

Meeting Minutes – Rootstown Community Meeting | April 11, 2018

Next Community Meeting – Wednesday, May 2 @ 7 PM

Presenters:

- Superintendent Andrew Hawkins
- Dennis Check – Hasenstab Architects
- Greg Chaplin – Hasenstab Architects
- Ben Rantilla – Hasenstab Architects

Meeting Items:

Introduction of advisors outside of the district – Superintendent Andrew Hawkins

- Hasenstab Architects – New Pre-Bond Architect working with the District
 - Attendees: Dennis Check, Greg Chaplin, Ben Rantilla and Lisa Roznovsky
- Rockmill Financial Consulting LLC – Bonding / Financial Consultant for the District
 - Attendee: David Conley

Briefly reviewed community survey – Superintendent Andrew Hawkins

The community survey was conducted by the Ohio School Board Association. Over 1,000 people responded to the survey. The survey can be found on the district website - <http://www.rootstown.sparcc.org/Content2/162>

- Things we learned:
 - Did people vote – yes or no? - Voting was split closely down the middle from those that took the survey.
 - How would you rate four items – How the district communicated about the project? Was it clear and understandable to you? Were the community meetings relevant to you? Did you understand the financing options that we had? Based on the charts/results, we want to be above 50% for all of those items this time.
 - How did most community members learn about Issue 33 back in November? We learned that we want to find more ways / opportunities to communicate to the community.
 - Social media ranked #1.
 - Friends and Neighbors ranked #2.
 - Community Meetings ranked #3.
 - JEDD – Did it affect how people voted? It did not affect the way people took the survey and voted.
 - Location of the school – We are staying on the same site. This did not have an impact on how people voted last fall.
 - Unique funding options – most people were interested in the combined earned income tax with the property tax option last fall.
 - Locally funded initiatives (LFI's) - These are items that are not co-funded by the state. These are items totally funded by the community.
 - Most people responded favorably to build the auditorium as an LFI.
 - Most people responded favorably to upgrading the stadium (includes track and field improvements) as an LFI.
 - The concession stand, fieldhouse, baseball field, softball field were split 50/50 about funding these items as an LFI.

Takeaways – Superintendent Andrew Hawkins

- The community believes we need updated facilities and current facilities are not conducive to today's learning.
- Goals for this year's campaign:
 - Improved communications and visual representation of what the future school might look like with the community
 - Have a better answer to where the kids will be during construction / where do the kids go during construction
 - Provide more details about the Locally Funded Initiatives (LFI's) to the community
 - Provide more information about the funding options / The district will go back and relook at the financing options
 - Improve methods of communicating with the community members to help spread the information about the levy
 - Take the information gained from the survey to improve the process this time around
- The JEDD will not happen.
- The State/OFCC (Ohio Facilities Construction Commission) will provide 42% of the funding for the district.

Presentation by Hasenstab Architects – Dennis Check, Greg Chaplin, Ben Rantilla, and Lisa Roznovsky

Introduction by Dennis Check of team members and some of Hasenstab Architects background in school work. Ben Rantilla is a community member with 3 young children in the district and will be working on this effort. Hasenstab Architects is going to help provide information to the district and the community regarding the components of the new school, the potential look/feel of the school, and options for how the new school may fit on the site.

There was a look at "Givens" and "Variables":

- **"Givens"** – Things we know that will not change and which are the building blocks for us to move forward (numbers shown are approximate and are being solidified)
 - The school will be partially funded by the OFCC (Ohio Facilities Construction Committee). The OFCC will provide 42% of the money needed to fund the building. The OFCC has a tried and true process that works well for the district and will provide oversight and funding for the project. They will be a part of this process.
 - The school will be one building for all K-12 students.
 - This site where the current schools reside is the site for the new school. There isn't any other property available.
 - Based on current enrollment and enrollment projections, the OFCC has calculated that the school will need to be about 165,000 square feet in size. We can use this number as a basis of design for the building to start looking at site options and options for the building to be either 1 or 2 (or more) stories.
 - There are Locally Funded Initiatives (LFI's) that the district would like the community to consider to fund. These are items that the OFCC will not co-fund. These items include athletic fields and athletic buildings, auditoriums / performing arts spaces, and administrative spaces.
 - The school will not be funded with a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD).
 - The OFCC has methods in place that restrict the project from moving forward at each stage of design if it is over budget. This helps ensure that the budget cannot be exceeded. We will hit the budget.

