

BAINBRIDGE ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 303
School Configuration Committee
Meeting Minutes

Date: April 10, 2013
Place: Board Room – Commodore Campus
Time: 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Welcome/Update/Review of March 27th Minutes

Superintendent Faith Chapel welcomed committee members and asked them to review the draft minutes from the March 27th meeting and make for corrections and/or additions. Committee member Carolyn Harper noted the description of the scenario for the K-6 Option 6 was not in the minutes. A correction will be made, and with no other corrections or additions, the minutes will become part of the record.

Ms. Chapel noted at the end of the previous meeting, committee members agreed three options would be carried forward for consideration – a) *K-4 Option* - current configuration with 7 schools and no school closures; b) *K-5 Option* - with 6 schools and a school closure; c) *K-4 Option* - with 2 K-4 schools with the Commodore program moved to Ordway, and Ordway elementary students absorbed into Blakely and Wilkes (?) with a school closure. The committee work for this meeting will include discussion regarding these options, and in particular, key assumptions/findings that will drive the conversation. For example, with all the configuration options, the committee reviewed information for each configuration with scenarios that included 7 schools and 6 schools. The committee also came to consensus that a grade configuration should only be considered if a school consolidation took place. These kinds of “key findings” were important and the committee will spend time discussing the assumptions and the rationale behind each one. They will also talk about next steps in terms of staff and community presentations about the committee work to date. Ms. Chapel also noted a report would be given to the school board Thursday regarding the committee’s work.

Review of K-4 (x2) Grade Configuration Option

Ms. Chapel distributed a draft school configuration analysis matrix that included data related to the three configuration options under consideration. The options include: Option 1 – current configuration (K-4 with 7 schools); Option 2 – K-5 configuration (with 6 schools); and Option 3 – K-4 (x2) configuration (with 6 schools). Ms. Chapel noted the K-4 option does not change the grade configuration but changes the number of schools. She reviewed with the committee the data related to this configuration and noted reassigning the Ordway students to two elementary schools would increase enrollment at those schools by 180 to 200 students each. She stressed there was a challenge with this configuration as neither Wilkes nor Blakely currently has the classroom space for the additional students. To resolve this challenge, adequate space for approximately 580 students would have to be added to current schools requiring the passage of a capital bond before configuration changes could be made. It was noted up to seven portables would be needed at both Blakely and Wilkes to accommodate this configuration change immediately, and there is simply not the space to place that many portables on those campuses.

Committee members also discussed the future growth of the Odyssey program and the impact of that possibility on a configuration change. It was suggested the following bullet contained in the K-4 configuration also be listed under the K-5 (6 schools) configuration: *“If Commodore moves to Ordway, there would be space for Odyssey and Eagle Harbor programs to expand.”* The other advantages and challenges listed under this scenario do not change because the grade level configurations don’t change. There was brief discussion related to the age and condition of the Commodore building versus the Blakely building, and it was noted the District Master Plan indicates Commodore as the oldest building. It was noted if the options programs currently housed in the Commodore building were to move to the Ordway building, the folks in capital projects would work with staff to accommodate the needs of those programs. Reviewing the category of “impact on students/families,” the loss of a centrally located elementary school was noted as impacting families whose children walk to school. The impact on staff was discussed, with a notation that some elementary counselors and specialists would be split between schools, since more than one counselor or specialist would be required in each of the two K-4 schools. The staffing costs indicate a savings for this option (including \$102K reductions due to declining enrollment) estimated at \$346K. The General Fund operational cost savings would be approximately \$81K (if Commodore closed), but costs for Transportation would increase by approximately \$10K. To assist committee members, it was suggested there be headers on each page of the matrix, as well as footnotes added for clarifications. In addition, an updated version of the Estimated Cost Savings/Increased by Configuration document was distributed to the committee for review/reference.

The committee spoke briefly about the time frame for a bond related to Option 3, and it was noted the general rule of thumb was construction completion three years after bond approval. That would mean there would be no General Fund savings realized with this option until completion of a new building. It was noted the current bond estimates take into consideration costs to mid-point of construction, with more finite calculations to be developed. Another clarification was provided regarding the differences between staffing costs for specialists and unified arts teachers associated with the scenarios for the K-5 configuration versus the K-4 (x2) configuration. It was suggested footnotes with more specific explanations be used in the materials to be provided at community presentations. In addition, it was suggested the assumption of the enrollment-driven reduction of \$102K be taken off each of the three configuration scenarios for General Fund staffing costs.

