

Transcript from May 14 Community Engagement Meeting

Superintendent Dr. Kathy Ludwig: Good Evening. Hello Everyone and welcome. Thank you for joining our second community meeting regarding one of our Capital Bond projects that relocates Athey Creek Middle School which is situated on Borland Road into a new facility that will be built on district property located on Dollar Street.

This meeting is one of several that the district will continue to conduct during the design process. There will be another one in June.

My name is Kathy Ludwig and I am the Superintendent of the West Linn-Wilsonville School District.

This meeting is being held as a live webinar with multiple presenters due to COVID-19 social distancing guidelines. We are able to host up to 500 participants in this meeting format.

This webinar is being recorded for viewing later by any patron across the school district community and is hosted by 3J Consulting Land Use Planners, Mr. Steve Faust and Mr. Andrew Tull.

At the conclusion of the webinar, there will be an opportunity for anyone to respond to what was presented by taking a brief survey. Comments from the survey will be documented and will serve to inform the design process and our design concepts for the new school.

Thank you for taking the time to listen and respond. We rely on our community to be engaged and active participants in this process. I will now turn it over to Mr. Steve Faust.

Land Use Planner Steve Faust: Thank you Superintendent Ludwig. You can see here the agenda for our meeting. In a moment, I will give a brief presentation of what we heard during the listening sessions. Then, Superintendent Ludwig will review the factors that lead to a school on Dollar Street. Rebecca Stuecker from

IBI Group will present the site analysis and design parameters. And we will wrap up with a review of next steps.

I know that many of you participated in the first community meeting in January. Today's virtual meeting is the second community meeting. The format for this meeting is a webinar presentation paired with opportunities to comment through an online survey, email or by scheduling another phone conversation. I know that many people prefer a format where they can interact with District representatives and neighbors, and we hope to provide those opportunities at future meetings while making everyone's health and safety our top priority. While exact dates have not been set, Community Meeting #3 is scheduled to take place in June, and Community Meeting #4 is scheduled for the fall.

My name is Steve Faust with 3J Consulting. Andrew Tull from 3J Consulting is also present at this meeting. 3J Consulting is a land use planning, public involvement and civil engineering firm located in Beaverton, Oregon. We have been fortunate to spend time working in West Linn in the past and appreciate this opportunity to do so again.

We want to thank everyone who took the time to speak with us and share their questions and comments about the Athey Creek Middle School at Dollar Street. We really enjoyed our conversations with you all.

Between April 22nd and May 13th, we conducted 35 listening sessions, and continue to speak with community members. Most of the sessions were by phone and some via video conference. We were happy to meet with some neighbors in person during a site visit the morning of April 29th and enjoyed getting to know the site through their eyes. I want to stress that none of the comments I'll be presenting are unanimous among the people we talked to. Rather, these are themes that we heard a number of times throughout our conversations.

As you would expect, we heard a full spectrum of opinions. Some people are excited about the prospect of a school being located in their neighborhood. Others are opposed for a variety of reasons. Still others are neutral, but have some questions and concerns they want addressed.

We found there are two main categories of comments; those related to the decision-making process and those more specific to the site itself.

Many people had questions about how the School District got to this point. Some feel there has been a lack of community engagement and transparent communication. Some neighbors say that students and their families were engaged, but not the neighbors or broader community. Some people were confused about the bond process and say they did not know they were voting for a new school at Dollar Street when they supported the school bond. People are looking for straightforward answers.

People are interested in understanding what information the School District used to make the decision to relocate the middle school to Dollar Street. They have observed that enrollment is decreasing and that any increases are coming from Wilsonville.

If there is a need for a new middle school, they wonder why not expand at Athey Creek? There seems to be enough land to expand the middle school and build a new Arts & Tech High School. People's perception is that the Dollar Street site was deemed unsuitable for a school in 1996, so what has changed since then? They believe any land use regulation challenges can be overcome. People also want to understand how the health and welfare of students will be as good or better at Dollar Street as it is at Athey Creek.

Finally, do any of the decisions or assumptions that have been made change due to COVID-19? For example, enrollment numbers, distance learning, traffic counts, or the project schedule.

Now the site-specific comments.

