

VIRGINIA:

A Special Joint Meeting of the Lancaster County Board of Supervisors and the Lancaster County School Board was held in the Board/Commission Meeting Room of the County Administrative Building on Tuesday, February 19, 2019.

Board of
Supervisors

Members Present:

Jason D. Bellows, Chair

Ernest W. Palin, Jr., Vice Chair

Jack D. Larson, Board Member

William R. Lee, Board Member

Robert S. Westbrook, Board Member

School Board

Members Present:

Audrey Thomasson, Chair

Carolyn Young, Vice Chair

Katherine Keith, Board Member

Joan Gravatt, Board Member

Kenya Moody, Board Member

Staff Present:

Don G. Gill, County Administrator

Brian D. Barnes, Planning/Land Use Director and
Environmental Codes Compliance Officer

Crystal Whay, Clerk to the Board and
Building/Land Use Assistant

Mr. Bellows and Ms. Thomasson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Presentation by VMDO Architects Regarding Proposed New Schools Project

Mr. Bellows stated that the purpose of tonight's joint meeting was to have a first look at the numbers for the master plan that was presented a few weeks ago. He stated that Jimmie Carter would introduce the architects.

Mr. Carter stated that he had been working with both the School Board and the Board of Supervisors to try to figure out what to do with new schools. He stated that both boards have engaged the architectural firm of VMDO from Charlottesville. He stated that at tonight's meeting were Bob Moje, Bryce Powell and Kristen Hill representing the firm. He stated that they were trying to keep the presentation streamlined and start off with the general overview and then quickly go to the numbers.

Bob Moje stated that his firm was asked to develop a master plan for the Good Luck Road site. He explained the plan, showing it in a power point presentation, which included a centralized campus for all Lancaster Public Schools' students. He stated that the idea of an integrated campus would be saving about 50,000 square feet of space, which would save money both initially and for long-term operations. He stated that construction costs, design costs, escalation factors, project costs, which include furnishings, technology and many other things, and the site costs equal the total cost of the project. He stated that they have asked their estimators to lump different pieces of the project together. He stated that the main piece, with the building in it, has an estimated project cost of \$110 million. He stated that would not include the athletic facilities. He stated that the offsite costs for the roadwork and utilities was \$3.95 million. He stated that the offsite costs remain the same, no matter which configuration is chosen. He stated that figure includes the buildings being net-zero ready, but does not include the roof mounted photovoltaic panels. He stated that the cost of the photovoltaic panels for the entire complex is approximately \$2.8 million, so that figure would need to be added to the initial cost as well. He stated that this is based on a 1,450 student capacity. He stated that there were roughly 1,100 students currently from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Mr. Moje stated that there were two somewhat recent school projects in the local area. He stated that Northumberland County's school costs for construction only was \$34.5 million in 2007 and Westmoreland County's school costs for construction only was \$40 million for 2020. He stated that these figures are also for a different number of students than Lancaster. He showed a slide in which they made a comparison by adding the number of students that Lancaster may have one day at 1,450 and showed where the costs of those other schools would be in the \$80 million dollar range. He compared that to the \$88 million dollar cost of construction only for their proposal. He stated that costs continue to rise each year, due in part to more regulations and the escalation factors.

Mr. Moje stated that the cost estimate decreases to \$103.9 million for a school that will accommodate the current number of students of 1,100. He stated that the cost estimate for grades fourth through twelfth at 900 students is \$92.7 million dollars. He stated that choice would presumably take the pre-kindergarten through third grade students to the existing middle school. He stated that the cost estimate for grades sixth through twelfth at 700 students, which is a common configuration, would be \$88.8 million. He stated that the caveat to that choice is that the remaining pre-kindergarten

through fifth grade students would not all fit in the existing middle school building. He stated that additional dollars would have to be added to the project to renovate and/or add to the middle school for another 200 students.

