

MEMORANDUM

To: Ed Bourget, Ed Frenette
From: David Frieder
Project: Warwick Public Schools Comprehensive Master Plan
Re: Outreach Workshop #3
Distribution: (MF)

Date: 5/20/2015
Project No.: 15024

Below is a list of questions that were asked at the third Warwick Outreach Workshop at Toll Gate cafeteria along with a brief answer. Unless otherwise noted, all questions were answered by Ed Frenette.

Warwick Public Schools
Workshop III
May 18, 2015

Ed Frenette and Ed Bourget made a power point presentation that began with these points:

- Will need to make some choices tonight
- Hope we've established the idea that we're trying to get to an answer that will work best for Warwick
- Workshop I: Understanding Warwick's demographics
- Workshop II: Understanding the capacity analysis
- With decreasing enrollment, Warwick's over-capacity gets worse every year and subtracts from the dollars you have to send on education.
- The full power point presentation is available on line.

1. I found an error in the Toll Gate capacity analysis. I believe one of the classrooms is smaller than what you have listed.

We have published this report piece by piece, and will review with administration to check. We welcome input and corrections. This analysis contains area take-offs of over a thousand rooms, so it may not be perfect, but it was carefully done. We think it would be helpful if people reviewed their areas and report back any errors.

2. Elementary school parents would probably advocate for smaller class sizes as beneficial for learning. Is this still correct? Does technology make a difference, especially when children spend so much time in front of a screen? (Question from Committee Member Nadeau)

These are actually two questions; first the issue of class size and second the implications of technology. Speaking first to technology, the next generation's technology will always be different than this generation's. This has always been the case, but the rate of change is probably picking up speed. We really have no choice in the matter; we're just going to have to get used to it. When I graduated from architecture school, the technology

To: **Ed Bourget, Ed Frenette**
Date: **5/20/2015**

was drawing on yellow trace. Now the technology is a computer program called Sketch-up. I have to use both technologies to keep moving and the students and teachers and parents will have to keep moving too.

On the issue of class size it might be good to look at private schools since they tend to have smaller student bodies. Just as a matter of efficiency, private schools never have a class size of less than 12-15 and they often have classes the same size as public schools. In general, the best class size is from 22 to 25 children. So no matter what resources you have, you will need RIDE reimbursement and RIDE sets the standards. Most schools in Rhode Island are performing well within that class size range.

3. Can you explain why some class usage is at 85%?

Students in the secondary level move from classroom to classroom and there's no practical way to use classrooms 100% of the time. RIDE says that the maximum achievable rate of utilization is 85%.

4. The master plan says it will cut costs by closing schools so we save on insurance and heating. The problem is we still have the buildings, so we're not really saving money.

Warwick is asking for advice on how to best spend your dollars, but we're not policemen, we recommend, we don't enforce.

Jennifer Ahearn adds: Once we close a facility we relinquish control of the facility to the building's owner, the City of Warwick. First we mothball the building then return it to its owner.

5. Is there capacity parity between the elementary schools, the junior high schools and the high schools?

There is not parity across the district; some schools have higher usage than the others, with regard to enrollment and capacity. Some children are living out of their district, but we need to consolidate first, and then re-district. Consolidation can be based on where the children are and not on the condition of the schools. We think there are plans where we can support the neighborhoods, the children, and the schools.

6. I understand the baseline costs for asset protection, but I'm struggling with criteria for going into next level of consideration to help in freeing up resources. The operating costs for Aldrich and Gorton is \$250,000 each building per year. We also want to reduce redundant salary costs. (Anthony Ferrucci)

The costing criteria will be all encompassing. If you close a building, then you don't have to repair it. We're going to benchmark faculty and staff against those for the state and the nation. Then we'll take the delta of where you are and the average. We will consider the costs of labor, facilities, and transportation.

7. Why is there a three high school solution?

We thought there might be some advantages to three campuses versus two. You end up with same neighborhoods, end up with the same teams, and there's less change for the neighborhoods. We're not selling it; we're offering it as an alternative. The costs of this alternative will come out similar to the others or within 10-15%. The choice is up to Warwick, but I would support the better educational outcome. In both cases of secondary consolidation, you go from 7 schools down to 5.

