

Skaneateles Central School District
Board of Education

Strategic Planning Advisory Committee

AGENDA

12 October, 2016

6:30-8:00pm

Board of Education Building

The meeting came to order at 6:33pm with Mrs. Brogan, Mrs. Huba, Mr. Lambdin, Mrs. MacLachlan, Mrs. DeMass, Mr. Butler, Mr. Slentz, Mrs. Richards, Mrs. Cogan-Millman, Mrs. Ward, Mr. Gerst, Mr. Nichols and Mr. Neumann present. Mrs. Abbott-Kenan, Ms. Usdansky Niebuhr, Mr. McGraw, and Mr. Widrick were absent and excused.

Mr. Slentz reviewed key governing policies for the Committee including Policy 1530 - Meetings of Committees of the School District – to ensure that all members understood the application of Open Meetings Law to Committee meetings.

The Standing Committee agreed that Mrs. Brogan would report out to the full board at the next meeting.

Mr. Slentz reminded the committee of the ongoing discussions regarding Project 2021 and provided a general overview of the scope of the project relative to the buildings that would likely be impacted. With this as background, Mr. Butler introduced Christine Crowley from Fiscal Advisors, the district's fiscal agent. Mr. Butler described the role of Fiscal Advisors in assisting the District in the development of a financial plan for the financing of building projects and the organization of our debt service in general. This further ensures the timeliness of our required filings with the State Education Department (SED) and the timely receipt of state aid associated with these projects.

Mrs. Crowley reviewed the current debt service (our financing of buildings) levels of the District and showed the committee where certain debt would be retired, thereby giving the District the opportunity to finance additional capital projects without necessarily increasing the tax levy. Specifically, any new debt incurred should be structured such that our first payments would come due in 2021 school year. For this to be true, Mrs. Crowley presented a timeline of when certain actions including a community referendum (vote) would need to take place. She also noted that to keep our current tax levy flat, a maximum total project amount of \$31,000,000 could be considered. It was noted that this figure was tentative and would be further refined as we move through the planning process. Mrs. Crowley further noted that in order for the 2021 timeline to be met, a referendum date of mid-late fall of 2017 was necessary. Finally, Mrs. Crowley discussed the aidability of the project (the voting process and associated costs would be an aidable expense) and the maximum cost allowance for each building. The State Education Department (SED) sets this for each building and will only aid projects up to that cost. For example, if the District determined that \$20,000,000 of work needed to be done at the high school, but the maximum cost allowance for that building was determined to be \$10,000,000, the District would not receive aid on \$10,000,000 of the project. Given that the District receives \$.629 in aid for every approved \$1.00 spent, this would be a significant cost to the District. Accordingly, paying very close attention to the maximum cost allowance is of critical importance when planning a project.

Committee members various questions to Mrs. Crowley and Mr. Butler including:

1. Does SED approve the financing of projects? No, this is done by the district and Fiscal Advisors. SED does calculate maximum cost allowance and determines aid based on that number and whether the actual construction is aidable.
2. How does SED set the maximum cost allowances for each building? SED determines the number of “building aid units” which reflect capacity of each facility and the respective needs to determine the maximum cost allowances. Administration noted that although building aid ratios themselves can occasionally change due to statewide fluctuation in wealth, SCS has had a 62.9% aid ratio for 12 years now.
3. Where is SEQRA process come in to play in a project like this? This happens in the early stages of the project and depending upon the design, the Board would determine whether this would be a Type I or Type II action for the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). The latter action is significantly more involved.

The committee was asked to respond/react to the concept of a fall vote given that traditionally the District held votes in the spring. Committee members suggested that strong and consistent communications were needed and that the District should be mindful of other events including various elections that might be taking place at or near the same time as the vote.

