



## **Strategic Facilities Committee Meeting #1 Minutes of April 10, 2019**

Facilitator: David Lever

Committee Members Present: Patrick Damon  
Karen DeVore  
Steven Kauffman  
Tracie Miller  
Kevin Null  
Carissa Rodeheaver  
William Swift  
Richard Wesolowski

Guests: Barbara Baker, Superintendent  
Brandon Hoover, Board Attorney  
Matthew Paugh, Board President  
Katherine Catulle, Student Member of the Board

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Dr. Lever called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m.

### **I. Introductions**

Dr. Lever, committee members, and guests provided brief introductions. Committee members shared their reasons for serving on the committee.

### **II. Background of the Comprehensive and Strategic Facilities Plan**

Dr. Lever stated that the Garrett County Board of Education began the process for a strategic plan when the County Commissioners requested a 5 year plan in 2017. The Board developed the framework for the RISE (Reforming, Innovating, & Strengthening for Excellence) Strategic Plan and conducted a SWOT analysis with observations on the top strategic issues. The Board stated that they would not close or consolidate schools. They also removed the option for a single high school. The RISE Plan Committee proposed possible grade band alignment options.

The Board decided at that time to hire a consulting firm to look at present strategic options and other possible options before moving forward with strategic planning, and to continue to seek community engagement during the process. They initially requested proposals for comprehensive strategic planning services, but then decided to limit the scope by working with a consultant to complete a comprehensive and strategic facilities plan.

Dr. Lever discussed the issues the school system faces, including disparities in curriculum, enrollment, special services, etc. He spoke about the geographic challenges the county faces including distance,

weather, and topography. He also spoke about the utilization discrepancies in the schools and the history of declining enrollment. He stated all of these factors can lead to inequity in educational opportunities for the students. Dr. Lever also shared that GCPS has the seventh oldest school buildings in the state although they have been well maintained.

Dr. Lever stated that the school system has experienced declining enrollment, however, right now the enrollment appears to have stabilized. Dr. Lever shared a summary of the “Estimated Maryland Total Population by Age Group” reports for 2013 through 2017, which show a 2.5% decline in the younger population age categories that support public school enrollments, and a corresponding increase in the older age categories. This demographic shift was greater in Garrett County than similar shifts in Maryland as a whole or in northwestern Maryland.

He stated the strategic plan should outline the direction and vision for Garrett County Public Schools for the next five years and beyond. The completed strategic plan should help the Board make future decisions for the school system that are aligned with its mission, vision, and goals.

Dr. Lever stated the committee will work independently from the Board and the Board will have to decide in November on whether to accept the recommendations or not. He stated that while the Board had removed school closures, school consolidations, and the one high school options from consideration during the beginning stages of their strategic plan, the committee may still look at these options in their research and discussions.

### **III. Committee Members Expectations**

The committee members stated their expectations and goals for the committee work. The following priorities were expressed by the members:

- Instruction
- Staffing
- Systematic sustainability
- Equity
- Technology and Resources
- Cost of Ownership / Efficiencies
- Properly defined process and accountability
- Facilities

### **IV. Proposed Planning Process**

Dr. Lever discussed the planning phases and events for the committee. The committee discussed the events and determined the corresponding dates.

#### **a. Committee Information Workshop and Research**

At an all-day workshop scheduled for April 25, 2019, the committee will receive information on various topics, including but not limited to school system and county finances, enrollment projections, facilities and the capital program, and county demographics and economic development opportunities.

In addition, Dr. Lever asked the Committee to consider areas of research that should be investigated. Possible topics include:

- Grade band configurations: educational or other advantages;

- Use of distance and online learning to mitigate geographic challenges;
- Behavioral issues that affect instruction, particularly the increase in drug-affected children.

Dr. Lever asked the committee to provide any other areas that they would like to research.

**b. Community Listening Sessions**

The committee will hold three sessions to listen to the concerns and observations of community members. The sessions will be held in the northern, southern, and central parts of the county.

May 7, 2019 North County (school TBD)

May 8, 2019 Garrett College

May 9, 2019 South County (school TBD)

Interim Committee Meetings will follow via teleconference and will be approximately an hour and a half in duration.

**c. Planning Objectives and Planning Options Workshops**

At two workshops in June the committee will brainstorm ideas, will identify its planning objectives, and will develop a list of planning options. The committee will subsequently prioritize the options and reduce the list to a manageable and reasonable number.

June 18, 2019 Planning Objectives Workshop Garrett College

June 20, 2019 Planning Options Workshop Garrett College

Interim Committee Meetings will follow via teleconference.

**d. Community Feedback Sessions**

The committee will release the draft recommendations at the beginning of September for the public and Board to review. The Committee will request feedback on the draft recommendations at three community sessions:

September 17, 2019 South County (school TBD)

September 18, 2019 Garrett College

September 19, 2019 North County (school TBD)

**e. Board of Education Presentation**

The Committee will present their recommendations at the November 12, 2019 Board of Education Meeting.

Dr. Lever stated that the committee will determine the dates of interim meetings and summer meetings via doodle polls. He asked the members to try to be at all of the meetings, workshops and community meetings, as much as feasible.

**V. Protocols and Logistics**

**a. Selection of Chair**

The members decided against appointing a chair for the committee. They instead recognized Dr. Lever as the Facilitator for the committee.

**b. Meeting protocols**

The committee members discussed the meeting formalities and chose not to record or videotape the meetings. The meetings however will be open to the public, and an opportunity for public comment will be provided at the end of each meeting. Minutes will be also be

available for view by the public after approval by the committee. The minutes will be a summary of the meeting and not a transcription.

**c. Open Meetings Requirements**

Mr. Brandon Hoover, Attorney for the Garrett County Board of Education, provided the committee with an overview of the Maryland Open Meetings Act to ensure that the members comply with the requirements. Mr. Hoover provided the reasons for closing a meeting, however, the committee does not plan to hold any closed sessions. Mr. Hoover also indicated that email communications will be accessible to the public via a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, and that committee members may therefore wish to establish a unique email address to conduct committee business.

**d. Rules of Order**

The committee decided not to adopt a formal mission statement or rules of order.

**e. Communications**

The committee discussed proper communications to the public via press releases, website and social media announcements. Dr. Lever stated that an online tool and committee email account will be available for the public to provide feedback throughout the process. Online comments will not be responded to, unless they contain misrepresentations or misinformation that should be corrected quickly.

**f. Name of the Committee**

The committee has chosen to retain the name Strategic Facilities Committee.

**g. Final Report and Presentation**

The Committee will provide their final report with recommendations to the Board at the November 12, 2019 Board of Education Meeting.

**VI. Adjournment**

Carissa Rodeheaver made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Patrick Damon seconded the motion. The committee unanimously approved the adjournment of the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.