

West Lafayette Community School Corporation RDP Projects Update

WINTER 2021

In 2014 a group of West Lafayette Community School Corporation (WLCSC) stakeholders began meeting to discuss WLCSC facilities. Those stakeholders included teachers, support staff, administrators, parents, community members, school board members, and architects. The 47-member facilities committee was facilitated by Dr. Ed. Eiler, retired superintendent from the Lafayette School Corporation.

After nearly two years of meeting, the facilities committee recommended the following:

- 1) Replace Happy Hollow with a new intermediate school at the Burtsfield site;
- 2) Renovate Cumberland Elementary School;
- 3) Update the West Lafayette Jr/Sr High School with a new STEM academic wing; a new aquatic center and repurpose the old pool into classrooms; renovate the performing arts area with a performing arts center; and remodel the cafeteria into a state-of-the-art café;
- 4) Repurpose Happy Hollow for possibly a Kindergarten/Early-childhood center if bonding capacity is available that would not increase the school district's Debt Service Tax Rate; and
- 5) Reallocate retiring debt so the above projects do not impact the Debt Service Tax Rate.

The administration and members of the facilities committee held five community forums to gain community input plus three additional community forums with residents from the Burtsfield residents. Based upon the input received from these meetings, the final plans were presented to the facilities committee for final approval. With unanimous approval by the committee, the administration presented the RDP Projects to the School Board on October 3, 2016. A copy of the minutes from that Board meeting is attached. Then, per Indiana Code legal requirements, the School Board held eight public hearings which were advertised in multiple places including the local newspaper. With no objections at any of the public hearings, between 2016 and 2019 the School Board approved the RDP projects.,

West Lafayette Intermediate School

On October 10, 2018, West Lafayette Intermediate School (WLIS) opened. WLIS houses grades 4 – 6. The construction cost came in at just under \$29 million. The facility opened nine-weeks earlier than planned and came in under budget. Students, teachers, staff members, parents and community members are now enjoying a state-of-the-art educational facility. This was the first new school built in WLCSC since 1961.



Cumberland Elementary School Renovation

On July 31, 2019, Cumberland Elementary School was rededicated and named the West Lafayette Elementary School (WLES) which serves grades K-3. The entire school was remodeled with the inclusion of a remodeled gymnasium, a new cafeteria with an operating kitchen, remodeled classrooms, a new media center, and updated safety features including a fire protection system, alarm systems and fire retardant materials. The remodeling costs came in at around \$15 million and the school opened on time as planned. Now our students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents and community have access to a safer facility, state-of-the-art instructional resources including a new media center, updated service areas including receiving a hot lunch prepared right at the school, and a more inviting facility.



West Lafayette Jr/Sr High School

On November 25, 2019, the dedication ceremonies for the Richard A. Wachs Jr. Aquatic Center and the RDP Café were held. The construction costs for both projects came in at approximately \$12 million. Now our students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents and community have access to a state-of-the-art aquatic center, new classrooms and a large group instructional area with the repurposing of the old pool, and a modern café that provides our students and staff with a greater variety of healthy food options and better service.



Construction is continuing on the James R. Guy Academic Wing (JRGAW) and on the Bob Kelly Performing Arts Center (BKPAC). The anticipated completion date for both projects is expected to be June 2021. The anticipated cost of the JRGAW is approximately \$13 million and the BKPAC is approximately \$8 million. Also, the cost of the stair tower and a remodeling of second floor classrooms is projected to come in at just over \$900,000.

Old Happy Hollow Elementary School

Currently, the City of West Lafayette is leasing Happy Hollow. This has provided additional revenue to the school district to assist with construction bond payments. Now, the West Lafayette Library plans to occupy Happy Hollow between 12-14 months. In the meantime, the school district must continue working towards fixing the charter school law which allows charter schools to lease unused public school buildings for a \$1 and work towards finding additional funding opportunities to eventually help put into place an Early-childhood/Kindergarten Center.