Traffic is already a major concern in the area. Congestion on Willamette Falls Drive leads to people cutting through the neighborhood. People are concerned that the school will add to the problem. A related concern is that there is limited access through the neighborhood and traffic congestion could delay emergency services or evacuations. Therefore, some people favor a through street from Dollar Street to Willamette Falls Drive, but others are opposed. The specific locations of entrances and exits are an important consideration for adjacent

neighbors. Some people are happy that some kids will be able to walk and bike to school, while others are skeptical that will happen in practice.

Many people said they are concerned that parking will spill over into the neighborhood, especially during large events like concerts and sporting events. A number of people are concerned that the site is too small for an 850-student school. Several indicated they would be more supportive of a smaller school or a school without fields. People are concerned that physical constraints such as trees, slopes, and soils will make the project too expensive and fiscally irresponsible.

People who live nearby are concerned about potential nuisances like litter, noise from people and vehicles, light pollution from the fields and air pollution from idling buses. Maintaining trees as a buffer between the school and their homes is a priority.

Some people do not want to lose this area that they use as a recreational amenity for walking, biking and playing. Others are concerned about the loss of wildlife habitat. And others mention that there may be historic resources on-site. People wonder what the impacts will be from construction and mention that previous construction in the area caused damage as their homes settled.

Several neighbors mentioned current issues with water pressure and wonder about the adequacy of infrastructure to serve the school. Other people are hopeful that the school project will bring infrastructure upgrades to the area. Neighbors ask that the school be built with the landscape so that it doesn't stick out, and trees and buffers are preserved.

Thank you again for your time and I hope to speak to you all again going forward. And now, I'll hand the presentation back to Superintendent Ludwig.

Superintendent Dr. Kathy Ludwig

Thank you, Steve. I also want to thank and acknowledge all of our community members who have shared their feedback. Your input is critical to the design process as we move forward and your partnership with our schools is a much-valued asset to our district.

As Steve mentioned, we continue to hear questions regarding how the district reached the decision about relocating Athey Creek Middle School to the Dollar Street property. And why the Arts & Technology High School (our third option high school) would relocate to the Athey Creek site and into the existing building.

There were a number of factors, spanning several years of study and community discussions that led to this decision.

Factor 1: simply, we are a growing school district. In the last eight years, we have added two new primary schools and a new middle school to accommodate growth.

As we know, parts of any school district experience growth in various ways and in various timelines. While West Linn currently experiences enrollment growth through home occupancy turn-over or small pockets of new housing; Wilsonville is currently experiencing growth through neighborhood expansions and new housing developments.

As a school district, we look at growth projections over the long term. Occasional dips and increases in enrollment areas are typical in any neighborhood at any time, which is why school districts contract with student enrollment forecasting experts, such as FLO Analytics, to study the projected rate of community growth over longer periods of time. A recent 10-year study by FLO Analytics shows continual growth across our district.

One of our persistent enrollment concerns is with our high schools, particularly West Linn High School which has been over capacity for a number of years and continues to grow, slowly but steadily. We need to find additional learning space somewhere else in order to reduce the current enrollment at West Linn High.

Factor 2: We identified three options for addressing the high school capacity issue.

In response to the capacity concerns at our high schools, we began a year-long study in 2017-2018 of what high schools of the future needed to include...both in terms of program as well as building facilities. *A Superintendent High School Study Group* which included parents, teachers and administrators conducted site

visits, research and multiple surveys of students and alumni. The district took the findings from this report and began exploring ways improve our education plan for our current and future high school students and its implications on learning spaces.

Our school district currently has 3 high schools, two larger ones within each city and one small option high school, Arts & Technology High School, that meets in a leased building near Wilsonville City Hall and has about 100 students.

In terms of building facilities that could respond to high school enrollment growth, we identified these three options:

- 1) Increase the sizes of our larger high schools, or
- 2) Build a brand new fourth high school, or
- 3) Expand our third small option high school and move it to a more central location to help reduce the enrollment at the larger two schools.

We decided to take these three options to our community for feedback and input.

However, before doing that the district did a review of the Dollar Street land and its viability as a site to relocate Athey Creek Middle School, thereby opening up the Athey Creek site as a central location for the third high school.

In previous years, the Dollar Street property was considered a site for Rosemont Ridge Middle School. Ultimately it was determined that a better location for RRMS was on the north side of the city which would help balance the location of the two middle schools with Athey Creek on the south side of the city. There were never issues with build-ability on the Dollar Street property that prevents it from being a future school site.

