

**MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 23, 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 9:04 a.m. at the Washoe County Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Caucus Room, Reno, Nevada.

b. Roll Call & Introductions

Chairman Shaun Carey and Committee Members Assemblywoman Teresa Benitez-Thompson, County Commissioner Marsha Berkbigger, Mike Cate, Todd Koch, Greg Peek, Dylan Shaver, Kevin Sigstad, Senator Debbie Smith, and Len Stevens were present. Committee members Anthony Carano and Josh Hicks were present through phone conference. Committee member Mike Kazmierski was not present at the time of roll call. Committee members Bridget Burkhard and Dana Galvin were absent from the meeting.

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 September 25, 2015 Meeting

This item was pulled from the agenda. The item will return to the committee for consideration at a future meeting.

b. Approval of the Minutes of the October 9, 2015 Meeting

This item was pulled from the agenda. The item will return to the committee for consideration at a future meeting.

c. Presentation by the Cuningham Group regarding their independent review and initial and analysis of current and projected school buildings capacity and enrollment growth, possible utilization of alternative capacity models, rebalancing of attendance zones, and their recommendations to manage future growth and to provide increased student equity

Pete Etchart, Chief Operations Officer, Washoe County School District, explained the reasons behind the District utilizing The Cuningham Group to provide an independent review of current and projected enrollment and growth in the District. The District also requested an analysis of different options that could be used to deal with overcrowding concerns. The Cuningham Group had previously worked with the District in the development of the Capital Improvement Program in 2002.

Tim DuFault, President and Chief Executive Officer, The Cuningham Group, provided an overview to the Committee on a presentation and recommendations that was presented to the Board of Trustees and District on October 5, 2015, related to current and projected enrollment and capacity issues. The analysis was based on existing data provided by the District and utilized a 1.7% growth rate. The intent of the analysis was to assure that all schools in the District would be at no more than 100% capacity and did not consider other options being considered to deal with overcrowding developed by the District. It was clear from the analysis that the anticipated growth would have to be dealt with in stages because the District would not be able to deal with it all at once. The analysis did not consider the schools located in Incline Village or Gerlach.

Committee Member Mike Kazmierski arrived at the meeting at 9:10 a.m.

Mr. DuFault presented the current and projected enrollment information related to the high schools. For all schools, analysis was completed for current enrollment and both 5- and 10-year projections. As related to high schools, the growth would be dispersed and could not be resolved with rezoning for the entire District. The recommendations were to construct three new high schools: one in the North Valleys and two within the McCarran Loop, one to replace Hug and Sparks High Schools, which would be combined into one school, and one to replace Wooster High School. The closure of the three schools was recommended because they were the smallest high schools in the District and had significant challenges related to capacity. Additionally, it was recommended that an expansion of Damonte Ranch High School occur to allow for a capacity of 2,400 students as the infrastructure was originally designed to hold. The recommendations would free-up existing Hug, Sparks, and Wooster High Schools for other uses that would be presented later.

Mr. Peek wondered if double sessions were considered as part of the analysis. Mr. DuFault explained double sessions were not considered in the analysis because of other issues related to the schedule and the overall negative impact associated with them. Middle and high schools were not really set up to go to multi-track, year-round calendars due to the programmatic nature of the classes and other activities offered to the students and because of the way the classes were run, with students moving

from class to class instead of having a single teacher for all subjects.

Chairman Carey asked if there could be additional options to deal with the capacity issues at McQueen High School if other factors, aside from just the data, were considered. Mr. DuFault remarked that the analysis utilized the current District standards related to capacity, so if the capacity at any new high schools were to increase, then rezoning for certain areas could be reviewed. Additionally, one of the possible uses for either Hug High School or Wooster High School could be for specialized programming or magnet programs that would reduce enrollment for high schools throughout the District.

Mr. Peek inquired as to the optimal enrollment size of a high school. Mr. DuFault stated it would be about 2,400 students. Anything above 2,400 became increasingly more difficult for staff because of the number of students.

Mr. DuFault provided the current and projected enrollment information for the middle schools in the District. The capacity issues for middle schools would occur within the next 5 years due to a "bubble" of students currently in elementary schools and then ease for the 10-year projections. The middle schools on the periphery of the District would continue to experience the most capacity concerns, but there were also concerns related to the schools within the McCarran Loop because those schools did not easily allow for additional growth. Rezoning was not a viable option because of transportation issues. The recommendations related to middle schools were to build two additional schools in both the Spanish Springs/ Sun Valley area and the South Meadows area. Additionally, Sparks High School should be converted into a middle school, combining the student populations from both Sparks Middle School and Dilworth Middle School, which would then free-up those buildings for something else. A possible expansion of Billingshurst Middle School could be developed and then slight rezoning of the boundaries for Billingshurst, Clayton, and Traner Middle Schools could occur.

Mr. Cate asked what the optimal enrollment for middle schools was. Mr. DuFault indicated that smaller schools were generally better because of the physical and emotional changes the students were going through, but it would ultimately depend on the program because the students could be divided into smaller groups if there was a large enough enrollment. The District currently had different models for middle schools in terms of the grades and it would be up to the District to determine which model worked best for the students in the area.