Mr. Moje stated that there can be many options and configurations and his firm would be happy to run those scenarios. He stated that, the most expensive option at \$114 million dollars, would include the full building with a student body of 1,450, which would take growth into account. He stated that, by putting everybody together at one site, the estimated operating savings would be \$925,000 annually. He referred to the photovoltaic arrays and stated that it was their recommendation to own the arrays because they would pay for themselves in a few years.

Dr. Westbrook stated that there had been discussion about having a County park near the water on this site and asked if that was included in the plan.

Mr. Moje replied that the idea is that the whole 156 acres is a county amenity and park. He stated that there would be plenty of land left over after the schools are built for community facilities.

Dr. Westbrook stated that VMDO had designed a school that had a reservoir for rainwater and asked if that feature was included in the plan for Lancaster.

Mr. Moje replied no, but they could run the numbers and add it to the design. He stated that the more that is invested in those kinds of things up front, the better the value is. He stated that the important thing to remember is that the net zero capability is built into the estimate, which will make the buildings far more efficient and makes them as environmentally green as possible because they will not be using other sources of energy.

Dr. Westbrook asked if one kitchen would feed every student.

Mr. Moje replied yes, that the kitchen is centralized, but there would be four or five different places to eat.

Mr. Lee referred to the site plan and stated that it looked like the younger children have a long way to go to get to the gym.

Mr. Moje replied that there are active and play spaces for the younger students. He stated that the young students usually don't use the gym on a regular basis, unless it is for a special event, like the older students do.

Dr. Westbrook stated that, at one time, they had talked about using the water access for school experiments and projects. He stated that he thought that was still possible and that the students would just have to have access.

Mr. Moje stated that there was a plateau that runs through the site and there can be a pathway for students to access the freshwater marsh area and the tidal area. He stated

that the idea is to get the students outside as much as possible and working on project-based learning. He stated that all of the educational trends indicate that students are strongly desiring and needing deeper learning activities. He stated that the education that almost everyone in the room went through is now considered outdated. He stated that the idea of learning facts and giving them back to a teacher on a test is an archaic idea. He stated that way of learning is now known to be detrimental and hurts the creativity of the students. He stated that what is being suggested for the future is more project-based learning and real life examples. He stated that what they have proposed with this plan allows for this type of learning. He stated that the thinking is that the critical issues of tomorrow will have to be thought of on a deeper level and there will be continual issues and challenges for how our population and species is impacting different pieces of the world.

Mr. Moje finished his presentation and stated that it showed four different examples of pieces to the master plan. He stated that the option with combining the middle and high schools together is where the biggest savings and consolidation is, but is counter to the fact that the primary school is the school that needs the most attention. He stated that they could run scenarios of having the primary school done first. He stated that the numbers came in a little higher than they had hoped, but they are solid.

Katherine Keith, District 1 School Board member, stated that the plan was a wonderful vision and they would be providing their children with a world class education. She stated that it would level out the playing field and give opportunities to children that they would not otherwise have.

Mr. Moje referred to a quote that says, as a society, they should want the same for all children. He stated that he understood that money was a big factor and it is a game changer for the community. He stated that, after attending some public meetings, he sees the County teetering on what direction it is going to go.

Ms. Thomasson, School Board Chair, stated that she knew the numbers were shocking, but what needs to be understood is all of the years this has been taking for them to get to this point. She stated that prices continue to escalate. She referred to the schools in Northumberland and Westmoreland and stated that this plan was just a little bit above what they have built or are going to build. She stated that this construction will be better and they will be saving nearly a million dollars annually in areas such as maintenance and energy costs. She stated that, as shocking as it is, it is not out of line when compared to what those other buildings would cost today.

Mr. Bellows asked for clarification on what was included.

Ms. Thomasson replied that it included the roads, parking lots, buildings and furnishings, but no football field.

Mr. Lee asked if the School Board had considered what would have to happen with the last two options concerning combining the middle and high schools first.

Ms. Thomasson replied that the School Board had briefly looked at the plan one night, so this is really their first look as well.

