

**Huntington School PTO  
Meeting Summary  
January 19, 2017**

**Attendees:**

*Board members*

Leeann Wiess  
Meghan Vitale  
Emily Pascale

*Administrators*

Mrs. Harlow, Principal

*Parents/staff/public:* About 22 people (including  
Common Councilor Nader Maroun)

**Welcome**

Leeann welcomed everyone.

**Board member reports**

Leeann reported that karate is going well. They are happy to be back after the break.

We are continuing to collect Box Tops. We just received a check for about \$270. Please continue to send in your Box Tops! Ms. Stroman's class won for November, and Ms. Long's class won for December.

We had Moe's and 5 Below fundraisers in December. We haven't received our check from 5 Below yet. We received a check from Moe's for about \$56.

**New business and upcoming events**

Next meeting is Thursday, February 9. Gertrude Hawk fundraiser is scheduled to start February 1. Bingo Night is scheduled for March 10.

Leeann noted that if families would prefer not to participate in fundraisers but would still like to support the PTO, we always welcome donations. Donations can be allocated to specific class accounts or to the general account.

We'll be looking for prizes for Bingo Night. Email us if you would like to help with planning for the event.

**Building renovations presentation**

Dean DeSantis, Chief of Operations for the district, spoke briefly and introduced the other staff from the district in attendance as well as the consultant team that is working on the renovations.

Other district staff in attendance included: Linda Mulvey, Chief Academic Officer; Jason Huyck and Carmen Malone, Facilities Department.

Consultant staff in attendance included: Lisa, King + King Architects; Sean Griffin and Chris Gray, Turner Construction; Tim and Pat, Appel Osborne Landscape Architecture.

There were also staff from the finance departments of both the City of Syracuse and the School District.

Chris Gray opened the presentation and explained Turner Construction's role as the project manager. They have oversight of the scope, schedule, and budget for all of the Phase II JSCB renovation teams, of which Huntington is one. There are seven teams involved in the Phase II construction at various schools in the district. Each team is examining the needs for the building and assessing what should be included in a scope of work for each project. Turner is responsible for overall communication and ensuring that the project moves along on schedule. Mr. Gray stated that they are in the "preconstruction" phase right now.

The total project budget for Huntington is \$22.5 million.

Needs fall into three categories: infrastructure (such as windows and pool lockers), program (such as Project Lead the Way facilities), and safety/accessibility.

Staff from the landscape architecture firm spoke about the proposed site design. They observed arrival and dismissal at the school and concluded that there are numerous conflicts between different traffic streams (parents, buses, walkers) under the current configuration, with afternoons being especially difficult.

The team's preferred option for the site redesign was displayed. They considered other options, but feel this best addresses the concerns (note: other options were not available for viewing at the meeting. It was not clear if these options were developed into designs similar to the "preferred option.") Under the proposed design, the lot on the west side of the building (to the right when facing the front of the building) would be restricted to staff parking only. There would be a bus loop in front of the school, and the curb radius would be expanded for buses entering site. The team tried to find a design that would maintain the visual symmetry of the front of building. There would be no loss of parking spaces for staff under the proposal (through no expansion, either), and about 20 spaces for parent pick-up/drop-off would be added. The parking lot on the east side of the building would include a parent loop and parking. The bus loop could be used for deliveries during the day.

The proposed plan includes a reconstructed playground (in the current location).

Ms. Jones asked about walkers: where would they be directed when leaving the building? The consultant responded by explaining that there would be a crosswalk through the bus loop in the center of the school, but walkers would cross Sunnycrest Road at the current crosswalk locations. Ms. Brigati asked about the median of the proposed parent loop: would this be raised, landscaped, or just paint? Consultant responded that the current proposal is just a painted area, flush with the pavement. Ms. Gannon asked about buses, noting that the schematic only shows 12, but we actually have 14. She expressed concern that all the buses will not fit in the proposed loop. Mr. DeSantis noted that additional buses could be staged on Sunnycrest Road, or the proposed layout could be modified to accommodate additional buses.