Mr. Kazmierski wondered what the priority would be in terms of needs for the middle school recommendations. Mr. DuFault mentioned that a new school in the South Meadows area should be the first priority; however, the Spanish Springs/ Sun Valley

area would begin to see enrollment pressures about the same time.

Mr. Cate inquired as to what would happen to the projections and recommendations if the growth rate were to be above 1.7%. Mr. DuFault stated that the recommendations would have to be moved up by 5 years, meaning that the 5-year projections would occur within the next year or two and the 10-year projections would occur in about 5 years.

Mr. DuFault provided the information on the current and projected enrollment growth and recommendations for elementary schools. Close to half of all students in the District were in elementary schools. The current and projected pattern for enrollment growth for elementary schools was one of consistent growth throughout the District, though there would be less capacity concerns at schools within the McCarran Loop because that was not where the largest growth would be occurring. District-wide rezoning would not be a viable option; however, some spot rezoning could help alleviate capacity issues in certain locations. The recommendations for elementary schools were to place elementary schools outside of the McCarran Loop on multi-track, year-round calendars, which would ease the overcrowding by 25% because of the four different tracks. At least one new elementary school would be needed, but the location would depend on where the growth was occurring at the time of consideration. For those elementary schools within the McCarran Loop, the recommendation was to reinvest in the schools to allow for expansions of specialized programs, such as special education classrooms. Additionally, Dilworth and Sparks Middle Schools could be converted to elementary schools and Lincoln Park and Risley Elementary Schools used for other programs. Wooster High School could also be used for specialty programs at all school levels that would not be boundary driven.

Mr. Kazmierski wondered if there would be issues within the District having some elementary schools on multi-track, year-round calendars and other elementary schools on the current calendar. Mr. Dufault noted that the District had placed certain elementary schools on a multi-track calendar before when faced with overcrowding concerns. At that time it was somewhat problematic for families because there were only a few schools on that calendar, but if all elementary schools outside of the McCarran Loop were on the same calendar, more opportunities would be available to families because there would be a greater demand.

Mr. Peek remarked that there were many in the community with a negative perception of the multi-track calendar and that somehow the education students received on that calendar was inferior to a more traditional calendar. Mr. DuFault stated that a multi-track calendar allowed for a more consistent learning timeframe for students with the ability to adjust to the schedule. Since most of the elementary schools within the McCarran Loop had the greatest number of students with Individualized Education

Plans (IEPs), they would benefit more from remaining on a more traditional calendar because multi-track did put different challenges on students, such as when standardized testing occurred. Kristen McNeill, Deputy Superintendent, Washoe County School District, added that the multi-track calendar also allowed for additional opportunities and services for students, administrators, and teachers. For example, if a student were on a track that was on a break, they could be brought in for a program that would allow them to work on specific skills. Teachers would also be able to come in to substitute if they were off-track.

Mr. Peek mentioned he was concerned about the parity issues that could occur with having the elementary schools on different calendars. Mr. Etchart commented that the elementary schools within the McCarran Loop were also some of the smallest schools in terms of capacity and could not be placed on a multi-track calendar because of classroom space. The District had every intention of using the lessons learned from the last time it had schools on a multi-track calendar and correcting previous problems.

Mr. Koch asked if there were other school districts that had implemented a calendar where some elementary schools were on a traditional schedule and others on a multi-track schedule; and if so, was one schedule determined to be superior to the other in the eyes of the community over time. Mr. DuFault indicated that multi-track calendars were unique to school districts in the Southwest and Southeast. They were developed because of the rapid growth that had occurred during the economic boom and the districts were not able to build schools fast enough. It was difficult to speculate on if parents preferred one calendar over another because there were numerous factors parents considered when deciding where to send their children to school and the reasons for preferring one calendar over another.

Chairman Carey opened the meeting to public comment.

Colin Robertson noted that multi-track sounded more like a logistical solution to overcrowding. If the District had the ability to build more space, then multi-track would not be needed. Mr. DuFault stated that interpretation was correct.

Mr. Kazmierski wondered if parents had specific impressions of multi-track calendars. Mr. DuFault mentioned that there were no real generalizations on parents' perceptions of multi-track. There were parents in favor of the calendar and there were parents opposed to the calendar.

Mr. Sigstad observed that there would be an increased cost to the schools to go to the multi-track calendar. He wondered what that cost would be per student per year. Ms. McNeill indicated that the District had not broken those figures down to a per

pupil cost.

Mr. Kazmierski asked what the District would need to not have any schools to go on multi-track, year round calendars. Mr. Etchart stated that it would take about nine new elementary schools located throughout the District to not have any elementary school move to a multi-track calendar.

Mr. DuFault reviewed some of the other pressures facing the District related to overcrowding and capacity. One concern was that the trend line for IEPs was continuing to rise which created long-term needs for dedicated space at each school related to specialized educational programming. The area was anticipating faster growth than normal and the increase in revenue from taxes would not come until later. Additionally, there would be increased operational costs and equity concerns in some facilities. The timeline presented should be considered a guide and was based on not only enrollment projections, but which projects could or should be completed first. The costs for all recommendations presented was about \$835 million.