Ms. Keith stated that the first two options do not take into account the money that would be needed for renovations at the existing middle school. She stated that, in her opinion, the \$103.9 million dollar option would be the best value.

Ms. Thomasson stated that the School Board pretty much agreed on the \$103.9 million dollar option because it builds to the size of the schools currently. She stated that the way it is designed, it can be added on later if needed.

Joan Gravatt, District 4 School Board member, stated that they would be able to take advantage of all of the savings by having everything centralized.

Mr. Bellows stated that to add the football field would take the preferred option up to approximately \$110 million dollars.

Mr. Moje stated that figure does not include the photovoltaic arrays, which would be \$2.8 million dollars for the full build out. He stated that they did not include that in the figures because that number will change depending upon the chosen structure.

Mr. Lee stated that it was \$2.8 million for the arrays and \$6.8 million dollars for the athletic field.

Mr. Moje replied yes. He stated that the figure for the athletic facilities can have a lot of variables, such as buildings and whether or not to have artificial turf. He stated that was why they left that figure out of the totals.

Ms. Moody, District 2 School Board member, referred to the photovoltaic arrays and asked about the return concerning savings and how soon that might be seen.

Mr. Moje replied that the amount of energy that the school system would not be paying for would generate enough savings, that if the County was borrowing the money for the arrays like it would be doing for the rest of the project, it would pay for twice the value of it.

Mr. Palin stated that, in the past, they have heard about promises of savings that have not been realized. He stated that a net zero school sounds good, but he just wonders if it will be as good as it sounds.

Ms. Keith stated that the net zero school would use a geothermal system, so there are a lot of statistics on it. She stated it is a continual source of energy.

Mr. Moje referred to Mr. Palin's concern and stated that he was familiar with people making promises, particularly on energy savings, and then it not turning out as

well as expected. He stated that the best way to answer Mr. Palin's questions was to say that his firm designed Discovery Elementary School in Arlington, VA and it is a net zero school that has been in operation for three years. He stated that, in its first year alone, it made enough energy for the building plus seven homes and it has gotten better each year. He stated that the caveat is that Dominion Energy does not pay anything back to them for the extra energy.

Ms. Thomasson stated that another reason the numbers are a little higher is because this will be steel construction. She stated that Northumberland County's school is cinderblock construction, so the quality there is not going to last forever and it is already falling apart in some areas.

Mr. Moje stated that he recognized that he had given a lot of information and he tried to condense it as much as possible. He stated that the plan has all kinds of pieces, so they can rebuild the numbers in any kind of scenario that is desired.

Mr. Moje stated that his firm recognizes that these are big numbers and a huge issue for the county. He stated that he has seen where the school system has improved dramatically in a locality, everything else improves as well. He stated that he thought the county was at a critical stage in its history and evolution.

Mr. Bellows stated that they are big numbers, but it is a very important project. He stated that this county would not move forward unless they can move the school system forward. He stated that they needed to work together as a community to find a way to make as much of this happen as possible. He stated that everyone in the room will need to work hard to make it happen. He stated that they cannot afford to continue to slip backwards. He stated that economic development takes investment, effort and time. He stated that he thought they needed some time to digest the information and think about ways to fund it. He stated that the ten people at the table did not have all of the answers, but they can get there if they work together.

Adjournment

Mr. Lee made a motion to adjourn the Board of Supervisors' meeting until Thursday, February 21, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.

VOTE:	Jason D. Bellows	Aye
	Ernest W. Palin, Jr.	Aye
	Jack D. Larson	Aye
	William R. Lee	Aye
	Robert S. Westbrook	Aye

Ms. Moody made a motion to adjourn the School Board meeting. Ms. Gravatt seconded the motion.

VOTE:	Audrey Thomasson	Aye
	Carolyn Young	Aye
	Kenya Moody	Aye
	Joan Gravatt	Aye
	Katherine Keith	Aye