp would like to hold a special meeting for discussion only and then take a Board vote at the regular meeting on August 11, 2021. Mr. Truett feels that a decision could be made now without waiting. He stated that he is in favor of deciding now to require masks unless the CDC or Franklin County Public Health rule differently.

Ms. Wassmuth stated that she feels confident in where she stands currently also, but doesn’t know where the community is. Since there has been discussion about possibly holding a special meeting, she feels that the Board should move forward with holding the special meeting.

Mr. Truett suggested the Board go ahead and schedule a special meeting for anyone who would like to participate in the discussion.

Mr. Bode stated that he would be on vacation and would be unable to attend the special meeting.

Mr. Culp explained that he has communicated that the district would likely hold a special meeting, but he has stressed that no final decision had been made. In particular for vaccinated students, his current belief is if they are exposed to positive COVID case and are unmasked, they would have to quarantine for 10 days. However, that information has not been officially released yet. This is important to understand before the Board makes a decision.

Motion 22-003 (Special Meeting) Ms. Wassmuth moved to hold a special meeting on Wednesday, August 4, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in Larson Middle School Commons for the purpose of discussing COVID protocols for the 2021-2022 school year.

Mrs. Gephart seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Mr. Bode, aye; Mrs. Gephart, aye; Mr. Gusé, aye; Mr. Truett, aye; Ms. Wassmuth, aye.

Motion carried 5-0.

Facilities Project Budgetary Consideration

Mr. Truett started with an explanation that the Board would be continuing the discussion of site plan enhancements that was discussed at the last Board of Education meeting. He shared a visual presentation with the Board members to follow along as they discussed each item. Included in the presentation was the following:

- Overall Site Plan with the assumption an MOU is executed with the City of Grandview Heights to take over the land for Fairview Ave. and the First Ave. parking lot for the purposes of a City park.
- Traffic flow
- Pedestrian flow
- Furnishings and fencing update based on the City Planning Commission feedback. The update includes 6' screened fencing to screen headlights from the neighboring homes. (This fencing would be a budget addition; the Planning Commission required a screened fence around the parking lot.)
- Site diagram with proposed metal fencing and/or a seat wall added as a result of Planning Commission feedback for safety purposes. The seat wall is significantly more expensive (\$90,000), but if the diagram is approved by the Planning Commission as shown, the Board could defer making a final decision as it evaluates the funds available near the end of the project.

Mrs. Gephart and Ms. Wassmuth inquired about the number of trash receptacles shown on the site plan.

Mr. Truett explained that more receptacles could be added later as Planning Commission approval is not required to add those.

Ms. Wassmuth asked for a general explanation of what part of the site plan would be done by the City and what part would be done by the school district.

Mr. Bode explained that it is really a joint site plan but stated that anything along the street right-of-way would be provided by the City.

Mr. Truett suggested having the site plans posted at the open house in each school building and anyone who wanted to provide feedback could then attend the City Planning Commission meeting.

Mr. Bode suggested updating the graphic of the fencing as the screen appears transparent in the picture.

Mrs. Gephart asked if the city approved the plan with the drive-up in front of the school.

Mr. Truett indicated the City Planning Commission approved the plan as is after slight adjustments were made.

- Placement of light fixtures in the parking lot

Mr. Truett explained the parking lot fixtures were moved to the edge of the parking lot with the fixtures shining towards the middle of lot, based on concerns expressed by the neighbors. He also explained the image in the presentation will be updated to show the light fixtures to scale.

- Outdoor learning spaces

Mr. Truett explained the outdoor learning space design has not been finalized at this point.

- Playground

Mr. Truett explained the presentation includes some sample images of the playground. The district has a potential lead on funding the playground.

Site Plan Presentation Summary/Conclusion

Mr. Culp explained the intent in sharing the presentation was to explain what is included in the project budget and to explain what enhancements are being considered to get to the desired site plan. The goal was to make it clear what is being asked of the Board in terms of approving enhancements to the site plan.

Mr. Truett explained the site plan would be presented to the Planning Commission for a second review on August 18, 2021 and Board of Education members may want to attend that meeting. It is expected the plan will be approved by the Commission at that meeting. The intent tonight was to make sure the Board members completely understand what will be presented to the Planning Commission at the meeting.

Mr. Truett also explained that it would be preferable not to wait until the end of the project to get these site plan decisions made. At this time, the focus needs to shift to the high school portion of the project and he would prefer not to spend any more time discussing the site plan enhancements that are known to be necessary. The City and the District have worked collaboratively on the site plan and are in lock step together on it.