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson wondered if the trend line for IEPs was for students needing completely separate classrooms or if it was for the need for additional space for aides. Mr. DuFault expressed that there were different levels of need for students with IEPs, but with all IEPs there were additional staffing requirements and educational needs that required time be spent outside of a traditional classroom.

Chairman Carey wondered if the Board of Trustees had considered the recommendations presented and if they had made any decisions related to those recommendations. Ms. McNeill indicated that the Board had received the same presentation at a work session on October 5, 2015. They knew something had to be done to relieve the overcrowding and capacity problems facing the District and were considering all options and how those options would affect the families. They felt the recommendations presented by The Cuningham Group offered innovative concepts and appreciated the different ideas presented, but wanted to look at other options as well.

Chairman Carey asked if the District would be conducting additional studies related to overcrowding. Mr. Etchart remarked that the intent of having The Cuningham Group conduct the analysis was that a completely independent review of the issue could be presented to the community on the anticipated needs based on enrollment projections. The District would need to work with The Cuningham Group to assure the information related to cost was accurate for the area so the options could be presented in a comparable format. The District would then look at what had already been completed in terms of renovations and repairs to see how those would apply.

Conversations would continue and a draft plan developed by staff then presented to the Board. Ms. McNeill noted that the Board had been having regular updates on issues surrounding overcrowding at their meetings and would continue to do so moving forward.

Commissioner Berkbigler wondered if the amount in the presentation included the on-going amount of \$20 million the District had previously stated they required for repairs and renovations. Additionally, she wanted to know if there were any repairs or renovations that would have to be completed prior to any school moving onto a multi-track, year-round calendar. Mr. Etchart stated the projected costs from The Cuningham Group did not include the on-going cost of repairs and renovations for the District. It would be critical for the District to determine which projects would need to be completed at the schools that would go onto a multi-track calendar. The Capital Projects Department had developed a priority list of repairs for those schools most likely to go onto a multi-track calendar based on current District administrative regulations.

Mr. Kazmierski asked if the District was considering any of the options presented by The Cuningham Group. Ms. McNeill stated conversations were continuing and all options were being considered to develop the best plan for the District moving forward.

Mr. Stevens inquired as to the number of middle schools currently in the District with 6th grade. Ms. McNeill noted that about half of the middle schools did have 6th grade. Teachers liked to have students in one location for as long as possible so they were able to get to know the students better. It was also the preferred model in terms of testing because it was better to have a 3-year trend rather than a 2-year trend. Educationally the 6 – 8 model was preferred but the District was not currently in the position to implement that at all middle schools.

Mr. Stevens wondered if the District would be able to avoid moving elementary schools to multi-track if all middle schools used the 6 – 8 model. Mr. Etchart remarked that it would be the middle schools facing overcrowding and capacity issues next and moving 6th grade to some of them could create that pressure sooner. The District would need to look at how moving 6th grade would impact both the elementary and middle schools and if the grade would need to be moved back if there were additional overcrowding issues.

Mr. Sigstad asked about the cost of operating an elementary school on the traditional calendar and how the cost would change if moved to a multi-track calendar. Tom Ciesynski, Chief Financial Officer, Washoe County School District, remarked that there was not a single “standard” cost for operating an elementary school because there

were various factors and programs at the individual schools. Multi-track did cost the District about \$300,000 more per year per school, plus an initial up-front cost of about \$50,000 for additional storage for teachers when they were not in the schools.

d. Requests for future agenda items

Commissioner Berkbigler requested additional information on the costs between the District's information and the information provided by The Cuningham Group. It would also be important for the Committee to review any District plans on overcrowding so they could determine the amount needed.

Mr. Peek agreed the costs needed to be reflective of the area so a true comparison could be made.

Mr. Kazmierski requested that a "true" picture of the need be presented so the Committee and community would know the priorities and what would occur first, second, third, and so forth. He believed that kind of plan would present a clear picture of what needed to occur and how much it would cost.

Mr. Sigstad expressed concern over the Committee dictating what the Board and District could do with the funding over the next 10 years. He was unsure the Committee had the authority to tell the Board and District what they could do with the revenue. Mr. Kazmierski stressed that it would be important for those advocating for the ballot question to be able to tell voters what the money would be used for and where the money would be going. A discussion was held on if the Committee had the statutory authority to include where the funds from the question could be directed.

Mr. Kazmierski requested updated information on the District's bonding ability over the next 10 years so the Committee could see what the "base" figure would be.

Mr. Peek requested a presentation and information on if the current funding formula in Nevada had ever provided enough funds to properly fund what the school districts needed in terms of capital projects and the building of new schools.

4. Public Comment

John Everhart mentioned that the District could take different aspects from the recommendations presented and develop different options and related costs.

5. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to come before the members of the committee, Chairman

Carey declared the meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Shaun Carey, Chair