Once we received confirmation from West Linn city staff that we could present Dollar Street as a viable option, district staff took the three options to the community for comment through a pair of community forums. These occurred in December of 2018. These forums included parents, teachers, school leaders, community members, city staff and local media. The presentation from these community forums was put into a webinar and distributed via listserve as well as posted on the district website for anyone to view and give feedback via survey.

Overwhelmingly, at each community forum and from survey responses, the district heard preference to keep the two comprehensive, larger high schools around 1,500 – 1,700 student capacity limit and instead expand our current third smaller option high school to offset growth in the two other schools, relocating it to a central location and a site that had enough room for future growth if needed.

The best location to satisfy these preferences is our Athey Creek property. This property site is centrally located and has the 40 acres that makes it ideal for a larger comprehensive high school someday.

Factor 3: This meant relocating Athey Creek Middle School to another location.

What emerged during the high school community forums from parents, teachers, community members and city staff, was that relocating the current Athey Creek Middle School into a new building on district-owned property in the Willamette neighborhood seemed to fit the preferences of BOTH high school expansion as well as having a middle school nested within a neighborhood.

We also heard from patrons that using already-owned district property was good stewardship and a judicious investment of district and taxpayer's resources long into the future.

Consistent feedback we heard and continue to hear about relocating Athey Creek Middle School into the Willamette neighborhood is that it becomes a neighborhood school, increases walkability, and that a larger building would allow for enrollment growth over the long term.

Lastly. Factor 4: Relocating the third option high school into the current Athey Creek Middle School building could be done with limited remodeling needed for immediate occupancy and program design for high school students as well as potential for future growth when the Stafford area develops.

Expanding the third high school, to approximately 4-500 students, allows for program expansion options for students while still maintaining a smaller, more intimate learning environment. It helps alleviate the capacity at West Linn High School and the central location improves the school's accessibility for more students across the district.

The programs at the third option high school on the Athey Creek site would include statewide Career Technical Education (CTE) programs that could begin right away and expand over time. As we know, CTE programs involve significant use of facilities and surrounding property.

Additionally, patrons agreed that when the area of Stafford Triangle begins to develop, this high school would need to expand significantly and would need the additional property to do so.

We have been asked whether we could keep the current Athey Creek Middle School as it is and build a new 500-student high school on the same property. There are two primary reasons why we cannot consider this suggestion.

First: We need to reserve this site for future growth within the Stafford area.

There is already a primary school on the site and it will remain there to continue serving that area of our district.

The 500-student high school will serve our purposes for now and the short-term, but when the Stafford area develops, we need to reserve as many portions of the property as possible for additional classroom wings, sports fields, larger auditorium, additional parking, etc.

Second: This property is also our main campus for a number of our district operations: Nutrition Services, Operations Department, Maintenance Equipment Storage, Community Services to name a few. The central location of this site keeps it as the most viable location for our district operations to be housed with room to expand over the decades.

These two reasons alone cause us to judiciously reserve property on this site for future growth.

I want to address comments about utilities and expansion on this property as part of the urban reserve. In the past, when the district has inquired of the county regarding possible facility additions to increase enrollment capacity, we received responses that urban services are not available to accommodate this request and

that utilities must be provided on site for water, storm, sanitary systems, etc. At the time, these requirements were problematic, incredibly costly and discouraged.

Currently, we do not see a need to pursue addressing additional utilities as we are not planning to increase overall enrollment capacity at that site. The current utilities are adequate for two schools as planned, and should the district need to expand the high school in the future when the Stafford area begins to develop, the district would work with the county at that time to address utility needs.

This option of relocating Athey Creek Middle School to Dollar Street in order to relocate the third option high school was drafted into a Long Range Plan and explored at a Community Bond Summit in February of 2019.

The Community Bond Summit involved over 200 participants including students, parents, patrons from the community, city officials and their staff representatives. All schools and neighborhoods were represented.

The summit was followed by community surveys, polling, presentations to some community groups, interviews with local media and communication on various social media outlets.

Consistently, the district heard feedback regarding the project: both favorable and concerns.

Concerns about building a school on Dollar Street did emerge during this time that mirrored the themes we heard earlier in this evening. To name a few: traffic flow, parking, lighting, build-ability on the site, loss of green space to the immediate neighbors. The district takes these concerns seriously and knows that they need to be addressed during any design process and with community input.

During the summer of 2019, the School Board finalized its decision to place this project on a Capital Bond proposal to the community for the November election.

