

# *Citizens' Facilities Advisory Committee*

## **Meeting Summary**

**Tuesday, September 26, 2006  
Wake County Commons, 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM**

### **Highlights**

1. Committee Call to Order & Announcements
2. Overview of Committee Communication Plan
3. Review of Capital Planning Assumptions
4. Report on Charlotte School Workshops
5. Tour of Panther Creek High School

### **Committee Call to Order & Announcements**

Billie Redmond, co-chair of the Citizens' Facilities Advisory Committee, called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. The committee briefly discussed the meeting minutes from August 23, and Ms. Redmond asked committee members to forward any changes or comments to Nicole Kreiser, Citizens' Facilities Advisory Committee staff.

Ms. Redmond informed the committee that the web site name has changed and that the name has been shortened. It is now [www.wakegov.com/cfac](http://www.wakegov.com/cfac). She reminded committee members that materials from prior meetings are being posted on the web page.

Ms. Redmond announced that the tour of an elementary school in Johnston County has been set up for October 5<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 PM. She invited others, outside of the committee membership, to come for the tour if they were so inclined.

Ms. Redmond announced that the contract with DeJong for the school district comparison project has been initiated. Eight of nine school districts have agreed to participate in the school comparisons project. Ms. Redmond stated that participation has not been finalized with Johnston County.

Ms. Redmond reminded the committee that the next Citizens' Facilities Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for October 24. The meeting will be held at Lacy Elementary because the committee had previously expressed an interest in seeing a school scheduled for a renovation. She stated that the committee might see a school that has been renovated at a future meeting.

Due to a conflict with the Board of Education meeting on December 19<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Redmond stated that the December meeting of the Citizens' Facilities Advisory Committee would be rescheduled to Monday, December 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **Overview of Committee Communication Plan**

Ms. Redmond then segued into a discussion of a proposed communication plan for the Citizens' Facilities Advisory Committee. Ms. Redmond reminded the committee that prior to the meeting she had distributed to the committee a document outlining potential activities for the committee to communicate its work. Ms. Redmond stated that she recognizes that the committee has a need to let the public know what they are doing on the community's behalf. Ms. Redmond said the communication plan would give the committee an opportunity to share their work. The committee could invite public input. This would allow citizens to pass along ideas, suggestions, or questions. The committee could gather information, incorporate it into their work, and have discussion and discovery.

Ms. Redmond announced that staff has created a capture sheet so that people can access the web sit to ask a question or provide an idea or suggestion. This web forum, Ms. Redmond stated, should hopefully create innovative input and public dialog. Ms. Redmond said that the committee would not be addressing questions as it relates to policy or academic questions.

Ms. Redmond asked if there were any questions or comments by the committee. Committee members did not offer questions or comments.

### **Review of Capital Planning Assumptions**

Don Haydon, Chief Facilities and Operations Officer at WCPSS, then walked the committee through the Capital Planning Assumptions adopted by the Board of Education and the Board of Commissioners. The Capital Planning Assumptions represent about a year's worth of work between both the Board of Education and County Commissioners and their staff. Mr. Haydon stated that the document represents both organizations and its purpose is a joint document.

Mr. Haydon also referenced the Capital Planning Assumptions Addendum, a document that details the assumptions that were not achieved with the \$1.056 billion capital improvement plan.

Mr. Haydon introduced staff that would assist him in explaining the Capital Planning Assumptions. Staff include: Jyoti Sharma, Director of Facility Planning; Mike Burriss, Assistant Superintendent for Facilities; Chuck Dulaney; Assistant Superintendent for Growth and Planning; and Joseph Desormeaux, Senior Director for Maintenance and Operations.

Mr. Haydon stated that the capital planning assumptions take a long-range approach to look at school building programs for the next couple of decades. He said that when the assumptions were developed, the view was that the school system would be in the business of building and opening new schools for the foreseeable future. The building program would be continuous, and that each bond program would cover a piece of the long-range building program.

Mr. Haydon asked the committee to notice the paragraph in the assumptions about how the capital construction program will support that attainment of Goal 2008. Mr. Haydon

also pointed out that the assumptions state the impact on the health of existing schools will be taken into consideration with any decision regarding capital projects or school calendars.

Mr. Haydon noted to the committee the four project priorities of the Capital Planning Assumptions: 1) ensure the health and safety of children and staff; 2) ensure adequacy of facilities for effective learning; 3) reduce school overcrowding; and complete phased renovations.

Mr. Haydon continued to walk through the planning assumptions, which focus on 21 different topics. Of the 21 topics, significant discussion and questions amongst the committee members were in regards to class size ratios, renovations of existing schools, educational program, new school size and space standards, and school site size.