Mrs. Gephart asked about shrubbery on the site plan.

Mr. Truett explained that there will be shrubbery as shown on the plan; however, the specifics have not been determined at this point.

Mr. Culp explained that if Fairview is opened, the City is actively planning for the streetscapes (e.g. types of sidewalks, trees, etc...) and that some of those details will be dependent on receiving grants the City has applied for.

Funding Available for Enhancements

Mr. Truett shared a copy of the facility funding sources prepared by Ms. Collier. He pointed out that the district has \$1,508,203 of project interest earnings-to-date with the expectation the district will receive an additional \$275,000 of interest earnings through the end of the project. The enhancements on the list for Board consideration tonight total about \$300,000. That would still leave 3-4 times the amount of contingency recommended by Mr. Doug Addis for the high school portion of the project.

Mr. Bode further explained that there are about \$600,000 of project allowances remaining for the high school portion of the project for unknown items. It's very possible that entire amount will be spent and we should assume that it will be spent.

Mrs. Gephart asked whether something like the price of steel increasing would impact the District's allowances.

Mr. Bode confirmed that the cost of materials increasing would not impact any allowances. The bids received for materials when the project was bid are guaranteed despite any changes in the market price of construction materials. However, if the district chooses to add something that was not in the original plans/bids, that would impact the allowances.

Mr. Bode also explained that beyond the project budget, the next pool of funds to access for enhancements or other additional needs would be the interest earnings. If the interest revenue is not used, we would have it available for future facility needs such as Stevenson Elementary or the athletic facilities. However, he explained that he thinks it would be perfectly acceptable to use some of the interest earnings for the enhancements discussed tonight.

Mr. Bode clarified that allowances are to complete the unknowns of what was already planned, whereas contingencies are for enhancements or other items additional items that were not originally planned.

Ms. Wassmuth expressed concern over the position of the project contingency back in May and asked if the financial position is now different.

Mr. Bode explained that after we received bids, they were less than the amount budgeted and it was great that we had \$1 million to add enhancements to the project. The Board did elect to do a few enhancements (e.g. scoreboard, railings) but then because of different things that occurred, there ended up not being any additional money left in the budget for enhancements. A good result is to end the project without going over the interest earnings.

Mr. Gusé asked if things have changed in the last few months.

Mr. Culp stated that when the Board met in May to discuss the project, there was a large number of change orders, the number and amount of which were not typical. The change orders have dramatically slowed since that time. In addition, the interest earnings have increased and our understanding of the allowances is better today than it was then. We also have a healthy Permanent Improvement fund balance. There is an enormous opportunity and responsibility to get the project right. It would be a mistake not to do the project right and have \$1 million left in contingency. The cost of doing these enhancements is much less now than it would be to do them after the project is complete.

Mr. Truett also stated that we have about \$2 million of interest earnings going into phase 2 of the project where we should have about \$400,000 in contingency remaining.

Mrs. Gephart stated that knowing the change orders have drastically slowed down is very helpful for her.

Mr. Bode stated that the biggest risk going into a new project is soil and bidding. Almost everything is bid at this point so there is almost no risk remaining there. So far, we have spent \$1 million out of allowances and we have \$600,000 remaining. We are done with half of the project and we are now beginning the renovation portion of the project. Some of the allowances spent to date have addressed items impacting both buildings. He explained that he is not overly nervous that the \$600,000 will not cover what we have left, but it also wouldn't surprise him if the \$600,000 is exceeded by another \$200,000.

Mr. Truett explained that items a. – i. on the list of enhancements being recommended for approval are the same items the Board discussed at the last meeting. Item f. reflects the cost of upgrading sidewalks to brick if the City moves forward with brick sidewalks along the Fairview Ave. streetscape so the surfaces match. He also explained that Mr. Addis mentioned the price of the screen fencing could fluctuate, but all other recommended enhancements are "up to" amounts.

Mrs. Gephart asked for clarification between the project fencing and the screened fencing.

Mr. Truett explained the project fencing is upgrading 4' chain link to 4' black metal fencing.

