

Board of Education Retreat
Tuesday, August 2, 2022, 3PM
PHS Library Media Center

Present: Lauren Christensen, Laurel Steinhauser, Dave Murphy, Stacey Benham, Tim Lavoy, Meg Scata arrived at 3:44PM.

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Charles Britton, School Facilities Study Committee Chair Lou Pear.

Called to order at 3:00PM.

Dr. Britton and Lou Pear talked the Board through the material they have been sharing with the broader Portland community during focus groups through the spring and summer months.

The 2020 Sightlines Report identified \$28,199,000 worth of work that needs to be completed across all five PPS buildings over the next 10 years. This is strictly deferred maintenance and does not include anything “new.” Further study by Friar Architecture with updated estimates taking into account inflation determined that this number is likely closer to \$35,000,000.

The School Facilities Study Committee has identified top priorities for Portland Public School facilities: high quality academic space for kids; academic space that promotes a positive school climate and culture; buildings designed to maximize school security; buildings designed to maximize heating, air conditioning and indoor air quality; buildings designed to maximize energy efficiency; learning space that optimizes teaching and learning and is cost effective for the future; capacity for potential enrollment increases, including the possibility of universal PreK; accessibility for all students (compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act); community space for community athletics, arts, etc. All focus groups thus far, as well as the Board of Education, expressed support for these priorities.

Dr. Britton and Lou Pear laid out three options for the Portland Public Schools and talked through the financial implications for each option.

Option 1: Maintain 5 schools and begin capital improvements and renovations at each school. The Committee is in agreement that this is not a good option for the district. This would not meet several of the stated priorities, and would be the most expensive option in the long term. Some of this would be eligible for state reimbursement, but would largely come from tax dollars. Dr. Britton shared a comparison of costs in operating 5 separate schools versus 3 or 4 schools, and demonstrated the potential for \$24 million in savings over 20 years if operating 3 schools or \$21 million in savings if operating 4 schools instead of 5.

Option 2: Reduce from 5 to 4 schools. Gildersleeve would be the school to let go of based on available space as well as the fact that it is situated on wetlands, making it difficult to expand.

This option contemplates whether or not to move 6th grade up to the Middle School. The community does not have a unified perspective on where the 6th grade should be situated. There are pros and cons to housing them in an elementary school versus in the middle school.

2a. Valley View PreK-2, Brownstone 3-5, PMS 6-8, PHS as is, Sell Gildersleeve

2b. Valley View PreK-3, Brownstone 4-6, PHS and PHS as is, Sell Gildersleeve

Option 3: Reduce from 5 to 3 schools. Brownstone and Gildersleeve would be turned over to the town, and a separate committee would explore what to do with those buildings. Keeping 6th grade at Valley View in the estimates of student enrollment allows for state reimbursement for greater square footage, and ensures the district has adequate space in the future should the state mandate universal Pre-K.

3a. Valley View PreK-5, PMS 6-8, PHS as is, Sell/repurpose Gildersleeve and BIS

3b. Valley View PreK-6, PMS and PHS as is, Sell/repurpose Gildersleeve and BIS

There was further discussion about the three options, as well as costs to the town, state reimbursement, bonding, how the Committee will proceed, what the transition year would look like for students and teachers during construction, and how to build community support.

Adjournment at 6:19PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Laurel Steinhauser, BOE Secretary