

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

**Date:** November 13, 2013

**Place:** Board Room – Commodore Campus

**Time:** 5:30 – 7:45 p.m.

**Welcome/Review of May 28<sup>th</sup> Minutes**

Superintendent Faith Chapel welcomed the committee back since their final meeting in May. The minutes were passed out so the committee members could refresh themselves as to what transpired at the May 28, 2013 meeting. There were no edits or corrections to the minutes and they are posted as part of the committee record.

**Information Updates**

Ms. Chapel had several updates she wanted to share with the committee. The Spring School Configuration Committee (SCC) Survey results were distributed as two packets of information: a **parent/community member** results overview and also a **staff** results overview. There were responses from 522 parents/community members and 164 staff members. Committee members each received a copy and were encouraged to review the results for several minutes. After this, Ms. Chapel asked for comments or what stood out to folks from the results. It was noted that a high priority for both staff and parents/community members was keeping the elementary school enrollment under 500 students. Another important priority was providing elementary schools in the north, central and south areas of the Island; neighborhood schools seemed to have an important value. Following closely behind these two priorities was keeping intermediate/middle schools under 600 students. Other survey trends were discussed and it seemed that both groups of the respondents felt there was not a compelling need to change the current configuration at this time.

**School Capacity Reports**

Director of Facilities and Capital Projects Tamela Van Winkle provided, as an example, a capacity calculation chart for Blakely Elementary. The chart identifies intended capacity and the current use capacity. Charts have been created for each school. The charts were created in response to questions regarding excess capacity perceptions. School capacity can change depending on program space requirements. It is very helpful to see what the actual use is now as opposed to how the building was originally designed decades ago. Identifying capacity is very complicated and requires a significant understanding of educational program delivery. The charts are designed to translate available square footage and how it is adapted to program needs each year. Ms. Van Winkle, expressed appreciation for her staff and the opportunity to develop consistent map formats that will now be available for a variety of uses throughout the district. Questions can more easily be answered when the discussion of excess capacity arises.

Ms. Chapel thanked Ms. Van Winkle for the thoughtful capacity calculations and asked Ms. Van Winkle to share this praise with her staff.

### Facility Study and Survey Update

Ms. Van Winkle also discussed the on-going work associated with a district-wide Study and Survey. A facilities study will provide a comprehensive analysis of building conditions for each school. Results from the Study and Survey will be presented to the School Board in Spring of 2014. The data will provide information necessary to update the District's Master Plan.

### Operational Cost Savings Update

Ms. Van Winkle stated that a consultant was hired to review the operational cost savings associated with potential school closures. The consultants concluded that the district's projected savings was conservative and suggested that the savings could be significantly more when considering maintenance.

### Enrollment updates

Ms. Chapel brought several handouts regarding enrollment including the enrollment by grade and the BISD Trends and Projections Forecast sheet. In contrast to the forecast of October 2013, we were significantly higher than the high forecast; we are 118 FTE higher than what we were budgeting for. A significant influx of students occurred over the summer. We are up in our numbers from last year and we are the only district on this side (Kitsap County) that is up. We seem to be following a trend of Seattle, a year delayed. Seattle's current trend has their district changing boundaries and building schools and we reflect that here as well. We have student/families moving here from out of state and then also spillover from Seattle. Ms. Van Winkle also spoke to the Seattle trend. She said that Seattle schools do their own enrollment projections in house now. Some estimates have the Seattle district swelling by 10,000 new students over the next 10 years and 4,200 students by 2016. The trend is a 3 year one, not just one year. Ms. Van Winkle stated that we are clearly the recipient of some of Seattle's growth with our easy commute and our quality of schools.

Committee members asked if there had been changes in state funding since last spring. Ms. Chapel stated that state reports indicated that the legislature had added 1 billion dollars to K-12 education, but about 250 million of that was simply reinstatement of the salary cuts made a few years ago. Of about 750 million of the remainder, some came to school districts, some came to transportation, and some came to materials supplies and operating costs (MSOC). Much of the added funding went to high poverty districts. Ms. Chapel said Bainbridge Island School District (BISD) is heavily reliant on local funding and support, and that will continue. The local Education Programs and Operations (EPO) levy accounts for 24 % of our operating budget, and 8% of our budget is from local support (Foundation PTOs). In the last 5 years our reliance on local funding has increased dramatically, due to losing so much state money. We lost 2 'pots' of money from various initiatives that total 2.2 million, which in turn, affected class size K-4, and staffing ratios; it will take us some time to get back to 2008 levels of funding.

Committee members brought up that we were looking at 3 things when considering changing the configuration of our schools: demographics, financial need and the facilities themselves. The demographics have certainly changed. We were hustling to hire new teachers for more sections/classes district-wide in the early fall and this fact was a surprise from the forecasted, dropping enrollment trend. Ms. Chapel reported we were up 118 FTE students by October 1. The enrollment information is

compelling and so different from what we thought it would be and from what was projected. Is it a trend or a blip on the radar screen?

