

SOUTHWEST SCHOOLS: DEFINING THE FUTURE

Monthly Update About Facilities Planning, Community Engagement & More

May 2017



School Board Accepts Community's Recommendation For Four New Schools



A COMMUNITY VOICE

Community representative Jennifer Leurck speaks at the school board meeting. "This process was open to anyone and everyone."

After input from more than 1,000 community representatives, the Southwest Local Board of Education approved a facilities master plan that calls for construction of four schools and extensive renovations to Harrison High School.

Representatives of the district's Community Advisory Team recommended approval of the master plan at the board's April meeting.

One of the representatives, Jennifer Leurck, who has three children in the district, described the process to decide on a plan as a community effort. "I firmly believe, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that this process was open to anyone and everyone."

In a process that began four months ago, the district engaged people from across the Harrison area to help decide the future of the district's buildings and how education should be delivered. They included members of the clergy, business leaders, older adults, parents, students, district employees and other community members.

The process involved about 15 meetings, including three Town Hall meetings as well as meetings of an Educational Visioning Team, Financial Advisory Team and Community Advisory Team. The community representatives started with 17 master plan options and gradually narrowed them to the recommended option.

The board's action authorizes a bond issue be placed on the November 2017 general election ballot. The action is preliminary because more details are needed, including an official state enrollment projection. Final board approval is expected in June.

The plan would require \$78.8 million in local funds, equal to 7.09 mills. Homeowners would pay an extra \$248 per year for each \$100,000 in assessed value. The plan is likely to also receive state funding equal to about 32 percent of the project.

The new buildings would replace the district's existing junior school and four elementary schools, which are overcrowded and deteriorating. Some details of the approved option:

- Three elementary schools would be built. One would be built at the Crosby Elementary site, another behind Harrison Elementary and a third at the high school-junior school property or other location.
- A junior school would be built near the existing Harrison Junior.
- Whitewater Valley Elementary, the district's newest elementary, would be renovated for administrative offices, a preschool, adult education and community use.

In Case You Missed It:

More information about the facilities master planning process is available at:
www.southwestschools.org/facilities

Plans for Modular Classrooms Being Reviewed by State

Construction drawings for modular classrooms at Crosby Elementary and Harrison Junior schools have been finished and sent to the Ohio Building Department. After the state approves the plans, Southwest Local will seek various permits from the City of Harrison, Crosby Township and Hamilton County.

Meanwhile, the district is busy with other aspects of the project, including acquiring classroom furniture, seeking price quotes from contractors and researching options for secure entrances. “We hope to have as many of these pieces in place as possible before we begin the installation process to avoid any unexpected delays,” said Adam Lohbeck, the district administrator who is coordinating the effort.

It’s a complex project for the district because there are so many details to address ahead of time, including exactly where the classrooms will be located and changes in arrival-dismissal patterns.

Installation of the modulares will take place in the summer to avoid disruptions and distractions at the schools. The goal is to have the modular classrooms ready before students arrive in fall 2017. The district decided to acquire the modulares after enrollment at the two schools began soaring beyond projections. Average class sizes at both schools significantly exceed the average class size for public schools across Ohio.

The classrooms will be supplied by Williams Scotsman, a Baltimore-based company that helps customers deal with modular space and storage needs.

Survey: 70 Percent Favor New, Expanded or Upgraded Schools

About 70 percent of the registered voters in the Southwest Local School District would “generally support new, expanded or upgraded buildings,” according to a phone survey commissioned by the district.

Fallon Research & Communications, Inc. conducted the survey to gain insights about potential support for a bond issue. The firm interviewed 300 respondents. About 66 percent of the respondents had no children in the Southwest Local schools at the time of the survey.

About 24 percent of the respondents said they would be opposed to new, expanded or upgraded buildings. About five percent were unsure or had no answer.

Todd Thackery of SHP Leading Design, the district’s architecture firm, said he’d never seen so much support for a school construction project. “Your community understands the need,” he told the school board.

The survey was conducted in March, near the end of the master plan process. At that point, the Community Advisory Team had narrowed the original 17 options to five options. None of the five options were supported by a majority of the respondents.

More details from the survey can be found at www.southwestschools.org/facilities.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Community Advisory Team spokesperson John Matheny called the process to recommend a facilities master plan an “extraordinary community effort.” Above, he addresses the school board at its April meeting.

Facilities Master Planning *What’s Happening in May:*

Community Advisory Team meeting

The agenda will include where to build one of the elementary schools in the proposed master plan and what to do with former school buildings.

Harrison High Media Center
Wednesday, May 3, 7 pm