Meghan Vitale asked again about the flow of walkers leaving building: will they have to cross through buses parked in the bus loop? Mrs. Harlow responded that this will be matter of timing at dismissal, and she is still working with the team on this aspect of the design. Mr. Malone noted that there will be some fencing to direct students to crosswalks. Ms. Vitale also noted that Sunnycrest Road in front of the school was widened some years ago, yet is signed as a no parking zone, and she asked if this block of Sunnycrest Road will be restored to its proper width (with an expanded sidewalk area) since it does not appear that the design proposes to utilize this area for bus loading or parent pick-up/drop-off. The consultant responded that there is no plan to change the width of Sunnycrest Road because it was observed that parents park there during the team's field visit; however, it was acknowledged that parking is actually prohibited in this area. A few parents noted that they use this area for morning drop-off, though they do not park there.

Councilor Maroun suggested that the project team talk to Centro about rerouting the Sunnycrest bus during dismissal time to reduce conflicts. He also stated that the team needs to work with the city to identify where parking should or should not be, and what the streetscape should look like. Safety is imperative. Councilor Maroun also asked about the timeframe for the work. Mr. Gray responded that the approvals still need to be obtained from the State Education Department for the construction, and the team intends to start the approvals process in April. They expect that procurement will happen in the last quarter of 2017, and construction will begin in spring 2018. Councilor Maroun stated that the city is starting the budget process in a few months and if city money is needed for street improvements, those conversations should start happening now (June is the start of the city's fiscal year, and the budget that will be adopted will run through July 2018, overlapping with the proposed building renovation). Mr. Malone stated that the team has already met with city police, fire, and parks and will continue to coordinate with those departments. Also, city finance staff were in attendance at the meeting.

Lisa, from King + King Architects, spoke about the proposed changes inside the building. The team proposes reconfiguring the main office area to include the new single entry point. There will be a new elevator near the front entrance. Bathrooms and pool locker rooms will be upgraded to meet Americans with Disability Act (ADA) standards and will receive new fixtures. A new loading dock will be added outside the cafeteria to separate the incoming food area from the trash removal area. The basement classrooms will receive ADA upgrades (including raising the floors) and new windows. Basement bathrooms will also be upgraded. On the second floor, carpet will be removed and bathrooms will receive ADA upgrades. The art room and adjacent classroom (currently Ms. Kalet's room) will be reconfigured into three classrooms.

Ms. Mayberry asked for confirmation that carpet will be removed from ALL classrooms on the second floor. This was confirmed. She also asked what will happen with the existing elevator. The consultant responded that this elevator will remain. Ms. Gannon asked if an additional staff bathroom would be added; this is not in the plans.

Ms. Whitney asked if air conditioning would be expanded to the entire building, noting that temperatures in some rooms exceed 90 degrees in the late fall and early summer months. The project team responded that this is not in the plans due to the high anticipated cost and the limited budget.

Leeann Wiess stated that the heat in the classrooms is a safety issue, and safety is the priority. Emily Pascale asked if a cost estimate was developed for air conditioning, and what items from the current proposal would need to be eliminated in order to include air conditioning. The team could not provide those details, but stated that they will consider that comment and develop a response. The team members noted that all new windows will be clear and operable. A parent asked if ceiling fans could be installed in the classrooms, and the team stated they could consider this. Ms. Mayberry asked if shades will be room-darkening, noting that this would aid in the use of technology in the classrooms. The team indicated that they will be room-darkening, very similar to what was recently installed at H.W. Smith school.

Ms. Jones asked if handicapped parking spaces will be provided. The consultants indicated that two handicapped spaces will be added in front, two in back, and one in the pool area to meet current standards.

Ms. Gannon stated that there are currently more staff than available parking spaces, and this doesn't even include student teachers and foster grandparents that are in the building regularly. Mr. Malone stated that the team can revisit the parking demand numbers.

The consultant continued to describe the proposed changes. The front entry will be at-grade to facilitate accessibility. There will be a secure vestibule, and visitors will have to go through the main office to gain entry into the rest of the building (but there will be a bypass for students at dismissal). Light wells for windows will be added to basement classrooms.

Ms. Pascale asked when the construction would start, if approved – in Spring 2018? Mr. Gray answered that the bulk of work will be done over the summer, and probably take two summers to complete. Ms. Vitale asked for confirmation that students will not be moved to swing space; the project team confirmed this, stating that students will not be moved out of the building.