According to some preliminary architectural plans, the estimated costs to convert Happy Hollow is approximately \$15 million. For the short-term, with the finalized construction costs of WLIS, WLES, and the Jr/Sr High School projects already completed, plus the bonds for the JRGAW and the BKPAC, WLCSC has reached its bonding capacity which means if any additional bonds are sold, the school district's Debt Service tax rate would increase. At this time, the administration and School Board are considering other financial options in order to keep the school district's Debt Service tax rate from increasing should we move forward with repurposing Happy Hollow. However, if the WLCSC community was in favor of increasing the Debt Service tax rate to add an Early Childhood/Kindergarten Center, that would be possible.

Summary

Since 2014, the WLCSC School Board, administration and facilities committee have been working on improving all school facilities. The learning environment is very important to the success of our students and to the work of our teachers, support staff and administration. Therefore, using recommendations garnered by the WLCSC facilities committee, and with input received from many community forums, the School Board and administration have followed the proposed plan as approved in 2016. Throughout this process, the cost of construction increased significantly. The school district's Debt Service tax rate in 2016 was \$0.5375 per \$100 of assessed valuation. In 2021, the projected school district's Debt Service tax rate is expected to come in at \$0.5375 per \$100 of assessed valuation.

The money to pay the school district's Debt Service tax rate comes from local property taxes. Other than the revenue received from the leasing of Happy Hollow and the money raised by the West Lafayette Schools Education Foundation for the building projects, no other school district funds are being used to pay the school district's construction costs. The total costs for all facility improvements came in at approximately \$83 million. The increase in construction costs is supported by an increase in the school district's assessed valuation (AV) which, in part, has kept the school district's Debt Service tax rate from increasing. As the school district's AV continues to increase, the School Board will be able to protect the tax rate from increasing for the RDP Projects. Below are the October 3, 2016 School Board minutes which indicate that if the school district's AV goes up, and if the construction costs come in over \$50 million, the school district would bond for more to cover the increased construction costs.

Some have asked if the operating referendum is being used to assist with the construction projects? The answer is no. In, 2017, the school district asked the community to consider renewing the operating referendum that was first passed in 2010. With a record setting vote of just over 94%, WLCSC's community voted in favor of renewing the operating referendum for another 7 years. The operating referendum is being used to cover the budget cuts made by the state over the past 11 years so WLCSC can maintain and enhance its award-winning arts, music, co-/extra-curricular programs, plus add teaching staff and provide raises to our teachers and support staff.

For six years in a row, Niche.com and Businessweek has named WLCSC the "Best School District in the State" and in the top 15 "Best School Districts" in the nation. If we want to continue providing our students, teachers, staff with a world-class education system, we are going to need to invest in our school district. This is one of many reasons the WLCSC School Board and administration have implemented the recommendations of the WLCSC Facilities Committee. The learning environment must match the great instruction and educational opportunities being provided to our students by WLCSC teachers, staff and administration.

If you need any more information about the RDP projects, the school district's Debt Service process, or the operating referendum, please call WLCSC central office at 765-269-4002.

MINUTES

WEST LAFAYETTE COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION

*Happy Hollow Elementary, LGI Room
1200 N. Salisbury Street
West Lafayette, Indiana*

FACILITIES MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Monday October 3, 2016

PRESENT: Mr. Alan R. Karpick; Dr. Karen S. Springer; Mr. Bradley Marley ; Mr. Thomas H. Schott; Mr. Brain J. Bittner, Mrs. Rachel Witt; Mr. Douglas Masson; Mr. Ross Sloat; Mr. Robert C. Reiling, Jr.; and Dr. Rocky Killion Superintendent.

President Karpick called the meeting to order at 7:04 P.M.

I. ROUTINE BUSINESS

A. A motion was made to approve the agenda for the Monday October 3, 2016, Regular Meeting of the Board of School Trustees.