8. We all want to know how much these will cost. (Jennifer Ahearn)

To: **Ed Bourget, Ed Frenette**
Date: **5/20/2015**

We will look at the costs next week. This will be a fire drill because there is a huge amount of data, but we will make it as definitive and clear as we possibly can. Our job is to make the criteria clear and understandable, but we're doing this study twice as fast as usual. Going thru 26 separate facilities was the longest task item, and we had to wait for the snow to melt before we could go up on the roofs. We've completed our facilities report, but it takes at least two weeks to get a construction cost estimate.

9. Will you look at the secondary schools and their structures, elementary schools too?

The short answer is "yes." Will do our best to give cost estimates for all the repairs you need to make. We will have these four alternative master plans estimated. After this has been presented, then we will look at what would happen if we consolidate the elementary schools. There are a number of ways of thinking about the elementary schools. A 27% excess elementary school capacity would have any other district concerned, but your excess capacity in the secondary schools is even greater.

10. I had thought that we should start consolidation with the elementary schools since the younger kids are usually more adaptable. But now I agree that any consolidation should be top grades down. I want whatever has the least impact to students in district. (Jennifer Ahearn)

Once we make the secondary school decision, the elementary schools will be easier. We would never recommend consolidating grades K through 12 in one year. Why would you take a break in between consolidations? You have to learn in the meantime, digest the results then adjust and make any changes.

11. How would we make the high schools into 7-12 schools?

Generally, the high schools are in the best shape and they all have a fair amount of land, parking, and separate entrances will be possible. They're gangly, buildings, fairly easy to sub-divide, and chop into pieces. At this point, we don't know how the numbers will fall.

12. The students in grade 10 have already been consolidated, so they've already been impacted. Now we're looking at potentially closing a high school. We need to wait for these kids to graduate and then consolidate and bring up the 6th graders.

Of the four alternatives we're considering, there's only one alternative that closes a high school. Just remember that I won't be making the choice. That belongs to the people of Warwick.

13. When you close down schools, what will happen to their grounds?

The land is returned to the City, just like the building. The City could re-use the land.

14. What is your vision for a magnet school, given Warwick's population?

I've designed an environmental learning center that offers sustainable education. I've done schools for the arts, and you can teach physics thru dance. I've also designed public, private, and charter schools. Magnet schools typically go more in depth in one particular area. Magnet schools also deal with the issue of relevance. Sometimes kids don't understand how what they're learning is relevant to their lives. Warwick can choose a

To: **Ed Bourget, Ed Frenette**
Date: **5/20/2015**

focus for the high schools that give the kids more depth and more relevance. There could be a business administration focus on one of the schools that could develop in concert with the administration.

15. Using Classical High School in Providence as an example, is STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) a viable option?

We suggested magnet schools for parity and educational enrichment. Nothing could be better than making education more relevant and deeper. Yes, STEM is absolutely a viable option, it's short dollars and mostly involves political will.

16. You mentioned the excess capacity of 26% at the ES and in a decline in enrollment. How do we narrow down any elementary school consolidation without financials?

Asset protection, health and safety should be the baseline cost and included in all the plans.

17. Why would we have 3 magnet schools as opposed to 2?

It's a reasonable alternative. My job is not to pander to what I think you want, my job is to stretch you. By offering middle schools and magnet schools, we want to stretch you and get you thinking.

18. I'm interested in the Super Schools alternative. You could build all new, or you could save an existing high school and add onto it. You could do the same with a Super middle school; that could be another alternative.

That's a good idea and we'll add it to our list. We need to give you lots of alternatives so you can choose the one that's best for Warwick. I would be shocked if you threw away any of your high schools.

19. What about property values when you close schools?

If you are strategic about which ones you close, there should be no impact. Based on our demographic, we know where the kids are, but we will take your thought and research the impact.

20. Google says that if you close a school, it cuts 10% of the property value.

If we improve the level of instruction and education, they will be perceived as better schools and people will want to move into the city and buy houses, thereby increasing the property values. (Jennifer Ahearn)

21. What about bigger class sizes?

We're currently working for a 7 school district and six of those schools are quite old but very well maintained. If schools are well run and maintained, people will want to move into a district. I have worked in lots of schools with 22 to 24 kids in a class. The best performing districts in Rhode Island have that many kids in a classroom.

22. I understand needing to close schools because of declining enrollment, but we haven't spoken about all day Kindergarten. That will increase in-migration. We haven't spoken about Pre-Kindergarten. We need to attract people to Warwick and we can use all our elementary school space.

