

**MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 28, 2015  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS OVERCROWDING &  
REPAIR NEEDS COMMITTEE MEETING**

**1. Opening Items**

a. Call to Order

The meeting of the Public Schools Overcrowding & Repair Needs Committee was called to order at 9:02 a.m. at the Nevada Mining Association, 201 West Liberty Street, Suite 300, Reno, Nevada.

b. Roll Call & Introductions

Chairman Shaun Carey and Committee Members Assemblywoman Teresa Benitez-Thompson, County Commissioner Marsha Berkbigler, Bridget Burckhard, Mike Cate, Dana Galvin, Josh Hicks, Todd Koch, Greg Peek, Dylan Shaver, Kevin Sigstad, Senator Debbie Smith, and Len Stevens were present. Committee member Mike Kazmierski was absent from the meeting. Anthony Carano was introduced as the new representative to the committee from the Nevada Resort Association.

**2. Public Comment**

There was no public comment at this time.

**3. Items for Discussion and Possible Action**

a. Approval of the Minutes of the August 13, 2015 Meeting

It was moved by Mr. Peek and seconded by Mr. Koch that **the Public Schools Overcrowding and Repair Needs Committee approved the minutes of the August 13, 2015 meeting.** The result of the vote was Unanimous. Final Resolution: Motion Carries.

b. Discussion and possible selection of a Vice Chair

Chairman Carey opened the floor to nominations.

Mr. Stevens nominated Mr. Dylan Shaver to serve as Vice-Chairman of the Public Schools Overcrowding and Repair Needs Committee.

No other nominations were received. Chairman Carey closed the floor to nominations. The committee unanimously elected Dylan Shaver as Vice-Chairman.

c. Overview of school construction needs in the Washoe County School District: Past, Present & Future

Pete Etchart, Chief Operations Officer, Washoe County School District, provided an overview to the committee on the current and projected statuses of enrollment, repair and renovation needs, regional growth and the impact on the Washoe County School District (WCSD), anticipated funding needs, and short- and long-term options for dealing with overcrowding. Enrollment had been growing over the past few years, but not by large amounts. The current issue for the WCSD had more to do with school capacity. He reviewed the capacity numbers in the District with and without the use of portable buildings. A brief history of capital funding, through ballot initiative and legislation, was provided. Additional information on the amount the District received from taxes would be presented at a future meeting, including the differences between the amounts received from property taxes in all Nevada counties.

Mr. Etchart provided information on how the District evaluated repair and renovation needs. The average school age in the District was 39 years and the annual repair and renovation needs for the District was approximately \$25 million. District staff determined the needs based on the Facility Condition Index Information System developed and maintained by District staff. The system was based on the age and inspection of systems.

Chairman Carey asked if portable units and buildings were included on the list. Mr. Etchart indicated that they were because even though the portables were meant to be temporary, the portables had become "permanent" classrooms and required the same repairs and renovations as other buildings. The newer portables required additional repair attention because they contained bathrooms and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) units.

Mr. Sigstad wondered what the percentage of the District's repairs were for administrative buildings. Mr. Etchart remarked that he was not sure of the exact percentage; however, the District would always try to put funds into the schools before any administration or facility property. Those locations would still need repairs and renovations because an increase in enrollment meant an increased need to house vehicles at bus yards or meals prepared at the nutrition services facility.

Mr. Koch inquired if the committee and the public could view the repair and renovation needs by school site. Mr. Etchart informed the committee about the Data Gallery website. A demonstration was provided on the information contained on the website and different ways to view the information. The committee felt it

would be important to provide the original estimates on projects along with the final cost so the community could see the difference. The District prioritized projects by assuring all students were safe, warm, and dry. The Data Gallery also allowed the community to look at the capacity information for schools, including projected enrollment at schools for up to 10 years.

Mr. Peek expressed concern about projecting enrollment at schools because growth could occur in various locations and not always where developments were originally zoned. He mentioned the District needed to focus on where growth was occurring and not try to build schools based on areas that had been zoned for housing. He gave an example of one of his company's projects in the north valleys zoned for several thousand units being included in the projected student enrollment, even though the plans to develop those units would not be for 10 – 15 years. The build time for proposed developments needs to be taken into account since it could be 10 years or more before construction began in an area that had been zoned for housing. Mr. Etchart explained that the District would base projected enrollment from information the County and Cities were also using from the Economic Planning Indicator Committee (EPIC). The District's demographer would provide additional information on how enrollment projections were made at a future meeting. The EPIC group had developed 2 different scenarios for growth. The local governments were currently interested in using the 1.7% growth because there was a lot of uncertainty in the numbers; however, others were using the 2.4% growth rate. The groups would meet quarterly to determine which numbers were closer and alter their projections as needed.