Motion by: Mr. Marley

Seconded by: Mr. Schott

Vote: 7 of 7

II. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Facilities – Pre K-12 Facilities Concept

Dr. Killion expressed gratitude to everyone for their contribution in the process of the Facilities Strategic Plan. Thank you to the committee, KJG Architecture, Schmidt & Assoc., School Board, staff, parents and all our community members.

Recommendation: Dr. Rocky Killion recommended the Board of School Trustees approve the following building concepts per the presentation at the Board work session held on Sept. 19, 2016 under the three global parameters set forth by the facilities strategic planning team, plus proposed processes:

- 1) a new elementary school, grades 4-6 at the Burtsfield property;
- 2) facility improvement to Cumberland elementary that include new classrooms, media center, cafeteria, HVAC, electrical and plumbing, and other improvements as cited in the Sept. 19 work session presentation;
- 3) facility improvements to the Jr/Sr HS that include the Jim Guy Education Wing, the Bob Kelly Performing Arts Center, the Richard Wachs Aquatic Center, media center, cafeteria, and other improvements as cited in the Sept. 19 work session;
- 4) repurpose Happy Hollow elementary school for early childhood/kindergarten center after new elementary school is completed at Burtsfield;
- 5) athletic improvements at Straley field if funding is available;
- 6) keep the overall school district tax rate and the debt service tax rate at or below the current (2016) rate;
- 7) authorize administration to contract with KJG and Schmidt Associates to begin the schematics, plotting and bid documents for the Board to review in late 2016 or early 2017;
- 8) assign up to two (2) part-time WLCSC administrators/directors to oversee process on behalf of WLCSC;

- 9) if the assessed valuation increases, use the additional resources to bond for additional expansion of projects if necessary;
- 10) authorize the administration to begin the process for bonding proceeds to receive resources by December 30, 2016 so long as it does not increase the school district's current overall tax rate; and
- 11) Begin the process for unifying the school district under 'Scarlet and Gray – The West Side Way', where each school will be scarlet and gray when the facilities plans are completed by 20/20."

If bids come in over \$50 million, then the administration will set priorities based upon the following criteria:

- 1) New elementary school at Burtsfield
- 2) Additional classrooms, internal systems' improvements (HVAC, plumbing, etc.), media center/cafeteria improvements at Cumberland & Jr/Sr HS (includes Jim Guy Wing)
- 3) Aquatic center – Jr/Sr HS; external components at Cumberland
- 4) Performing arts center – Jr/Sr HS; Early Childhood/Kdg. Center – old HH site
- 5) Straley Field (athletic improvements)

The administration believes that in the coming years WLCSC's A/V will dramatically increase. So the same debt service tax rate that now generates just under \$50 million will generate additional revenue in 2018 without increasing the debt service tax rate. If this holds true, additional bonding can occur without increasing the school district's tax rate.

A motion was made that the Board of School Trustees approve the facility concepts and the proposed processes.

Motion by: Mrs. Witt

Seconded by: Mr. Bittner

Vote: 7 of 7

IV. INFORMATION TO THE BOARD - None

V. COMMUNICATION FROM THE AUDIENCE

Linda Terhune – 128 Wheeler Lane
 Zachary Baiel – 124 Connolly Street
 Margaret Psarros – 3619 Swansee Drive
 Courtney Hollingsworth – 2170 Tranquil Trail, 47909
 Randy Studt – 3014 Ferry Street, 47904
 Johanna Wu – 722 Bexley Road
 Arnold Chen – 818 Sparta Street
 Trudy Rowe – 507 Hillcrest Road
 Kim Bowers – 2800 Wilshire Avenue
 Ada King – 237 Connolly Street
 Zonda Bryant – 474 Maple Street

Brian Bittner
 Rachael Witt
 Alan Karpick
 Brad Marley
 Tom Schott
 Douglas Masson

VI. FUTURE MEETINGS

Monday Nov. 7, Regular Board Meeting

VII. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 P.M.