

Morton 709 Board of Education

Minutes of the Committee Meeting of the Whole: Strategic Facilities Planning

May 23, 2023

The Board of Education of Morton Unit School District 709 held the meeting on May 23, 2023, at the Morton Education and Administration Center to discuss district facilities, needs, and requirements to plan for the future.

REGULAR MEETING

Call to Order and Roll Call –

President Tim Braker called the Regular Meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

Members present: Mr. Tim Braker, Dr. David Cross, Dr. Diane Krall, Mrs. Amanda Leman, Tom Neeley, Mr. Andrew Roth, and Mr. Jerry Rudd.

Approve Consent Agenda–

A President Braker asked for a motion to accept the consent agenda as presented. A motion was made by Dr. Cross, second by Mr. Rudd, that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda as Presented.

- Approve Personnel Report
- Approve Liability Insurance Renewal
- Approve Overnight/Out of State SkillsUSA National Competition for MHS
- Approve Board Calendar 2023-24
- Approve Resolution for Non-Re-Employment of Educational Support Staff 2023-24
- Approve Bethel-Lutheran Rental Contract for the 2023-2024 School Year

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0

Motion carried.

Facilities Discussion–

The purpose of the meeting is to strategically plan for the vision of our programming and facility needs, and to consider the specific projects or upgrades, in both the near and distant future, to address those needs.

The Committee recognized the 15-Year Facilities Maintenance Plan that helps keep our buildings well maintained. The plan is subject to change if there is a larger capital project that needs to take priority. The plan gets amended and changed yearly, and the highest priority items take precedence. The annual reassessment allows things to be moved up or down on the scheduled improvements based on need and finances. There can be a 1-2 million dollar fluctuation in what is needed in any given fiscal year. The summer weeks are the primary time to schedule the work. Need, priority, and funding are key components in facilities decisions.

Programming Needs and Concerns—

- **Early Childhood:** Early childhood is currently housed at Grundy. They are full. 6 sections use 3 classrooms and the need is growing. The potential for state funding is unlikely.
- **Morton Academy:** We rent a building from the Center for Youth and Family Solutions (CYFS) for 36,000 annually. Only 5.5 of the 18 students learning at MA students are housed at Guardian Angel. The rent could potentially increase, as it already has in the past. It would be a goal to bring as many outplaced students back home, whenever our programs can meet their needs. We have recently turned down tuition students from smaller nearby schools due to lack of room in our programs. We have student outplaced in Autism programs and at Schramm. A few will remain outplaced, but any we can bring back get the benefit or
- **Life Academy:** The Life Academy and PAES Lab provide needed programing for the students they serve, preparing them for life beyond High School.
- **Industrial Technology (Trades) Education Growth:** The program is growing, performing well, and providing much needed introductions to the trades and some of the high level technology fields.

Space Concerns and Growth: The Board unanimously sees the need for more space for housing our current programming and some programs are growing.

- **Industrial Technology (Trades) Education Growth:** The Board recognized the need to continue growing and supporting the SkillsUSA classrooms and other trade related education.
- **Student Support Services (Special Education):** Programing is out of space with potential growth.

Facilities Options and Concerns:

Morton High School:

- Title IX requirements at MHS include addressing inequality in the locker rooms and Girls Bathrooms.
- Other Potential MHS Upgrades include a new Canopy Entrance, New Gymnasium, Additional Classrooms/ Weight Rooms, and Tennis Court Bathrooms (Est. \$150k - \$200k)
 - The renovations would increase the sense of welcome to our buildings and show we value education. There are some utilities challenges that would need to be figured out related to water/sewage.
 - In 15 years we may consider a new High School, but not at this time.

Jefferson School: Jefferson continues to have upgrades including three levels on one wing this year, and three levels on the other wing next year. The Board and Community are invested in Jefferson School has great masonry and character. We are still invested in Jefferson.

- Critical and eventual needs (gym floor, heating system, etc.)
- The heating systems will need work at some point.

Other Properties:

- The District Office has approximately 4000 Sq. feet in the old Sanctuary.
- The Board will consider Existing/Vacant Commercial Buildings if they are feasible.

Short-term and Long-term Needs and Action Plans: The Board discussed where to prioritize.

- Keach has prepared for MHS some architectural design options over the years. Some included a facelift for the canopy entrance as well as Locker Room renovations to bring equality to the locker room spaces. The Board will seek more feedback from MHS leadership. The least expensive design would still be an improvement in the entrance and the locker rooms, and may work within our resources.
- **Building additions on existing properties:**
 - **Grundy** – Grundy has the most room to add on. The ECE program is already there, although it was previously at Lincoln. An addition that housed the SSS needs be beneficial.
 - **ECE, Morton Academy & Life Academy** in one place has benefits – but it would have to be the right location or a current building with adequate room for that kind of addition, like Grundy or Lincoln. Life Skills post-graduation might be able to use a house for their educational needs if it were ADA assessable.
 - **Lettie Brown** does not have room to add on.
 - **Lincoln** – There is room to add on to Lincoln. Perhaps with a separate entrance for some of the ECE and Morton Academy needs. It is a possibility.
 - **Student Support Services:** The need for special services continues to increase.
 - **If we build, we want to do it right.** 10 Classrooms with restrooms and hallways - \$400 a foot. Although we are behind the Cropper Study predictions by about 50 students, Lincoln keeps growing and currently has three classrooms at every grade level not including the SSS related classrooms.
 - **Growing Technology and Student Opportunities:** Growing technology in the classroom requires space, too. Daily Physical Education came out of the last projects in the grade schools and it has been good for student. The Board wants to meet the needs of all students, while being budget conscious with taxpayer dollars.

Going Forward: Purchase, Renovate or Build New Buildings? We need to look at both sides of the ledger as we proceed. The benefits of each option need to be weighed carefully.

- A large enough off-sight facility might hold everything.
- The right Commercial or Vacant Property would be of interest.
- Our 4th Avenue Farm – what is the best use of that property to maximize the potential?

Financing Options: The Board will consult with Lisa Kowalski, CFO

- **The 4th Avenue Farm Land-** Develop or sell? The farmland is not going to work for a school because of the cost to develop it. The Board discussed that they would consider a sale of that property or even trade, if it was the right land. Solar has pursued us but it ties up the land for a long time. A sale of the acreage would provide some resources for other needed facilities, additions or renovations.
- **Working Cash Bonds:** We can look at the timing with the paying off of bonds, Lisa will research.

- **Reserves** – We can afford the High School Project.

Fiscal Responsibility: The Board feels strongly about fiscal responsibility to the taxpayers. Any new building would require a referendum under the law. The Board views a referendum as a way for the people of our community to give their input. Additions to existing buildings do not require a referendum, and can meet some urgent needs within our means.

The Board will follow up with financial discussions to determine the next step in facilities management, improvements, and maintenance.

Adjournment –

President Braker called for adjournment. A motion by Mr. Neeley, and seconded by Dr. Cross.

Voice Vote: 7 Yea Nay 0

Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Recorded by,

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Smith, Recording Secretary

Jerry Rudd, Secretary

Tim Braker, President