



**High School Facilities Task Force
Minutes from February 28, 2008**

Members present: Jodi Schneidmiller, Jim Hayner, Clint Gabbard, Mindy Meyer, Rob Ahrens, Jim Sporleder, Darcy Weisner, Ruth Ladderud, LaDessa Smelcer, Carina Stillman, John Rowley, James Payne, Jim Sanders, Linda Newcomb, Cindy Meyer, Max Carrera

Members absent: Cindy Widmer, Dick Cook, Nanqi You, Scott Krivoshein, Lawson Knight, Mike Pettyjohn, John Butenhoff, Ruth Russo, Jim McCarthy, Everett Knudson

Guests: Dave Teater, Mark Higgins, Rich Carter, Anne Golden, Pat Johnston, Maria Gonzales

Motions:

There was a motion to adopt the Quality Alternative High Schools summary report. A request was made to rework one sentence in the third paragraph of the document to clarify what was being stated and to add one word in the final paragraph. Those changes were approved and the document was unanimously adopted.

Minutes from the January 24, 2008 meet were approved and adopted.

**Topics: A: Walla Walla High School Expansion and Renovation
 B: Skills Center and Effect on Walla Walla high schools**

It was decided to review both topics together.

Costs

Dave Teater presented approximate cost figures that had been developed by Jim Christensen of Architects West (who was ill this evening). In summary:

- ◆ **A:** The cost to replace the library, science building, music classrooms (not auditorium), the academic building, and the commons/cafeteria AND to remodel the older gym would be approximately \$89.9 million in today's dollars. State matching dollars would be approximately \$27.6 million. This estimate would be for 1,800 students and 316,800 square feet of buildings.
- ◆ **B:** The cost of similar new construction/remodeling for a student body of 1,500 and 264,000 square feet of building space would be \$73.1 million. The remaining (300 full time or 600 half time) students would be served by a 17,000 square foot Skills Center that would cost \$41.5 million, but might be funded at a rate of about 90% by the state. State matching dollars would be approximately \$67.3 million on a combined cost of \$114.6 million.

Tax Rates and Operating Expenses

Interim Business Manager Pat Johnston presented two different scenarios on the two topics: 1) financing entire bonds, using state matching dollars for other projects throughout the district and 2) using matching dollars to complete the projects and reducing the district's direct costs. In summary:

- ◆ **A:** Financing the Wa-Hi replacement/remodeling would average approximately \$3.43 per \$1,000 in assessed valuation beginning in 2010, if the total cost (including state matching dollars) was funded; it would average approximately \$2.25 per \$1,000 in 2010 if the matching dollars were not included in the bond amount.
- ◆ **B:** Financing the Wa-Hi replacement/remodeling for a smaller student body AND the Skills Center would average approximately \$3.27 per \$1,000 in assessed valuation beginning in 2010, if the total cost (including state matching dollars) was funded; it would average approximately \$1.99 per \$1,000 in 2010 if the matching dollars were not included in the bond amount. This option could also add up to \$83,000 in annual staff costs and \$91,700 in utilities, based on current expenses. It was noted that utility costs would very likely be much less in new and updated buildings.

Group discussion included the following questions and comments:

- Would you have to link a Skills Center directly with renovation/new construction at Wa-Hi? Response: No.
- Why would we including matching dollars in the bond cost? Would we disclose that? Rich Carter responded that, historically, Walla Walla has financed bonds at the full amount, with the School Board deciding where to use the matching dollars for building maintenance and upgrades in the district.
- You can only run a bond for brick and mortar (building and related expenses), not staff.
- You can run a special levy for technology, busses, etc.
- Why was the recent levy vote so close? Dr. Carter explained that primaries tend to bring out more negative votes. “Yes” votes in the February election were similar to those of previous levies, but there were more “no” votes. There is a state bill pending that would de-link special levies from presidential primaries to help that situation.
- Would the Skills Center have a lunch program? Darcy Weisner explained that most students would attend both Wa-Hi and the Skills Center, so the current lunch situation might not change.
- Adding a Skills Center might increase bussing, depending upon its location.

Skills Center Overview

Rich Carter announced that the state is planning to include \$100 million for Skills Centers in this year’s budget. There is a push to pay for regional Skills Centers throughout the state and to provide up to 90% of the funding for them over a three year period. During the first year, there would be a feasibility study; in year two, design work would take place; and in year three, construction would begin.

Dr. Carter has been in touch with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and said he believes Walla Walla School District has an excellent chance for a feasibility study, as a satellite campus for the Tri Tech (Skills) Center in Kennewick. He is meeting with Tri Tech officials in the coming weeks to learn more about their program and possible partnership.

Dr. Carter said this is very preliminary and the district has not made any decisions regarding developing a Skills Center in Walla Walla. He said he believes the district owes it to our community, staff and students to look into this issue, and that a state-funded feasibility study would shed more light on the issue of Skills Centers and help determine if one would work in Walla Walla.

Group discussion included the following questions and comments:

- What would a Skills Center include? Offerings could include welding, automotive repair, culinary arts and cosmetology.
- Only juniors and seniors would participate. Students would still be subject to state assessment requirements for the K-12 system.
- There shouldn’t be a duplication of services provided by the community college. Students could take basic offerings through a Skills Center and then move on to the community college to continue their studies in various areas.

- Are there any downsides to Skills Centers? No responses within the group
- What about Lincoln students? See the next section

Alternative Education/Lincoln

Using some rough estimates, Dave Teater shared that rebuilding Lincoln Alternative School for a population of 300 students might cost approximately \$13.8 million, of which \$2.5 million could be state matched. It could be offered to voters, in combination with the Skills Center, for close to \$14 million.

Group discussion included the following questions and comments:

- Why would we look at 300 students when there is growth in Alternative Programs? The total population of alternative programs, including Lincoln and the Opportunity Program, is approximately 300 today.
- Need to look at other options first, then address Wa-Hi separately
- Lincoln, in combination with a Skills Center, might be a good bond issue. Wa-Hi might then be changed incrementally with smaller bond issues to address specific needs.
- Still need a clear sense from the community. We need to know what the community wants.
- There are lots of questions about Lincoln, some of them philosophical. There is the potential for community/agency partnerships
- Research shows that academic courses aren't necessarily the answer in alternative programs.
- As a committee and community, we need to develop a vision for Alternative Education in Walla Walla.
- A large percentage of students in Walla Walla do not go on to college. We need programs for them. Lincoln and a Skills Center might be part of the answer.

Final Discussions/Closing Statements

Darcy explained that Wa-Hi and the district want great things for our students, but there are some sub-standard space issues at the high school. He said these have to be kept in conversations with the community. Several Task Force members agreed that bonds targeting smaller projects at Wa-Hi might pass, but there was concern about how the community gets involved in the discussion.

Task Force members suggesting looking at a vision for quality schools, getting ideas out into the community, and keeping citizens involved in the research phase of what to do with high school education in Walla Walla School District.

For the next meeting, committee members were charged with examining various high school scenarios for the district and then determining how high school issues can be brought out into the community. Darcy Weisner was asked to come up with a list of "needs" at Wa-Hi.

The next meeting will be Thursday, March 24, 2008 at 5 p.m. in the Administration Building Board Room.