Leading up to the November election, district staff continued to explain and respond to questions and interest regarding this project proposed in the Capital Bond. This included multiple interviews by local media and visits to every school's

PTA/PTO organization. There were also formal public presentations to each City Council.

In each presentation, the Dollar Street site was included as the relocation site of Athey Creek Middle School.

We understand that recent concerns and the “unknowns” around COVID-19 presents additional questions regarding how students will learn and attend school. In recent months, we have learned a great deal about the strengths of online learning, blended learning and in-class learning. As we design learning going into the future, we know that we need to preserve places for students to still have regular in-person access to teachers and access to hands-on learning materials and experiences.

Building a new school in an existing neighborhood is a big change and big responsibility. This decision carries a tremendous responsibility to consider input from immediate neighbors, students and patrons in the community before, during and after the process. It carries a tremendous responsibility to be good stewards of the land as an environmental asset of a community, now and long into the future. It carries a tremendous responsibility to design a building that generates pride, inspires young people to learn deeply, and enhances a community.

We pledge to do our very best to be good neighbors in our community and be good stewards of the West Linn-Wilsonville School District’s resources and facilities.

And now I’ll turn it over to Rebecca Stuecker of IBI Group Architecture Firm.

IBI Group Project Architect Rebecca Stuecker:

Thank you Superintendent Ludwig.

My name is Rebecca Stuecker, I am an Architect, Educational Planner, and Associate Principal of IBI Group. We are a team of Architects, Planners, and Interior Designers focused on designing high-quality, educational spaces in the Pacific Northwest. Our firm has been lucky to partner with West Linn-Wilsonville School District for the past 35 years and are proud to have been the architect of

record for the most recent schools in West Linn: Trillium Creek and Sunset Primary School.

In the following slides, I'll be sharing the current site analysis that has been performed, the analysis that is currently underway, and the design parameters that we and our team of engineers and designers will be using as we develop master plan iterations.

To put our discussion in context, this is an overall aerial view of the 22.1-acre site and surrounding region. Here we can see the Tualatin River, I-205 and the connection formed by Willamette Falls Dr. from the highway to the New Middle School Site. Since it is often difficult to get a sense of scale at this level, we have also indicated the location of Willamette Primary School as a reference.

The Middle School Site is within the jurisdiction of the City of West Linn and therefore subject to the West Linn Community Development Code for design parameters like setbacks, onsite vehicular parking, building height, and stormwater treatment. In addition to the Community Development Code, the New Middle School will also be designed to standards set by state building codes for all building systems including structural systems, fire separation walls, and ADA accessibility requirements.

In this closer view of the site, we can more clearly see the property line and the surrounding neighborhood. The northern boundary of the site follows Dollar Street, and the southern boundary follows Willamette Falls Drive.

In its test for viability as a school site, the District has gathered a great deal of information about the property. In the next few weeks, additional analysis will be conducted which will provide the data necessary to develop design solutions and respond to concerns expressed by the community.

In particular, a traffic engineer has been hired to study the effects a new school will have on the surrounding neighborhood's traffic patterns. In response to concerns from the community, the District is working to decrease vehicular traffic and increase walkability and bike ability to the school, and therefore will be improving Dollar Street and Willamette Falls Drive. The design team works closely

with the City and the Safe Routes to School organization to understand the infrastructure needed to support an increase in student walking and biking.

These improvements will provide new sidewalks and trees. The District expects to build these improvements on the half of the street bordering the property, and will work closely with the City to determine full-street improvements. These images were provided by the City of West Linn Planning Department and shows the City's typical standards for street improvements on minor arterials like Willamette Falls Drive, and 34-foot Local Roads like Dollar Street.

The District has taken the additional step of asking the design team to consider a buffer between any development on site and the nearby property line. This landscaped buffer is in addition to the setback requirements imposed by the City's Development Code.

This property is part of a larger system of natural resources. The District has heard concerns from the community about preserving water quality and will be taking steps to minimize any impacts to water quality, including leaving this area shown in green undeveloped. An environmental site assessment is also underway which includes a review by a wetlands consultant and environmental consultant. In addition to this assessment, an arborist has been hired by the District to study the trees in particular.

In another response to concerns about traffic flow concerns, the District is taking steps to build a new 2-way public access road on the site. This public access road will re-connect Dollar Street with Willamette Falls Drive. The final configuration of this road is not yet determined, but current studies indicate it will most likely be an extension of Brandon Place (hover over with pointer).