Motion 22-004 (Construction Project Site Plan Enhancements) Ms. Wassmuth moved to approve the following site plan enhancements:

1. Project Enhancements
Recommend the board approve the following facilities enhancements that are not included in the current project scope of work:
 - a. Stage lighting package, up to \$215,000
 - b. Exterior signage, up to \$56,700
 - c. Resurfacing of parking lot at Oakland Avenue and West Third Avenue, up to \$27,000
 - d. Project fencing upgrades, up to \$19,665
 - e. Addition of fencing columns, up to \$19,668
 - f. Upgrade of selected sidewalks to brick, up to \$29,565
 - g. Screen fence around new Fairview Avenue parking lot, estimated cost \$78,975
 - h. Replacement of high school entry sidewalk, up to \$12,555

Mr. Gusé seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Mr. Bode, aye; Mrs. Gephart, aye; Mr. Gusé, aye; Mr. Truett, aye; Ms. Wassmuth, aye.

Motion carried 5-0.

Mr. Truett explained he would like to call for a vote separately on the exterior lighting on the high school facade. He explained this item is purely aesthetic. There is a chance this number could be reduced.

Motion 22-005 (Construction Project Site Plan Enhancements) Mr. Gusé moved to approve the following site plan enhancements:

1. Project Enhancements
Recommend the board approve the following facilities enhancements that are not included in the current project scope of work:
 - a. Additional exterior lighting to include high school façade, up to \$56,250

Ms. Wassmuth seconded the motion.

Ms. Wassmuth stated that she prefers a well-lit building, especially when walking at night.

Mr. Bode pointed out that there are other lights throughout the site plan, so the building wouldn't be dark, even without the facade lighting. He stated that he has been more focused on signage. He indicated he would be embarrassed to end the project with the existing sign in front of the high school.

Roll Call: Mr. Bode, no; Mrs. Gephart, aye; Mr. Gusé, aye; Mr. Truett, aye; Ms. Wassmuth, aye.
Motion carried 4-1.

Discussion – Potential Future Project Enhancements

Mr. Truett explained there are some additional enhancements that have been discussed, although they are not items the Core Team is recommending the Board move forward with at this point. These are simply things that have been discussed.

- a. Relocation of Oakland Avenue and West First Avenue parking lots, estimated \$450,000 (finalizing MOU with City of Grandview Heights to cover cost)

Mr. Truett explained that initially the district was considering giving the city the First Ave. parking lot as a grass park area; however, now the plan would be to give that to the City as a parking lot and the City would make the upgrades.

Mr. Bode explained the City is going to do the contracting for the street and will do the park at the same time.

- b. Playground and deck seating at LMS main entrance, estimated \$150,000 (district pursuing private funding)

Mr. Truett explained that Mr. Gusé has been working on securing a funding source for the playground and outdoor deck seating. The district may need to consider doing that, however, if the funding is not secured.

- c. Irrigation, estimated at \$96,730 for a full package. Partial irrigation is an option.
- d. Upgrade grass field south of new middle school to sand based soil, estimated at \$152,111
- e. Upgrade grass field south of new middle school to artificial turf, estimated at \$220,894

Mr. Truett explained the upgrades in items c, d, and e above. The area south of the new 4-8 building will be a multi-purpose field. There is an option to upgrade the soil to sand for better drainage due to expected heavy use of the field. There is also an upgrade to change the field surface to artificial turf. These numbers are independent of one another. Mr. Truett also explained that we are nowhere near making a decision on the options for the multi-purpose field at this point, but he pointed out that the base site plan includes only grass.

Mr. Bode also added that the irrigation would be for the entire site, not just the multi-purpose field. Also, if artificial turf was selected, irrigation would not be needed in that area.

- f. Resurface glass block in high school gymnasium that is no longer on an exterior wall, options and cost to be determined
- g. High school exterior repairs (brick work, painting of ornamental ironwork on second floor windows, etc.)
- h. Other unforeseen items in the high school project

Mr. Bode explained that after it was discovered there were a couple "surprise" items not included in the original high school bid, Mr. Truett went through the plans and facility assessments with a fine-tooth comb and determined there are a few things not included, but nothing terribly costly.

Mr. Truett explained that none of the high school gym ceiling equipment gets replaced in the budget. There are some things on our radar that we need to be mindful of, but he feels good about where the district stands currently. He also explained that Mr. Addis would be preparing an overview of the phases of the high school project for the Board's review. Since the outside of the building will not look much different throughout the project, he wanted the Board to be aware of the overall renovation plan inside and corresponding timeframe.