Mr. Slentz noted that the District did have existing reserves that would help to offset a portion of the cost of the project. For example, a capital reserve was established in May of 2016 with \$1,083,000 allocated to it (with \$250,000 subsequently withdrawn for the Transportation Center capital project). Administration will be recommending that additional monies from 2015-16 remaining funds be added to this reserve which has a maximum total of \$2,500,000. Mr. Slentz also noted that conversations with the Board thus far have included packaging of the project so as to give voters a choice of the work that should be completed versus asking them to vote on one single amount. Mr. Slentz noted that there would be continuing conversations with the group about Project 2021 and also noted that it was the district’s intention to recommend the appointment of a new architectural firm and construction management firm to the Board for this project. The appointed firms would be joining Fiscal Advisors, administration, and where necessary, legal counsel at any project meeting so as to maximize communication and accuracy and minimize errors and risks in general.

The committee thanked Mrs. Crowley and Mr. Butler for the information and presentation.

Mr. Slentz presented the committee with a draft expenditure plan proposal for the Duke Schneider Bequest funding totaling approximately \$110,000. Utilizing this money as a type of capital reserve would allow the district to get a greater return on investment of this money was leveraged against an aidable portion of a building project (e.g., on an approved project, the \$110,000 could act as the local share of a project component of up to \$300,000 such that there would be no impact on taxes for said portion). The committee shared that while this was an effective use of the monies, the district should state specifically what the monies would be used for so that it did not appear that the money was in search of a project. Doing so would allow the district to provide a proper homage to Duke and his love of athletics and our student athletes. The proposal will be revised accordingly and shared with two other committees before going back to the Board.

Mr. Slentz presented to the committee with an updated version of our Strategic Planning Framework document. This document has been refined thanks to the help of the steering committee of Mrs. Cogan-Millman, Mrs. Abbott-Kenan, Mr. Gerst, and Mr. McGraw. Mr. Slentz reviewed the various components and how they all tied directly to the mission, vision, and theory of action for accomplishing improved outcomes for all of our students. The committee reviewed the strategies and specific initiatives that were listed. Mr. Slentz noted that an additional 3-4 strategies and associated initiatives would be added and invited committee members to question, suggest, and/or meet with him to discuss the document and the contents thereof. The leadership cabinet continues to orient their work to this document as does the Board. Each respective committee will be reviewing this document to further ensure that their work continues to align to the mission and vision.

A question was raised regarding the decrease in enrollment and whether or not a building would be closed at any time in the future. This was raised due to the fact that this was an issue of concern some years ago. The committee discussed whether talking points might be made available to share with the community along with the strategic plan framework. Administration will share a document that the steering committee reviewed this summer. It was noted that this document along with the strategic planning framework and the project 2021 proposal fit very nicely together and should be shared accordingly.

Board members thanked the advisory members for their time, commitment, and willingness to engage in feedback to administration. The steering committee members were thanked by the board and the committee for the additional work done over the spring and summer months to further refine the strategic planning framework.

Items not discussed included updates to current capital projects which include:

1. **Smart Schools Bond Act** - the goal for this project which focuses largely on security infrastructure and the replacement of the district's internet fiber is to integrate this work with the Phase III, part 2 work to take advantage of economies of scale where possible and also to coordinate the replacement of classroom ceilings and walls. There has been a delay of the approval of our Smart Schools plan which puts the timeline and coordination at risk. To potentially offset this, the architects have submitted the design drawings in hopes that plan approval in December will allow for a March approval of the design and a summer '17 installation.
2. **Phase III** – this project is separated into 2 parts with part one – the removal of asbestos containing materials in floors, walls, and ceilings - being largely completed this past summer. One area of work that has not been accepted is the installation of tiles in the classrooms at the middle and high schools. A defect in the tile – a slight angle on one side – allows dirt to be caught thereby making it very difficult to clean and increasing the risk for water penetration. The vendor has been in site and a plan for replacement at no cost to the district is being drafted. This will be reviewed by the architect and by legal counsel before being presented to the Board. Otherwise, the remaining components of the project were completed on time and with acceptable quality.
3. **Transportation Center** – the plans for this project will be reviewed with administration and submitted to the State Education Department later this month. The project will address windows, exterior walls, and drainage issues for a total of approximately \$350,000.

With all other agenda items being complete, the meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mrs. Brogan, Mrs. Huba, and Mr. Lambdin