Another committee member brought up the 6 different pivotal findings that the committee had generated: potential impacts on staff students and families; staffing and operational costs (General funds) and facility costs (Capital Fund). We want to be sure these findings are accurate for the Board to see and then the Board has to let us (committee) know what is the tipping point. When do we really have to look at a closure or replace programs or a change in placement of those programs. We have been looking at what to close—but we need to learn for certain when such a move needs to be considered. From a business perspective, we need to have flexibility and a rolling 5 year plan. We can prepare; then if certain things happen, then we are ready with a plan of action.

### Status of Committee

Ms. Chapel stated that the status of the committee at this point was to provide a recommendation to the Board. With many conversations and meetings to support this decision, it should be a committee decision. It was suggested to put the work of the SCC on hold as we need to watch the enrollment trend which means waiting until next fall or even the year after that to ascertain whether this rise in the number of students will continue. Declining enrollment was the main factor driving the need for possible re-configuration, and as of this, fall enrollment was well above prediction.

Discussion then centered around financial need. We are better off financially than we were last year but the McCleary decision for 2018, unfortunately, will not give us a huge influx of what we have lost. It was noted that we are as high as we can get on our levy requests; the legal cap drives this. We also are maximizing our donated monies and as our numbers go up, our dependence on the levy money becomes more severe. This makes us more vulnerable. We have made prudent use of the funds given, but at some point we probably will have to go out for a capital request for buildings—that came out of the committee findings. Putting the work of the SCC committee on hold, however, would not affect the master plan, stated Ms. Van Winkle. This recommendation does not change the condition of the buildings. She said we have the responsibility to maintain the buildings. If we remove one, there would be that many less to maintain. Currently, clear needs are being worked on, and we will go forward with the immediate facility needs. Some of the capital funds should be reserved for projects. Ms. Van Winkle said there are many conversations regarding priorities of facilities. It was pointed out that the SCC research has found that if, at some point, Blakely Elementary would need to be replaced, the SCC being on hold would not impact this project, as it seems clear that an elementary school will need to remain on the south end. How big this replacement would be or what programs it would house would be up for debate.

Committee members voiced that ‘we surfaced a lot of material over the course of the last year and we hope that this information is captured for future folks or committees.’ Ms. Chapel said that another group down the line should not have to begin from scratch with all the items unearthed and brought to light with this current, hard-working SCC group. It was also brought up that before the SCC suspends, we should be making recommendations and report what our findings have been so far to date to the Board. At this point, parts of the original charge from the School Board were read aloud:

*The primary purpose of all economically or demographically driven strategic change is to utilize available resources to provide the students of Bainbridge Island with the highest quality educational opportunities in alignment with the district's mission, vision, and guiding principles.*

*The School Board's charge to the committee is to develop configuration options that best accomplish the districts mission, vision and guiding principles within the constraints of the district's economic and demographic limitations.*

Then, Ms. Chapel asked for a show of hands for all those who agree that work of the committee needs to put on hold for a least a year to watch for enrollment trends. All agreed. There were none opposed. She stated that this committee has done an incredible amount of work and learned an incredible amount.

It was discussed that there needs to be an accurate representation of some pivotal findings of the SCC. One committee member suggested that the Board has to help us see *what* is the tipping point of this venture. We need more clarity on what this encompasses. The Board has to be clear as to when such a move (reconfiguration) would need to be considered. Another committee member mentioned that in the business world, companies have business plans which they are continually updating. One can't always predict economics and demographic, but one can be prepared for changes if needed. We need a plan to move forward. Folks felt that the public and the Board will want to know why we have shifted. We are putting the work on pause due to increased enrollment, but this exercise has not been a waste of time.

It was suggested that a summary document be generated. We looked at research, school size, school success and different grade level configurations. One format style suggested was to have a ½ page executive summary followed by the existing SCC Guiding Principles document (3 pages) and followed with a fourth page incorporating the survey date, updated enrollment data and a couple paragraphs encompassing the problems the committee encountered. The format was also succinctly described as such: *met for this reason, looked at these things, ruled out some options, enrollment was up...put decision on hold. Also add some details regarding survey results.* It was also suggested that the facility information from Ms. Van Winkle and the Spring 2013 Survey results also be given to the Board.

It was suggested that members each describe what they learned from the process and being on the committee, and many committee members spoke up with similar observations: they had gained a much better understanding of various schools and programs; staff is willing to forgo their personal gain for their own particular program; if we have to reconfigure, we have to prove how we are enhancing the programs and schools; and it was a responsible move to check into reconfiguration but not does not seem necessary at this point in time. Several members mentioned that the public had credited the committee with being transparent and open.

It was noted that school committees often start out strong and end weak as folks lose enthusiasm during the process. Both Ms. Chapel and Ms. Van Winkle thanked each and every person who hung in there and finished out the evening tonight individually weighing in with their observations and comments. It was said that this has been one of the most difficult committees ever to work in the District. This could have brought out divisiveness and ugliness. Folks here are passionate about programs and students; parents feel very strongly about their school communities. This committee and its research brought out many, many positive elements and constructive criticism as well that will help. Ms. Chapel also remarked that this was one of the most challenging and valuable experiences she has had.

The meeting concluded with Ms. Chapel saying that an executive style summary would be generated with input from all committee members involved via email. Communications would be directed to the Board at the meeting November 14, 2013 that the Committee reached a recommendation that due to increased enrollment and other factors, the committee is on hold, and we will get a report to the Board in the near future.