



**Northville Public Schools
Short Term Options Committee
Report to the Board of Education
April 5, 2005**

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Background

The Northville Public Schools' Board of Education commissioned the Short Term Options Committee in the Fall of 2004, creating the charge and parameters for the Committee to follow throughout their deliberations. See attachment A.

The Short Term Options Committee waited to meet until the Enrollment/Projections Committee completed their deliberations. They reported to the Board on January 11, 2005.

The Committee membership, consisting of 32 members was open to the community and District staff. Community and staff representation on the Committee came from all levels, i.e., early childhood, elementary, middle school, high school and from the Special Education Center Program. Almost every school was represented either by a community member or by an administrator.

The Short Term Options Committee began deliberations on January 3rd, 2005, and concluded on March 21st after attending twelve meetings, reviewing enrollment projection data, studying school building capacities, school building configurations and brainstorming ideas as to how to most effectively deal with the enrollment and capacity challenges facing the District for the next two years.

Charge and Parameters

The Short Term Options Committee Charge and Parameters, developed by the Board of Education, guided the Committee throughout the deliberations.

It was clearly stated that the Committee's focus was to determine if capacity exists for the projected enrollment for the next two years, (2005-06 and 2006-07) and if capacity doesn't exist, recommend options to accommodate the projected enrollment.

The Short Term Options Committee accomplished all but one of the parameters. The Committee did not analyze the financial implications of the recommendations that are being presented to the Board. The Committee believes that the Board and administration will cost out each of the recommendations presented, thus the Committee's analysis would have been a duplication of effort.

The timeline stated for the commencement of deliberations, October 2004, with a report to the Board in February 2005, did not occur due to circumstances beyond the Committee's control

Process

A consensus decision making model was discussed at the initial meeting as being the most desired model to employ during the Committee's deliberations. If consensus could not be reached, the Committee would conduct a majority voice vote to make the decisions necessary to achieve the stated charge. The consensus model was used throughout the process, resulting in every major decision made by consensus.

The Committee soon found that the overcrowding problem for the next two years would occur only at the elementary school level.

The adopted ESI projections clearly show that the middle schools and high school have capacity for the projected enrollment for the next two years. The focus of the Committee's attention, then centered on elementary school capacity. It was decided to "Brainstorm" as many ideas or options as the Committee could develop in order to have the opportunity to determine the feasibility of each idea or option.

An "Options" list was developed which included Pros and Cons as well as Consequences for each of the thirty-six options. As the Committee worked through the Options list, new ideas or Options emerged either from Committee members or from the community at large. Each idea/option was discussed by the Committee. See "Options" List, attachment B.

During the Committee's deliberations, Options were either deemed viable, rejected or forwarded to the Long Term Committee for consideration.

The Committee found that some of the options were similar in nature and as the options were studied, variations of the respective options were suggested and discussed.

The Committee achieved its goal to discuss, and record the Pros and Cons as well as the Consequences for each option to achieve the Board's Charge to the Committee.

Options remaining were assessed by the Committee's "Criteria Evaluation Chart" to determine if they survived the scrutiny of the "Mandatory Attributes" and the Variable Criteria". This feasibility assessment tool quickly decreased the number of viable options.

From this process an "Options That Work" list was developed. The Committee further discussed the remaining options and concluded deliberations recommending four options for Board of Education consideration.

Findings

As previously stated, the Committee very quickly found that the capacity constraint was focused on the elementary level, specifically at Ridge Wood and Amerman Elementary Schools. Both schools were currently and remain, over capacity. The remaining elementaries are currently at or slightly under capacity. Ridge Wood Elementary School and Amerman Elementary School remain the two elementary schools, due to enrollment, not being used as designed. The Ridge Wood and Amerman Elementary School principals explained, in detail, their building design and current usage.

After considerable discussion, it was determined that Amerman Elementary School could manage for the next two years by having one more portable classroom installed on the school site. Although this scenario is far from ideal, (i.e., special class teachers teaching in the regular K-5 classroom rather than having rooms of their own) it is feasible to accommodate the projected enrollment for the next two years.

The Committee found the situation at Ridge Wood Elementary School was quite different. Currently, Ridge Wood is significantly over capacity and the situation is exacerbated by each new student enrolled. The Committee had to determine a mechanism to halt the influx of new students or to relocate existing students where capacity exists, thus sharing the over-capacity problem with other schools.

The other major finding discovered by the Committee was that none of the Options under consideration would be acceptable to all community stakeholders. Families would not favor an option or recommendation that impacted their student. This realization motivated the Committee to study each Option on its own merit, combine options and/or develop feasible variations for discussion.

The Committee was unsuccessful in determining recommendations that would be positively embraced by the entire school community.

Recommendations

The Committee spent a significant amount of time discussing whether it should make one recommendation to the Board or provide options for Board consideration. Attention was reverted back to the “Charge” which states “recommend options.” It was decided to make a recommendation that included the most viable options as determined by Committee consensus. The focus of the following recommendations is to either create capacity, use existing capacity or to share the overcrowding problem District wide.

The recommended options are not in priority order as the Committee consciously decided not to prioritize the options.

Construct A New Elementary School

Significant discussion ensued as to whether this is a short or long term Option. It was ultimately decided that since enrollment projections for 2006-07 warrant a new elementary school, the Board should begin the planning process to have the new school constructed as soon as possible.

Relocate Ridge Wood 5th Graders to Winchester and Silver Springs Elementary Schools

This Option would create the necessary capacity at Ridge Wood for the next two years. The Pros and Cons capture the benefits and drawbacks of this option. This option shares the overcrowding problem with the two other schools that feed into Meads Mill Middle School.

Redraw Attendance Boundary Lines

This Option, like the previous one, distributes Ridge Wood students to other schools to solve the capacity problem at Ridge Wood.

The Committee reviewed enrollment by grade level, by subdivision to determine if this was a feasible option and found that it was feasible. The Committee decided against recommending specific subdivisions be moved, leaving that decision to the Board of Education.

Discussions about the number of times either a family, subdivision or child had been moved or will be moved (if a new elementary school is constructed), took place at several meetings. The Pros and Cons list accurately depicts the advantages and pitfalls of this option.

Relocate Ridge Wood Kindergarten Students to Other District Schools

Again, this Option distributes all Ridge Wood Kindergarten students to other schools, thus creating needed capacity for the next two years.

This Plan, “The Kindergarten Relocation Plan”, shares the overcrowding burden with other District schools and it may reduce the number of First Graders attending Ridge Wood by allowing families the choice of transferring to Ridge Wood for the First Grade or remaining at their Kindergarten school for the First Grade. The Committee believes that a significant number of children will remain at their Kindergarten school because of the likelihood that the children would attend the new elementary school once it is constructed. Remaining at the Kindergarten school for First Grade would reduce the number of transitions the family would experience.

Emergency Back-up Proposal

The Committee recommends that Ridge Wood’s enrollment be monitored and if the projected enrollment exceeds capacity even after one of the Options is implemented, the Board exercise the “Overflow Concept” as a stopgap measure. The “Overflow Concept” involves sending new students to a school other than Ridge Wood if the particular grade level is at capacity.

Conclusion

The Options considered by the Short Term Options Committee emanated from the Committee members themselves or from community contributions.

The Committee believes that the process to solve the District's capacity problem was an open process. Committee deliberations, minutes and related documents were included on the District's website for community information and comment. Community members and staff were also welcome to attend Committee meetings as observers.

It has been the Committee's intent to not only recommend viable options for Board consideration, but also to provide the requisite detailed backup information to enable the Board of Education to make an informed decision.