

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMO #21
Jamestown School District #1
2016/2017 School Year
November 7, 2016

RE: Referendum Review and Recommendations

FROM: Superintendent Robert Lech

BOARD FOCUS: Review and Action

The purpose of this memo is to provide background on the referendum on September 29, 2015, steps taken since that vote, a recommendation to move forward with addressing the facility needs of the Jamestown Public School District, and recommended next steps.

Facility Planning and Initial Enrollment Study

At the April 21, 2014 meeting of the Jamestown School Board, the district approved the DLR Group to conduct a facilities assessment and to assist with future facility planning. The assessment was conducted in July and formally reported to the Board of Education at the October 6, 2014 meeting.

Throughout the 2014/2015 School Year, the DLR Group facilitated a total of 12 meetings with various stakeholder groups (staff, administration, parents, community members, board members) to gather perspectives regarding the educational and facility needs of Jamestown Public School districts with the goal of ultimately creating a long-term facility plan for the district.

Additionally, Schwarz and Associates was contracted to provide an enrollment study of Jamestown through the 5-year period ending with the 2019/2020 school year. This study, presented at the April 6, 2015 meeting of the Board of Education, outlined an expected increase of 7% to the student population to 2,384 students by the 2019/2020 school year. The RSP enrollment study projected 1,080 K-5 students by the 2019/2020 school year.

Facility Proposal and Referendum

At the June 21, 2015 school board meeting, the DLR Group proposed three facility options to the school board. The board directed the superintendent to review the different options to find a more economical option to bring before the voters for a special election prior to the approval of the formal approval of the Certificate of Levy.

At a special meeting on July 13, 2015, the school board approved a phased option with a focus on the most immediate needs of the school district's facilities. This first phase proposed to address growth, improve air quality at each elementary building and the middle school, and create flexible learning spaces in each of the K-5 buildings. This option would have decommissioned Washington Elementary and increase the capacity of Louis L'Amour to 360 students (presently 125). This proposal met the enrollment projections of the demographer by the 2019/2020 school year for all school levels. The total cost of the proposal was \$19 million with a capacity for 1,080 elementary students.

The passage of the referendum, by law, required a 60% approval requirement. With a total number of voters of 1,953 (1,140 Yes and 813 No), the referendum had a majority of voters (58.37%), but was 31 votes shy of the 60% threshold.

Steps Taken Since Referendum

On January 11, 2016, a referendum review committee of school board members, administration, teachers, support staff, parents, and consultants met to review the referendum and discuss the rationale for yes and no voters.

On March 21, 2016, the school board retained Consolidated Construction Corporation (CCC) to utilize the facility assessment to create a 10-year capital projects plan as well as pre-referendum planning. Additionally, the board authorized DLR Group to design and engage with staff on pre-referendum planning.

An electronic survey was administered in May of 2016 to gather perspectives from staff related to their instructional needs and the ability of the current facilities to meet those instructional needs.

On July 18, 2016, the capital projects plan was presented and approved by the Jamestown school board. This included information on the condition/expected useful life by system, prioritization of building level needs over the next 5-10 year span. The capital projects plan did not include educational needs or building code recommendations that were included in the facilities assessment. Additionally, the school board approved to reengage with RSP and Associates to conduct another enrollment study due to the changing economy of Jamestown and North Dakota to ensure accurate enrollment projections.

At the August 15, 2016 school board meeting, Jim Perras provided an overview of the construction management process.

On October 24-25, 2016, Chris Gibbs from the DLR Group met with building administrators to discuss the administrative perspective on the current facilities, how to best meet educational needs at the facilities, examine how education is changing, best method for engaging staff at the building level.

Recommendations

Based on my assessment of the school district facilities, the discussions of the referendum review committee, staff engagement survey, capital projects plan, and the facility assessment, it is my recommendation to move forward with a late spring referendum in April or May. Additionally, it is my recommendation to move forward with a Construction Manager at Risk (CMaR). I believe that a CMaR would provide the district with the best support and accountability throughout the pre-construction and construction processes.

Recommended Next Steps

Beyond the logistics of setting a special election, there are three additional recommendations that I believe are necessary to the creation of a plan that is representative of all stakeholders, meets the current and future needs of education in Jamestown, and can be supported in the community.

The authorization of a pre-referendum planning process would allow our architects to review the plan set forth in the last proposal and adapt to any necessary changes that are recognized presently or through the further engagement of stakeholders.

The authorization to form a Citizen's Steering Committee (school board members, school leadership team, staff representatives, community leaders, and consultants) to guide the planning process and ensure a strong representation of community. This committee would consider design, facility assessments, financing, and communications.

If moving forward with Construction Management at Risk (CMaR), the board would need to approve the authorization to submit a legal ad for a CMaR. The selection would take place in December through an interview process conducted by the Jamestown School Board.

Recommended Actions:

Approve recommendations to:

- 1) Plan for a special election in the Spring of 2017 for a bond referendum
- 2) Authorize pre-referendum planning process
- 3) Authorize the creation of a Citizen's Steering Committee
- 4) Authorize legal ad for a Construction Manager at Risk (CMaR)