



February 10, 2015

To: Don White and Bridget McGuiggan

From: Craig Larson and Ken DeSieghardt

Re: Summary of one-on-one interviews

From January 27 through February 3, we interviewed 10 individuals about their perceptions of D181 and, more specifically, their thoughts about current efforts to address facilities issues within the district. We summarize these interviews in three areas below:

1. Key ideas shared
2. Questions raised
3. Opinions about what to do with the Hinsdale Middle School building

We look forward to exploring these ideas further, as we proceed through the engagement process, including during the upcoming focus groups on February 18 and 19.

Key Ideas Shared

1. All those interviewed said that D181 was “top notch” and literally one of if not the top elementary districts in Illinois.
2. Several interviewees commented they appreciated the efforts of the superintendent to involve the community and to keep people informed about district issues.
3. Most interviewees were very aware of the problems at HMS last year, due to frozen pipes and felt the district did a good job handling an unexpected problem.
4. As D181 thinks about its possible actions or next steps around facility issues, it should align its efforts to those of the high school district it feeds.
5. When any eventual facilities plan is created and shared with the public, it should include a clear economic analysis over at least the next 10 to 20 years.
6. A couple of interviewees pushed strongly for an effort by D181 to rebuild/replace HMS with a structure that could serve the general public more effectively, with suggested facilities, such as meeting rooms, a small theater, a workout room for adults (after regular school hours), and athletic fields for community use. (“HMS could become the heart of Hinsdale.”)

7. The district should take time to design a long-term facilities plan that the public understands and supports (take the time to make a solid decision).
8. The rough design of a new HMS building should be part of the discussion — the look of the building will matter.
9. It would be very helpful to include representatives from the Villages in the building or facilities redesign process to resolve potential issues up front and to see if a collaborative project with the Villages is possible.
10. Green space in the district is sacred and it would be difficult to take existing green space to build a new middle school. The Villages are under constant pressure to preserve all existing green space, so the aesthetics of any new building design will be critical to Village officials.
11. None of the interviewees said the district was slipping in its public perception and many indicated that the quality of the schools was a key draw for families to the community.
12. Over the past 15 years, the district has improved the facilities of all of the schools, and the ongoing problems at HMS cause it to be the only major facility issue in the district.
13. Several interviewees (and all parents with children who attended HMS) commented that an old, outdated building might be more expensive over the long run than a new school that is energy efficient, lower in annual maintenance costs, and up to date academically.
14. Several interviewees suggested the district should focus any eventual campaign on the reality that the district has been frugal over the past 15 years and not asked for tax increases. (“D181 has lived within its means.”)
15. Parking was seen as a problem within the district, but most interviewees saw no way for D181 to resolve it. In fact, several suggested that the district should encourage programs, such as “a walking school bus” as a way to reduce congestion and parking issues. (Getting parents to walk their children to school and rotating days of the week individual parents walk with children on their block, rather than all driving up in their cars.)
16. If HMS was rebuilt, several interviewees commented that improving parking for the Village of Hinsdale, as part of the project, could be helpful to the community. Any new structure should be carefully designed and done with involvement along the way from Village officials.

Questions Raised during the Interviews

1. How much of an issue is the unequal size of the two middle schools?
2. Are five-year demographic trends clear about enrollment trends and do they clearly support two middle schools?
3. Does the district have any other needs? If so, it should come forward over the next few months, as it would be a problem to come back to the taxpayers in the near future.
4. How could we avoid disrupting students in any plan to rebuild HMS?
5. Is the field on the opposite side of Washington large enough to contain a new school? If not, might the Village be willing to close off Washington by the school to make a safe and adequate site?

6. What is the relationship between District 181 and the high school district? (A couple of interviewees were not aware that they were separate districts.)
7. What are its current debt service levy and the ability of the district to pass a “no-tax-increase” bond issue?
8. Does D181 set aside money in its operating budget for capital improvements?
9. Would it be cheaper over 20 years to replace rather than rebuild the school? What data is needed to answer this question?
10. A previous superintendent tried to move HMS to Veeck Park. Is this off the table and if so, why?
11. The site at 55th and County Line has been considered as a new site for HMS, even if it is not an ideal site. Is it off the table and, if so, why?
12. How much would an individual homeowner’s taxes increase for every \$1 million bond issue passed?
13. Is the current HMS site worth enough to suggest it should be sold and the middle school relocated?

Opinions About What to Do with HMS

1. All those interviewed who had children in District 181 thought HMS should be replaced with a new building, since problems of mold, building design and tight classroom configurations could never really be resolved.
2. All interviewees wanted to see a careful analysis of the costs associated with a new school vs. a renovated and expanded school.
3. Most interviewees commented that the inequality in the two middle school buildings was unfair to students and families.
4. Several interviewees commented that any new structure should be designed to last 50 years. (No partial solutions should be considered.)
5. It seemed to several interviewees that a new middle school design could include some features that could also be renovated into CHMS, such as new technology, new science and engineering labs, etc.
6. A couple of interviewees suggested rebuilding HMS and making the new structure a combination school and community center for Hinsdale.