

District Advisory Council
Talking Points
January 17, 2013

* Facilities Master Planning Update

The School Board has recently completed a community engagement process on the three North Mercer campus options to address overcrowding in our schools.

- The Board also commissioned a telephone poll, a more scientific study of how our community feels about the three options.
- Results will be posted on the district web site following the special board meeting on January 22, 2013.
- The next opportunities for a ballot are: April 2013, November 2013 (general election) and February 2014 (M&O levy), April 2014 and November 2014.

* Rezoning of district properties

District land (we own six properties) is now zoned part of the residential codes, which require compliance with the impervious surface calculations. We have exhausted variances on the code and need to be rezoned as “P” – public designation for community use properties to enable the district to have the latitude it needs to build facilities.

- We need to place four portables at the high school. The school was remodeled in the 1990’s for a student population of 1,200, but now we have close to 1,400 with more coming.
- PEAK was supposed to include four classrooms for high school use, but the cost was prohibitive when they were designing PEAK and these rooms were left out.
- Our enrollment is growing steadily at all levels; we need the “P” designation to add portables should that need arise. Another issue – the high school needs a new boiler at a cost of \$500,000.

* Safety Audit

While safety audits are ongoing in our district, the Newton, Connecticut tragedy has prompted a comprehensive district-wide safety audit of protocols and structures.

- We are working with a school safety consultant, the MI police and fire departments.
- We are in the process of changing the locking mechanisms on all doors so that they can be locked from the inside and outside.
- Gary has received many requests from community members for full disclosure of security measures and the presence of armed security officers in every school.
- He needs to balance disclosure with the need for maintaining security for staff and students. There will be a report to the board in February.

*Recent MIHS lock-down incident

A neighborhood issue prompted a police ordered lock-down of Mercer Island High School.

- Gary is the Public Information Officer (PIO) for the district. It is common for superintendents to take on this role in smaller districts.
- The MI Police ordered the lock-down; district personnel can't order a lock-down except in very rare circumstances (i.e Newton.)
- We later learned that IMS should have been notified, particularly because middle school students come to the high school for early morning classes.

*Possible adjustments to elementary start time

We are considering changing the elementary school start time to 9:10 am from 9:15 am to comply with our past practice of annual instructional minutes and state requirements for instructional time.

- We lost instructional time when we moved from early-release Mondays to early-release Wednesdays, because there are more Wednesdays in the academic calendar.
- The additional 5 minutes a day adds up to 15 more hours a year.
- There is some transportation impact as well as implications for instrumental music and before school world language instruction.
- The middle school requires 1,080 hours and is currently under that number of hours.
- We will need to ramp up to 1,080 by the fall of 2014.

* Public Records Requests 2012

State public disclosure laws dictate that all district records, including school board communications, email, district financials and more are matters of public record available to be inspected and viewed by the public.

- In 2011 we had 6 requests to view public records relating to various issues; in 2012 we had 35 requiring the disbursement of over 10,000 records.
- A public records request log shows all requests for the year, with names redacted.
- One person (H) made 13 requests. Some people never come and pick up the documents they request.
- The report shows staff time costs of \$13,380 and legal costs of \$35,650 for a total of \$49,030.

*I-90 Tolling

This is another topic at the board retreat. The decision will be made at the state level, but we can present our best thinking in terms of the impact of tolling on our community.

* Education Funding

Gary Plano reported that he sees no big reductions in funding for the coming year. There could be some improvements, with the biggest coming in 2017. The bottom line should be plus or minus \$500,000.

* 1:1 iPad initiative

The district has been piloting the iPad to enhance and improve instruction for the past two years. By August 2013, all 8th -12th grade students will have iPads to use in their classes.

- Many other districts have already done this. Lake Washington students start in 5th grade, using a 1:1 computing device per student. It is not a new idea.
- We originally thought of using the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) model used in some districts, but decided the complications outweighed the benefits in having students purchase devices.
- As a public school district, we can't require students to pay for most instructional materials.
- We have found savings in our budgets to pay for the iPads and for insurance for them.
- We have the infrastructure to handle the additional connections through our fiber installation, which we completed in the best possible economic environment.
- The costs savings are also being passed down to students; we will be hiring an additional tech support person and one more tech integration specialist to help teachers.
- There is a 2 minute Video Spotlight on the district web site that showcases the use of the iPad in a seventh grade language arts class.

* Announcements

- The MIYFS "Giving from the Heart" breakfast is Feb 13.
- "Communities That Care" is currently conducting an education campaign about marijuana use.

* The next DAC meeting is:

March 21, 2013, 9:00 am – 11:30 am Board Room

March 21, 2013

9:00 – 11:15 am in the Board Room