A parent asked why the plans don't consider moving the playground farther back from the building and expanding parking into that area. The project team indicated that this was not considered because the property adjacent to the rear of the school belongs to the city, not the school district. Ms. Pascale stated that graffiti is an issue on the playground and asked if any consideration was given to moving the playground to a more visible location. The project team stated that the space does not exist elsewhere on the school's property to relocate the playground. Mr. DeSantis also noted that additional security cameras would be installed around the playground.

Ms. Vitale stated that it appears that a lot of decisions about the renovation plans have already been made by the district and consultants, without parent input, and although she appreciates the information provided tonight, she felt that the priorities of the parents and staff should have been solicited earlier in the process.

Ms. Wiess stated that there was a plan developed about six or seven years ago to have bus loop in the rear, and she wondered what became of that plan. Mr. DeSantis indicated that space is very limited around the building, and the plan to create a loop in the rear (possibly including access via Caleb

Avenue) would have required the use of property that belongs to the city. Mrs. Harlow reiterated that the use of Caleb Avenue is not feasible. Ms. Wiess then stated that the final plan presented years before had been to have buses enter on the east side of the school and loop around the back of the building, exiting via the driveway next to the pool. Mr. Malone indicated that the old plan had limitations, including the very narrow driveway next to the pool and the encroachment of structures in private lots adjacent to the school property. He indicated there would also be safety conflicts with the pool doors under that scenario, and the school must maintain egress through those pool doors. Ms. Vitale, as well as other parents, then stated that the side driveway next to the pool is how the neighborhood accesses the playground, and asked if it could that be improved, possibly with vehicles prohibited, while still retaining the required egress areas from the pool. The project team indicated that they would consider this possibility.

A parent asked if classrooms could be reassigned so that all the younger elementary students stay on the first floor, and the older students stay on the second floor. She felt that the current configuration is dangerous, with the young children on the stairs while the older students are trying to change classes. A parent also asked if there are plans to renovate or move the pre-K classrooms. Mrs. Harlow indicated that this could be the topic of a future discussion.

Ms. Mayberry asked if there are other schools in the district with a bus loop in front of the building. Ms. Mulvey indicated that H.W. Smith has a similar bus loop, and that it functions very well; arrival and dismissal are very controlled. Mrs. Harlow indicated that if all students are dismissing out of the front of the building, then all of the staff can be assigned to one location as well. Additional thought will need to be given to the logistics of dismissal, and the administrative team will need to coordinate with the transportation department.

Ms. Pascale asked if what was presented tonight is the final plan, or if there is opportunity for the parent and staff comments to be incorporated into the design. Mr. Gray indicated that the project is still in the development phase, so there is still opportunity to make modifications based on comments from this meeting. Ms. Pascale asked when we would see a revised plan; the project team indicated they would continue to communicate with the PTO and the building administration but no specifics for presenting a revised plan were given.

Ms. Brigati asked if the single, central point of entry is “a must” in the design and if the center crosswalk, as shown on the plan, must be at that location. She has safety concerns about this location.

Ms. Gannon asked if the windows will have screens. The team indicated that the windows would have screens.

Ms. Vitale asked what other outreach is planned for this project, and stated that the PTO Board would be happy to help coordinate future meetings of the PTO as well as coordinate with the Eastwood Neighborhood Association and Tomorrow’s Neighborhoods Today. The project team did not provide specifics on future outreach.

Ms. Wiess asked if any consideration had been given to single-stall bathrooms, as were installed in H.W. Smith. Mr. Malone indicated that that design was unique to H.W. Smith, and Mr. DeSantis stated that those bathrooms have proven problematic; “gang-style” bathrooms are much better from an administrator’s standpoint (in regard to safety and security). The team is proposing moving the sinks into the hallways, similar to the current configuration of bathrooms near the pre-K classes, to reduce the amount of disruptive behavior in the bathrooms.

Ms. Brigati asked if the student lockers in the hallways will be replaced. The team indicated that this is not in the plans (only the pool lockers will be renovated).

There were no additional questions for the project team. All present thanked the team for their time.

### **Funding requests**

Ms. Wiess read Mr. Cohen’s request for reimbursement for pizzas that he purchased for students on the evening of the Christmas concert, in the amount of \$54. No one objected; the motion passed.

### **Administrative reports**

Mrs. Harlow indicated that she did not have anything to add.

### **Added agenda items**

There were no agenda items.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.