A review of the facility (capital) costs and implications was completed for Option 3 (K-4 x2), with short-term (2014 or 2015) and long-term implications noted. No “jump-start” is possible for this scenario as it requires too many portables at Blakely. The essential renovations under the 2009 bond would continue in order to maintain buildings until a new bond was approved. It was noted there would be no General Fund savings until a future bond and related projects were completed. The long-term implications would be a new bond measure to fund replacement of Blakely with space to accommodate 600 students, and the addition of permanent classrooms at Wilkes to accommodate 150 more students. Also included was the long-term cost implications for other facilities identified in the 2005 Master Plan such as the replacement of the Bainbridge High School 100 Building (\$18M) and Ordway Elementary (\$30M). These were included to try to capture the impact over the long-term for overall bond requests. It was suggested the estimated year for the bond requests be added to the information for perspective. Further, committee

members suggested it should be underscored their charge is a review of school configurations. However, it is important to note the facilities renovation/replacement schedule reflected in the District's Master Plan as a change in school configuration could impact bond costs in the future. Committee members debated at length the rationale for keeping Option 3 (K-4 x2) as a feasible choice for school configuration. It doesn't change the rationale for a Blakely replacement, no "jump-start" is possible, and requires a bond before the change can move forward. In addition, savings to the General Fund will be lost for up to five years, causing a continuation of deficit spending. There were also comments related to growing the Odyssey program and maintaining flexibility related to all the configuration scenarios.

At the conclusion of the conversation, Ms. Chapel noted the School Configuration Analysis Matrix with the three remaining options was created to accurately capture the narrowed options and related elements for each option. She heard committee members say they wanted net savings reflected in the document (not including enrollment related), and flexibility in the projections is needed as such things as state legislative changes could have impact.

Key Assumptions

Ms. Chapel distributed the School Configuration Committee Guiding Principles and a set of draft key findings for committee review. She noted the guiding principles were developed as the core values of the group. The guiding principles included areas of educational programs and educational research, operational costs, facility costs, human costs, and short-term vs. long-term costs. There was some prioritization related to facility costs that would maximize the use of district facilities to provide flexibility, efficiency, and optimal investment of taxpayer dollars.

Ms. Chapel focused on the draft key findings that included: 1) A change in grade configuration should only be considered by the District if there will be consolidation from 7 schools to 6 schools. 2) If the District consolidates to 6 schools, the facility that should be closed is Commodore. 3) The 3 options programs currently housed at Commodore should continue to be kept under one roof. 4) Grade configurations that were analyzed by the School Configuration Committee but are not currently being considered: a) Gr. K-8, 9-12; b) Gr. K-6, 7-8, 9-12; and c) Gr. K-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-12. It was suggested a short rationale be added to each finding to provide clarity. Another assumption was suggested to include replacement of Blakely. A change to #1 was suggested to read *the only way to save costs is by closing a school*, and a change to #3 was suggested to read *the Commodore programs need to be kept together on the main campus*.

As the committee continued the conversation, members suggested another meeting was needed to continue with the work. Ms. Chapel agreed, but asked committee members to "vote" on changes to the key finding document as follows: 1) A change in grade configuration should only be considered by the District if there will be consolidation from 7 schools to 6 schools. **Majority – yes;** 2) If the District consolidates to 6 schools, the facility that should be closed is Commodore. **Majority – yes;** 3) The 3 options programs currently housed at Commodore should be kept together on the main campus. **Majority – yes;** 4) Grade configurations that were analyzed by the School Configuration Committee but are not currently being considered: a) Gr. K-8, 9-12; b) Gr. K-6, 7-8, 9-12; and c) Gr. K-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-12. **Majority – yes;** 5) At some point in the near future, Blakely needs to be replaced. **Majority – yes;** 6) In considering configuration options, the committee believes the only way to save operational costs on an annual basis is to close a school.

Majority – yes. Ms. Chapel stated she would get a revised draft of the key findings out to the committee.

Staff and Community Presentation Timeline and Feedback Process

Ms. Chapel noted board members would be presented with a report on the committee’s work to date at tomorrow’s school board meeting (April 11). This means the options will be presented in a public arena. It was noted the original timeline for the committee’s work was into the Fall of 2013, with the possibility there would be initial recommendations to the school board in May or June. Ms. Chapel expressed hesitation whether those recommendations would happen, because it is incredibly important that district staff and the community be provided the opportunity to review the information and provide feedback to the committee. Ms. Chapel introduced Communication Consultant Patty Spencer who has been contracted by the district to work in tandem with Community Relations Coordinator Pam Keyes on communication strategies around school configuration. It was noted Ms. Spencer is the former communications officer for the Seattle School District and has started her own consulting service. To begin the process, an informational email regarding the work of the School Configuration Committee will be sent out to staff and parents in the next few days. In addition, Ms. Chapel will begin staff presentations next week, followed by community presentations to come. There is also a survey being developed to provide an online opportunity for folks to give feedback to the committee. Responding to a question, Ms. Chapel said the last task of the committee will be to bring a recommendation to the school board, which may be one or may be more based on committee consensus. Considering the impact of the recommendations that could move forward, Ms. Chapel noted the “drop dead” date for submission to the school board would have to be October 2013. At the conclusion of the conversation, committee members agreed to meet in two weeks on April 24th.

Next Meeting:

April 24 (Additional Mtg.)

May 8 & 22