Discussion Topic – Master Facility Planning

Mr. Truett explained that the Board would be continuing the discussion of the overall district master facilities plan that last occurred at the Board Work Session in January. He reviewed the meeting minutes from that work session and provided the following recap:

- The purpose of this discussion is to talk about a *process* for making decisions and not to actually make any decisions.
- When the planning started for the current facility project, the Board gave up some of the reigns for making decisions and worked with community groups to develop the facility plan recommendations. The Board and administrators visited several schools in the Cincinnati area seven years ago and received feedback from their leadership that we needed to focus on the community and the process to be successful.
- We have a master plan that says we are going to renovate Stevenson, build a new 4-8, renovate the high school, and make some updates to the athletic facilities.
- The current project includes the new 4-8 and the renovation of the high school.
- We have been having discussions about budgeting Permanent Improvement levy funds to maintain the new 4-8 and renovated high school to stay ahead of the maintenance needs. Following that plan, it is cheaper completing these facility projects than if we had not completed the project.
- Stevenson Elementary and the athletic facility improvements are remaining to be completed.
- When the Board met in January, everyone was comfortable moving forward with developing a master plan for the athletic facilities, but not necessarily ready to move forward with Stevenson Elementary.
- We are not making any decisions tonight, but the discuss will guide any recommendations brought to the Board for moving forward.

Mr. Bode stated that he thinks it is very good that the Board is continuing to discuss these important topics. The value of the master plan is to have an overall vision or picture so the Board can then evaluate doing certain sections of work that fit within the overall plan. The athletic facilities have been an ongoing concern as problems and issues continually come up and the facilities are in definite need of improvement. Having a plan would be very helpful, but wouldn't necessarily mean the Board would raise the money needed to complete the work immediately.

Mr. Bode explained that for Stevenson Elementary, there are maintenance needs that occur such as painting. We cannot do Stevenson Elementary piecemeal, however; we need to either address it all nor not address it all. The facility has deferred maintenance needs but it is not falling apart or in dire need of immediate work. He feels that the educational facilities of the district are a priority over athletics, but that the athletic facilities are more of a dire need.

Mr. Truett stated that we need to remember the reason for addressing the facilities was the deferred maintenance. There is a real argument for addressing the stadium as we have been spending good money backwards on needs there. However, he said he also struggles with addressing athletic facilities prior to addressing all of the educational facilities.

Mr. Bode stated that the athletic improvements are doable.

Ms. Wassmuth stated that she feels the Board is not being good stewards of taxpayer dollars by continuing to defer Stevenson and asked if the specific needs of that building are available.

Mr. Culp reminded everyone that there is a master plan that includes renovating Stevenson, building a new 4-8 building, renovating the high school, and making improvements to the athletic facilities. The Financial Advisory Committee is who determined the scope of the current project based on what portion of the plan they felt voters would support, and that was the new 4-8 building and the renovated high school.

Ms. Wassmuth stated that she didn't want to continue to defer Stevenson. She asked if the Board should get the Financial Advisory Committee back together.

Mr. Bode added that the master plan is a living document. While it was developed, it is necessary to come back and revisit the needs rather than just pick it up five years later and do what was originally determined.

Mr. Truett explained that he has put a lot of thought into this and went back to look at what was done before. When the district planned for the new 4-8 building, it was based on a square footage number and a square footage amount. It was approximately \$280 per square foot and Mr. Addis has indicated that number would now be approximately \$400 per square foot. He felt fortunate that the planning process worked out as it did but wasn't sure the Board had as much information, necessarily, as it would have liked. Stevenson Elementary is 41,000 square feet. Mr. Truett stated that he felt the Board should move forward with enough planning to determine the necessary square footage for the project and the only way to get that number is to do programming. Once that programming is complete and an athletic master plan is developed, the Board could

re-engage the Financial Advisory Committee to discuss the timing and funding for the projects. Mr. Truett suggested the following next steps:

- Obtain new enrollment projects;
- Hire a firm to do a full athletic facility plan;
- Program Stevenson to determine needed square feet;
- Supplemental contract with Concord Addis to guide the district through this planning process; and
- Re-engage the Financial Advisory Committee to make the decisions.

Mr. Bode stated that he felt this was a great discussion and offered the following alternate plan for moving forward. He explained that the Board needs to first decide when it is serious about addressing Stevenson. Once that decision is made, he feels the best course of action is working backwards on the planning components. The planning will include a lot of effort and expense, but will also be time-sensitive. It's not realistic to think you can go through the planning process and delay it for two years; rather the process would need to begin again at that point. Mr. Bode doesn't feel the district is at the point to begin the planning process for Stevenson Elementary, but does feel that that athletic facility plan should move forward.