To: **Ed Bourget, Ed Frenette**
Date: **5/20/2015**

Full day versus half day Kindergarten represents maximum difference of 4% in the district. When we meet next week, we'll tell you what the capacity of all these schools will be. We will factor in all day Kindergarten. We're not trying to sweep anything under the rug.

23. About the magnet schools; if we have two high schools, can we only have two magnet programs? Or can we have more?

I've designed a high school with four different magnets within that high school. This subject will be worked out with the School Committee and the Administration.

24. If magnet schools become a choice, students can travel across district. They will need bussing. But if we have three high schools, enrollment gets lower enrollment and Advanced Placement classes get reduced. Warwick is not that big and I want to offer as much as possible.

Those are all good points, but we can't really discuss it at this point in our process. We will add those points to our criteria to make sure that offerings will increase to students at the secondary level.

25. We creatively use some of the empty space at the elementary schools, for instance, for science programs.

We're making room for the curriculum as currently defined plus the enrichments already on the table.

26. We don't want to reduce space so much that we're crowded.

The way we will plan it is that all grade levels will end up with at least 10% excess capacity. The 1 to 1 approach on technology actually reduces the amount of space you need because there won't be computer rooms.

27. What if the 10% isn't enough?

At some point, you're going to ask RIDE for reimbursement and RIDE won't allow more than 10% over capacity. There's no future for Warwick schools without RIDE reimbursement. You'll have to tighten up your schools and reduce your over-capacity. We will pick 3 to 5 years out as a target population for the Master Plan projections, and your population will continue to drop after that. 10% over is more than enough, particularly with drop in population. Don't fear that we will tighten up too much. By the way, I don't think of RIDE or U.S. Department of Education as Big Brother. There's been a lot of research on educational methods and standards and they have a good idea of how to deliver education

28. I have 4 kids in schools and want to keep the integrity in the schools and I want the schools to be part of a neighborhood.

Whichever plan Warwick chooses, it will be Warwick's choice. The four master plan alternatives we have are: 1. Asset protection, health and safety, 2. Two high schools and two junior high schools, 3. Three High School-Junior High Schools at current High School locations, 4. One Super High School and one super Junior High School to serve the entire District, location to be determined.

29. Do we have the Mayor's support? The Schools don't own the buildings.

To: **Ed Bourget, Ed Frenette**

Date: **5/20/2015**

The Mayor wants to help the School Department deal with the problem if the Mayor is sure that the buildings will be well used. He doesn't want to re-furbish buildings that won't be fully used. All the elected officials need to get behind whatever Master Plan you decide.

The Mayor has said that if we consolidate, he would leave us level funded, that we could put the savings back into education. Some of these Master Plans will require bonding. (Jennifer Ahearn)

30. The total principal and interest on bonded indebtedness is \$1.2 million. The City has forced the Schools to pay interest on the bonds. I want the City to pay bonded indebtedness on school improvements.

If we have a vision that everyone wants to move towards, I believe that some of these tripping points will be diminished. We need to have our house in order.

31. The City never released the bond for school improvements. We're still waiting for our money. Warwick took 5% cut in budget and never restored it.

We have to tighten up on this discussion. Our next step is to pick two alternative plans and one preferred plan. We must focus like a laser.

32. We're going to vote?

The School Committee will vote on the Master Plan and then you voters will hold them accountable.

33. When you get down to these 2 Master Plans are actually going to name schools?

The plans will name the secondary schools first. Elementary school consolidation will come later. We will have the elementary school numbers in but not names of any schools to be consolidated. At that time, this will be done based on where the children are, not on the condition of the school building itself.

34. When is the next meeting time?

This Thursday night, at Veterans Auditorium, you can hear Ed Frenette's presentation and add comments. This will be an open public meeting to present information only. The next School Committee Outreach meeting will be next Wednesday, May 27 here at Toll Gate. (Jennifer Ahearn)

35. I have kids in Warwick and I have a niece in a magnet school in Tampa. They can be competitive and raise the achievement level. I like hearing the perspective from somewhere outside of Warwick, Rhode Island. We're not doing any of our kids a service if we don't listen. Warwick not unique. He knows, he's done this a million times. It's not easy and it's not what we want to hear, but everything rides on what we decide to do for our kids. We must go forward. Doing nothing is not an option.

This is not supposed to be easy. You need to be passionate, you need to be involved, and you need to do something for your kids.