The property has a rich history. In the more recent history of the site, we can begin to see the important role this property and the surrounding area played in meeting the agricultural needs of Oregon's population during the depression. As the 20th century went on, groves of trees were planted and many fields maintained for agriculture.

In this next photo dated 1998, we can see the River Heights neighborhood is now established, with young street trees dotting the perimeter of Dollar Street. And in

the 2000's Fields Bridge Park is now in place and the community of Arbor Cove is under construction.

These aerial photographs are one resource we have to understand the rich and varied history of this property and evolution of the community.

Another way is through archeological testing. In response to concerns from the community about historic preservation, the District has hired an archeologist to study the entire property and is already expecting to keep the northwest portion of the site (hover over with pointer) free of development.

These topographic lines, taken from a survey of the site, indicate 5-foot increments. The highest elevation of the site is at this point along Dollar Street, with the slope extending down towards Willamette Falls Drive and views of the River below.

Additional tests will be conducted by a geotechnical engineer. The engineer will be testing the soils at several locations. These test results will provide the design team with the knowledge needed to design the structural systems and building foundation.

In this early stage of design, we do a great deal of analysis to understand the opportunities and challenges a sloping site will bring. In this image, we are indicating two locations for what we call section cuts of the property.

The site sections on this slide show the existing slope as it occurs at section lines A and B of the previous slide. Here, you can see the scale of the slope on this site. As we begin to place elements like buildings onto the site, we take a close look at the relation of the building's height to its neighbors and the best way to take advantage of views and slopes. On the right is a representation of a typical home height on the North side of Dollar Street. In green is the landscaped buffer zone between the built area and the street.

As we begin to consider how a school may be placed on this property, we begin by understanding how the site will be accessed. In response to concerns from the surrounding neighborhood community, the District has directed our design team to use the new connector road as the access point to the main entry driveway and

parking area of the school. All parent drop-off and visitor access will be directed to the main entry that fronts the new connector road.

In addition to the main entry, it is typical for schools to have a secondary entry point for buses, service vehicles, and fire truck access. One reason this is done is to maintain a safe distance from parent vehicular and bus loading zones during peak pick up and drop off times. The design team is currently considering Dollar street as the access point for this secondary entry. Because bus access does not increase traffic flow patterns, this methodology has been used on previous school sites in order to mitigate parent vehicle traffic through neighborhood arterials.

In addition to these access points, the design team is also currently considering the best locations for all Site elements including a Middle School with an 850-student capacity, outdoor learning gardens and instructional greenhouse, outdoor gathering and play area, a track and field with lights, and parking. Our early design iterations indicate there is adequate land on this property to accommodate all of these site program elements.

These design explorations are at a very early stage and will be heavily informed by the additional data provided by the traffic engineers, archeologists, arborists, geotechnical engineers, and environmental consultants described in previous slides. The analysis provided by these 3rd-party consultants will be used to help the District and design team test the efficacy of design solutions to address the concerns of neighbors, families, teachers, and students for many decades to come.

As you can see in the diagram above, we are at the beginning of a 16-month long design process. We are planning for the Land Use permitting period to begin in January of 2021, and to have the building permit process begin in late spring and summer of that year. The competitive bidding period begins at the end of the summer in 2021, with contract awards and the start of construction happening in the fall of that year. The construction period is approximately 2 years long with the school ready to open for the 2023/24 school year.

And now I'm going to hand it back to Steve with 3J to wrap up.

Land Use Planner Steve Faust, 3J-Consulting

The best way to stay informed is by signing up for the New Athey Creek at Dollar Bond Project ListServ. The ListServ will continue to be the primary way that the District provides project updates over the coming months, including community meeting information.

You can sign up for the ListServ email system by visiting the district's Capital Bond website. The district posts regular updates for all major bond projects on the Capital Bond website, including answers to frequently asked questions, project developments, and community meeting information.

The district will stay in close contact with the Willamette Neighborhood Association and looks forward to connecting with neighbors, school families, students, and the greater West Linn-Wilsonville community.

If you would like to schedule a phone conversation, you can reach out to Andrew Tull or me by email.

The easiest way to provide your questions and comments about the information presented tonight is by taking the online survey. For those who might only be listening in, the link is www.surveymonkey.com/r/L9XTH6N.

Thank you again for your time and comments and questions. We look forward to hearing from you soon and to meeting again in June. Good night.