Mr. Haydon walked through the state mandated class size ratios. State law requires WCPSS to maintain a district wide class size of 21 students across the school system for K-3, although state law allows up to 24 students in an individual classroom. Mr. Dulaney explained to the committee that this typically means that the schools in the fastest growing parts of the County have 23 and 24 students per classroom while the slower growing areas of the County have 19 students per classroom, so that the district averages 21 across the system. State law also requires a district wide average of 26 students per classroom for grades 4-8.

High school class averages also generated much discussion. The state maximum per classroom is 29 students, but WCPSS plans for 24 students per classroom. WCPSS states that their average is lower because of class offerings that might not draw 30 students, like calculus or French IV, which in turn lowers the district wide average. Mr. Burriss explained that other systems express this as an efficiency factor such as 85 percent. A district wide average of 24 and an efficiency factor of 85 percent results in the same ratio. Ms. Sharma also explained that career and technical education classes also have lower class sizes, but classes such as English, which may have 33 or 34 students per class, often offset those lower enrolled classes.

Ms. Sharma explained that some smaller classrooms are built, but generally, because of stacking multi-story schools and for flexibility, most classrooms in high schools are generally the same size in regards to square footage.

The committee then discussed renovation of existing schools. Mr. Haydon explained that there typically are three kinds of renovation work: life cycle replacements, major renovations, and deferred major renovations or life cycle replacements. Mr. Haydon explained that life cycle replacements are typically things like replacement of air conditioning units or roof replacements. Major renovations are total renovations where parts or all of a school building is totally reworked. Deferred major renovations or life cycle replacements are projects that were not completed when first due. The planning assumptions call for a major renovation every 40 years. Deferred renovations happen when renovations are beyond the 40-year lifecycle.

Glen Blackley, a Citizens' Facilities Advisory Committee member, asked WCPSS staff how the school system determined the life cycle replacement schedule. Mr. Desormeaux explained that the schedule was based on Whitestone research. WCPSS used that model, and input when a school was last built or renovated. The model provided certain targets to hit in five-year increments. WCPSS' analysis stopped at twenty years, because items listed for replacement after twenty years were assumed to be included in the next scheduled major renovation.

Mr. Blackley asked a follow-up question about the Whitestone model and referenced a recent whitepaper that said their previous work on HVAC systems needed re-working. He asked what implications that had for the renovations and replacements contemplated by WCPSS. WCPSS indicated that the replacements would still need to occur but perhaps in a longer time period than originally thought. Further information will be provided to the committee.

The committee inquired about any current backlog for deferred renovations and life cycle replacement. WCPSS staff explained that the assumptions originally called for the backlog to be eliminated by 2012; regularly scheduled repairs and eliminating the backlog would occur for five years. WCPSS staff also referred committee members to the Capital Planning Issues Addendum, which states that the target for deferred maintenance is now 2015, or three years later than in the planning assumptions.

The committee also inquired about the forecasted annual replacement budget and deferred maintenance budget per year. Staff indicated the budget was over \$100 million a year for five years, but would bring revised estimates to the committee at its next meeting.

Mr. Blackley asked Mr. Desormeaux if the model information has been tested on actual experience. Mr. Desormeaux responded that sometimes Whitestone's results were longer, sometimes the school system was longer, but overall it was pretty close.

Mr. Haydon explained to the committee that WCPSS uses 75 percent as its standard for renovating or replacing. This means that if estimated renovation costs are 75 percent or greater than new construction, a detailed analysis of the project is conducted in order to determine whether renovation or replacement is the most cost effective option.

Mr. Haydon also briefly stated that WCPSS is focusing on and emphasizing indoor air quality in its renovations. A question was asked regarding the cost impact.

The committee briefly reviewed mobile and modular percentages and school utilization. Mr. Haydon said that originally, the goal was to have eight percent of students in mobiles and modular classrooms by 2012. With the \$1.056 billion school CIP, this goal was postponed to 2015. Mr. Haydon also stated that the original school utilization goal was to assign to 95% for elementary and middle schools and 97.5% for high schools to allow for assignment flexibility. While the assumptions called for this to occur by 2015, it is now pushed back to 2018.

The committee also spent significant time discussing the special education program requirements included in school design and construction. Mr. Haydon discussed how federal law mandates services for special needs students. The school system includes self-contained classrooms and pullout classrooms to provide services. It also offers pre-kindergarten programs for special needs students as well. Mr. Haydon clarified that special-needs programs include general education support (academically gifted, accelerated learning programs, ESL, Title I) as well as students with disabilities.

The committee inquired whether the classrooms count towards a school's capacity as listed in the district's school capacity book published each fall. Staff indicated that they are listed separately in the capacity book and are not included in capacity calculations. The committee also inquired whether the law required the number of self-contained classes built by WCPSS. Ms. Sharma indicated that the number of classrooms planned for special needs students are a result of actual student enrollment. A study from a couple of years ago showed special needs students who required self contained classrooms were growing at a much faster rate than overall student enrollment. The committee noted that not only does the County pay a share in its operating budget for special needs programs, it also incurs costs to build extra special needs classrooms in its schools.