Chairman Carey requested additional information from the EPIC group and why there was a difference in the numbers used by the local governments versus the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada (EDAWN). Other committee members were interested in hearing more about why there was a difference. Mr. Etchart noted that whichever figure was used, growth would be coming to the area and the current District facilities were not able to handle the increase. Based on current information, the increase in students would not be able to be absorbed by charter schools, private schools, or other educational options such as homeschooling if the current percentages of student in all school options remained the same.

Mr. Stevens wondered if the District was also seeing an increase in the number of students in adult education classes. Kristen McNeill, Chief of Staff, Washoe County School District, stated that the District had seen an increase in the number of adult students interested in obtaining a high school diploma. Approximately 40,000 adults in the area were viable for adult education and the District was looking at additional alternatives for those students as well. Mr. Etchart added that more students, 3-3.5%, were also staying in school which put an additional strain on facilities.

Mr. Etchart presented information on the areas with the highest current need for new schools: Damonte Ranch area was the most in need of an elementary school; Sun Valley and Spanish Springs were in need of middle schools; and northwest Reno and Spanish Springs were in need of high schools, as well as an expansion to Damonte Ranch High School. The projected costs of building new schools continued to increase because of the increase in construction costs that was occurring in the area. The difference in the financial need versus the funding available was a gap of about \$100 million.

Senator Smith mentioned the perception in the public was that the Nevada Legislature took care of the funding problems with the increased dollars to education during the 2015 Legislative Session. A discussion was held on the differences in funding education was provided and how categorical funding could not be used for capital projects. A presentation would be provided at a future meeting regarding the different ways the District was able to spend money and how there were often restrictions on funds. Mr. Etchart stated that to bond a new elementary school at \$23 million, 4,600 new \$300,000 would need to be built; however, the impact to the District of those 4,600 homes would be \$80 million in new school construction. There was also a lag between the homes being build and the District receiving funds from the property taxes, as well as a lag of 2-5 years between the District approving new construction and schools being built.

Mr. Cate asked if the District had property for new school construction. Mr. Etchart noted the District did have some property for an elementary school in Damonte Ranch, but did not have other property available for school construction. High schools required the largest amount of land, of at least 50 acres, and if would be difficult to find that much land where the current growth was occurring.

Mr. Etchart reviewed the short-term options available to the District related to overcrowding. Rezoning was an option; however, there were few schools in the District with enough room in the areas where overcrowding was a large concern. The process was also long and would not remain valid for more than a couple of years depending on the speed of growth. The District was looking into using existing structures, such as empty box stores, but the cost to retrofit the building so they complied with building code requirements for schools was as much as new construction.

Mr. Sigstad noted there seemed to be a number of charter schools that utilized existing store fronts. He asked if they were required to follow the same building codes as the School District. Mr. Etchart stated the charter schools were not held to the same building code statutes as schools in public school districts in Nevada. The

idea was to use the box stores as specialty schools and not neighborhood schools, but that solution came with challenges related to transportation of students to the school and equity issues. A discussion was held on the ability of the District to use more portable buildings. If the District were to remove all portables, the students would fill 10 elementary schools. The problem was not all portables were located at elementary schools, but also middle and high schools. Additionally, portables did not increase the base capacity of a school and the cafeteria or other common spaces would only hold a certain number of students and the portables removed space from playgrounds. Mr. Etchart explained District staff was also working on revising Administrative Regulation 6111 related to school calendars and that multi-track and double sessions would be considered as options to relieve overcrowding, but also come with their own challenges. The only current viable long-term solution was the work the committee was performing and additional funding for capital projects for the District.

The committee held a discussion on if they would require additional information on the current status of the District related to enrollment and the amount required for new school construction. The committee members were confident in the information provided by the District and did not believe additional information on the need required a formal presentation. Many agreed the committee needed to shift their focus to how to address the needs, change the perception problems in the community, and explain how the District was required to spend money on specific programs and could not just move funds around. It would be important for the need to be translated into tax dollars so the community would know exactly how much they would need to pay to help.

- d. Review of past efforts to generate revenue for school construction in Washoe County School District

This item was postpone for a future meeting because of time.

- e. Overview of proposed tax revenue to fund school construction in Washoe County School District as authorized by Senate Bill 411

This item was postpone for a future meeting because of time.

- f. Requests for future agenda items.

Mr. Hicks requested information on the anticipated bonding capacity of the various taxes the committee was tasked with considering.

Chairman Carey requested a presentation on what how other counties were dealing

with capital funding issues and options they were considering.

#### **4. Public Comment**

William Horn mentioned he was a part of the process in 2008 related to the WC1 ballot question. He spoke for the measure to various community groups and received feedback on why many in the community were not interested in increasing funding for the Washoe County School District. Many of the reasons had nothing to do with the need, but perceptions people had of the system. He indicated it could be beneficial for the committee to hear from others about the concerns raised by the community at that time.

#### **5. Adjourn Meeting**

There being no further business to come before the members of the committee, Chairman Carey declared the meeting adjourned at 10:47 a.m.

---

**Shaun Carey, Chair**