Mr. Truett explained that his fear is that if the Board continues to defer the work on Stevenson, that the district will eventually be in a position of needing significant operating and bond levies at the same time. The Board also needs to think about swing space for a potential Stevenson project as he does not want to vote for a site plan improvement that is sand-based if there will eventually be a need to place portable classrooms on that site.

Ms. Wassmuth stated that she feels that the Board has been focused on treading water through the pandemic and feels like she needs additional information before deciding on next steps.

Mr. Truett stated that the deferred maintenance has gone up \$400,000 per year on Stevenson Elementary since the facility assessments were originally performed, and that it will be difficult for him when the millage is higher down the road.

Mrs. Gephart stated that she feels like the community is really divided and not in a great place currently and would be angry if the Board moved forward with a major facility improvement of Stevenson coming out of the pandemic.

Mr. Gusé agreed with Mrs. Gephart.

Mr. Truett asked what the issue would be with simply programming Stevenson to get a square footage number.

Mrs. Gephart and Ms. Wassmuth both indicated they were ok with that.

Mr. Truett explained what he feels the district will start doing if Stevenson is not addressed is spending Permanent Improvement levy funds to try to make Stevenson look like the new 4-8 and renovated high school. The Board started on the planning work for the current project over 7 years ago and he feels now is the time to start the next phase of that planning.

Ms. Wassmuth stated that she feels the pandemic has slowed the district down but that she does want to re-engage the Financial Advisory Committee.

Mrs. Gephart stated that she thinks what people focus on is the total taxes they pay. Grandview Yard is starting to settle, but not quite settled yet. People are still upset about the Grandview Yard so it may be good to let things continue to settle.

Mr. Truett stated that he feels things are not going to settle.

Mr. Gusé stated the appetite for additional investment into facilities will likely increase with the opening of the new buildings. Getting the ball rolling is a good idea.

Mr. Truett recapped by saying he is hearing the Board say two things:

1. Conduct internal programming to get a square footage number for Stevenson and then stop.
2. Move forward with developing a complete master plan for the athletic facilities.

Mr. Truett stated that the Board will need to be careful not to let the athletic plan get out of control. People only know what is cut from the plan. The Board will need to figure out parameters for that plan. Once a full athletic plan is developed, there is likelihood that the work can be done in segments.

Ms. Wassmuth stated that those are the items she feels she needs at this point.

Mr. Gusé and Mrs. Gephart agreed.

Mr. Bode stated that he thinks the Board should move forward with the athletic facilities plan and get someone on board who knows how to do athletic planning. He does not feel that the Board would get much value out of new enrollment projections. The big question is still the Grandview Yard. He would feel just as comfortable with running scenarios of 300 students vs. 400 students for Stevenson.

Mr. Culp stated that Steve Turkes' insights might be helpful in terms of working backwards or doing programming now.

Mr. Truett recapped that there is a certain appetite to engage but not go too far with Stevenson. He said he could go either way on enrollment projections.

Mr. Culp stated that the value of updating the enrollment projections now is that we have 4 years of firm numbers that were projections before. In Grandview, uniquely, the enrollment doesn't change significantly.

Mr. Bode stated that while taxes have not been discussed recently, he thinks each year we should have a process to re-engage the big questions, thinking about millage and levy cycles.

Mr. Truett stated that sometimes when districts focus on facility projects, the academics suffer. He is very proud that did not happen during the current facility project.

Mr. Culp stated that what is also inseparable from the conversation about facilities is the general fund finances. Is it prudent to spend general fund dollars on bricks and mortar? That is a fundamental decision in all of this planning.

Mr. Truett stated that he thinks the Grandview Yard compensation agreement is a very positive arrangement for the district, but he also said the way to save money is by evaluating how much is spent. In the end, it is really a sort of shell game. Had we not gotten the additional Grandview Yard TIF revenue, we would have had to go to the voters for operating funds sooner. When operating money is used to lower a bond levy, the district will then need more operating funds.

Ms. Wassmuth suggested the Board may want to consider additional work sessions for longer-term district planning.

Mr. Culp stated that he will share the district's mission statement and goals/objectives with the Board members for reference. He also stated he doesn't think the timing is right to do visioning now. There is an uneasiness among the staff. He said there has been discussion about doing a community survey and said the prevailing view among the leadership team is it may not be reliable because people are not at their best.

Motion 22-006 (Adjourn) Mr. Bode moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Gusé seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Mr. Bode, aye; Mrs. Gephart, aye; Mr. Gusé, aye; Mr. Truett, aye; Ms. Wassmuth, aye.

President Truett declared the meeting adjourned.

ATTEST:

President

Treasurer