Mr. Haydon then referred committee members to the Capital Planning Assumptions to see the new school size models as adopted by the Board of Education during the development of the school capital improvement program. WCPSS is now planning on building 800-student capacity elementary schools (1,124 on a year-round calendar), 1,311-student capacity middle schools (1,623 on a year-round calendar), and 2,223-student capacity high schools. Mr. Haydon said that the larger schools were designed to keep the cost per student down and to take advantage of a larger building on the same site.

The committee inquired how the school system reconciles the push for smaller schools with their latest decisions. School staff indicated that they take approaches like the teaming approach in middle school, or the organization of one grade in a wing, that makes it easier to break a school apart. With stacking, there is flexibility to change class and grade configurations in a school. Mr. Haydon also discussed how East Wake High School is moving from one large high school to four separate high schools on the same campus. In response, the committee asked for more information about the Gates foundation grants that fund such programs.

Mr. Haydon then presented information on school acreage, and explained that acres are set aside because of the educational program and offered further information regarding the different rules and regulations required by various municipalities.

The committee inquired how many multi-story schools are operated by the school system. Ms. Sharma responded that it is now over 50 percent, but would bring specific information back to the committee at its next meeting. Mr. Burriss explained that it often is a tradeoff between the cost of acreage vs. the cost of elevators and stairwells.

The committee also asked whether the school system has looked at not providing a football stadium for each high school. They inquired about the feasibility of regional stadiums.

The committee also inquired about the number of parking spaces, especially at high schools. Mr. Burriss responded that the number of parking spaces is based on a Department of Public Instruction recommendation for parking based on school capacity. Mr. Burriss also noted that various municipalities like Wake Forest, Holly Springs, and Cary have ordinances that require WCPSS to build additional parking to prevent student parking from spilling into areas outside of the school campus. The committee inquired about the possibility of adding a second bus loop instead of having so much parking for students who need transportation after the end of the school day because of after-school activities, etc. The committee also inquired about whether the school board could limit the ability of certain grades to drive to school or and to institute or raise parking fees to deter the need for so many parking spaces at a high school.

Ms. Asefnia, another member of the committee, inquired about the acquisition of more multi school sites to earn greater efficiencies. Mr. Burriss informed the committee that the biggest challenge was finding the 100+ acre site. He stated that the biggest change with shared sites is that instead of a series of entrances, there are only typically one or two entrances, and then a series of connecting roads required by municipalities to carry persons from campus to campus. With multi-school sites it is important to coordinate operational hours so cars are not backed up in carpool lines. Mr. Burriss also said that there are savings on grading, water and sewer, etc; so the school system takes advantage of a better value rather than doing it piecemeal.

Mr. Haydon then finished his presentation by walking the committee through the remaining assumptions pertaining to land banking, enrollment, school calendars, and program base prices and inflation estimates.

### **Brief Report on Charlotte School Workshops**

Jim Smith, a member of the Citizens' Facilities Advisory Committee gave a brief report on the two Charlotte school workshops he attended earlier in the month. He reported that the first day focused on school design. The workshop was open to anyone in the community to talk about issues for school design and construction that were important to them using a technique called open space technology. He suggested that the school board, another group like AIA, or the committee conduct a similar session in order to create ownership for the process where people can participate.

The second workshop focused on three topics: making schools part of the urban fabric; how schools exist because of interactions with municipalities, county government, and the school system; and creating best practices for school design. These were led by John Norquist, President of the Congress for New Urbanism; Dr. David Salvesen, Center for Urban and Regional Studies at UNC Chapel Hill; and Randall Fielding, principal of Fielding/Nair International and director of DeisgnShare.

Mr. Haydon and Susan Parry, Wake County Board of Education member, discussed a similar session conducted by Randall Fielding for teachers, parents, students, and the community held in the spring of 2005 at Broughton High School. They stated that WCPSS is incorporating some of the outcomes of this session in their designs.

### **Tour of Panther Creek High School**

Mike Burriss presented brief information on Panther Creek High School. WCPSS purchased 71.2 acres for Panther Creek in 2002. The Town of Cary contributed \$1,412,000 towards the purchase, which reduced WCPSS' cost to \$40,000 per acre.

The total school construction budget was \$42,675,185, with funding from Phase IIIB, Plan 2000, and Plan 2004 building programs. The school opened on August 25, 2006.

The committee saw how a high school is designed with one common area that serves multiple purposes such as the cafeteria, main entry, meeting area, etc. The committee toured a classroom wing and then toured the football stadium. The committee discussed some of the requirements mandated for stadiums, like ADA requirements for press boxes and the costs associated with those requirements.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM. The next Facilities Advisory Committee will be October 24, 2006 at Lacy Elementary in Raleigh.