- **“Variables”** – Things Hasenstab will be working on, getting input and presenting to the community over the next several months:
 - The building location – There are possibilities for a 165,000 square foot building to be constructed around the existing buildings. This will eliminate the need for a “swing space”, meaning the students can stay in the schools during construction and will not have to be relocated to trailers or another area. When the new building is constructed, everyone can then move into the new facility at the same time. This will eliminate phasing and complex moves. This is the current thinking for the effort going forward.
 - LFI items are funded by the community. We need to look at each of the items to determine where they would go and how big they need to be so it is better defined this time around. Priorities and costs will be reconsidered.
 - Hasenstab will work with the district and the community to help everyone visualize the building.
 - We want to include some historic or sentimental items that are part of the existing schools in the new building. This is something Hasenstab has done for other districts. An example was shown of a historic bell and stone sign from Chippewa Schools that is being incorporated into the new school. A computer-produced realistic drawing (rendering) was shown to their community early in the design process, so they were able to see what the end result would look like. A photograph of the actual bell and sign that is being incorporated into the construction today was also shown, describing how accurate the early renderings can be.
- Hasenstab Architects asked the questions, “What’s going to change your mind this time?” “What information do you need that you didn’t receive the last time?” “What’s the best way to convey information to you regarding this project?” - Community members were encouraged to think through those questions and provide feedback. Hasenstab plans to go out to the community and meet with focus groups to help get the word out.
- Hasenstab presented a schedule for the next few months regarding their involvement. In general:
 - April – Hasenstab will be gathering information
 - May – Hasenstab will be creating and showing options for some of the things that were talked about, and will get feedback from the community
 - June – In order to submit ballot language in June, Hasenstab will have to have the project developed enough to supply a description of the facility and a description of LFI items
 - July – August – Hasenstab will be refining the design and creating visuals to be ready to present to the community in September
 - September – November – Promote the issue in the community
- If the levy passes in November, the project will take about 3½ years to design and construct, so students would begin using the new school in August of 2021.

Questions from the Community:

- 1. Does the size of the building that was calculated at 165,000 square feet by the OFCC include the Locally Funded Initiatives (LFI's)?**
 - Answer – The 165,000 square foot number does not include any of the proposed locally funded initiatives.

- 2. If the community needs to fund the LFI items, do we need to do this at the same time as the building project? Can we do the building portion first and handle the LFI items at a later date? Why should we pay for the LFI items now / at the same time as the building project?**
 - Answer – You get the benefit of having the OFCC oversight on the LFI project portions. The OFCC will not fund the LFI items, but will manage the design and construction process if included with the larger building project. This is management that will be of no additional cost to the community. Additionally, it will be less expensive and is a benefit to get this all done at once while all of the construction crews are already on site. There are some items (for example, stage lights for an auditorium) that the OFCC will co-fund that can be allocated for an LFI space. This is an opportunity that can only be utilized if completing both the building project and the LFI projects at the same time.

- 3. Can I call an “LFI” a “TFI” – a Taxpayer Funded Initiative? I’m concerned that the taxpayer still does not know what they are buying. How will we know what we are paying for?**
 - Answer – Today, we do not know the exact composition of the LFI projects. We are currently at the beginning of this effort. Hasenstab’s charge is to identify and work with the community on exactly what those components need to be including how big, how many square feet, and how many people can use those spaces. This will need to be identified before June, which is when the ballot language is established. We will know by June.

- 4. A community member was concerned about the information that will be given and how the taxpayers will figure out their tax. There was also concern about community members who do not have computers and no access to online information.**
 - Answer – It was agreed that the community needs to understand and be able to visualize to what the taxpayers are paying for. That is what Hasenstab Architects will be providing – the ability to work with the community to find the best location on the site and graphics that will help the community be able to see what the new facility and LFI items could look like. David Conley from Rockmill Financial Consulting agreed that we will work harder at helping the community understand the costs and get better explanations. Aaron Kurchev, chairman of the levy committee for the last effort, said that the retired voters voted for the levy more than any other age group. Aaron talked about some of the efforts that were made and some of the questions that came up with voters who did not know much about the levy. All agreed that this effort will have graphics to show what the community is getting which was not provided last time. This effort will help everyone understand what they are getting for their money.

- 5. A community member was pleased with tonight’s session. He liked that the presentation showed how the school could be in different locations on the property without interrupting the school day. He was happy that Hasenstab Architects is local and has a community member with children in the district on the team.**

- 6. Another community member stated that he has only been in the community for 3½ years. He had been in education for 39 years at 11 different districts. He was surprised that without much information the last time, the levy was lost by only 400 votes. He is encouraged that with the direction of providing more visual information this time, that the issue might have a better chance of passing.**
- 7. Will the community have a design in September to show what the building could look like?**
 - Yes, we will create graphics to show to the community so you know what you are voting on and know what you are paying for.
- 8. A community member suggested that a booth be set up at Randolph Fair in August and the Ravenna Balloon A-Fair in September to help get the word out to the community.** This was acknowledged as a very good idea.
- 9. What happens if the levy doesn't pass this time? How does that impact us wanting to have 21st century schools? How do you retrofit the existing buildings for this? Is it more money to renovate the existing buildings and how long would that take?**
 - Answer – We don't know how long the OFCC money will be available, but currently Rootstown is first in line for funding. Buildings will still have to be maintained. It would be a challenge to incorporate 21st century learning in the existing schools. The other challenge is the neither the high school nor the middle school are ADA compliant / equipped for ADA accessibility. (ADA = Americans with Disabilities Act) The renovation of the existing buildings would cost at least 70% of what a new building would cost, more than likely with a less satisfactory end result. If you renovate, there is a real concern with where will the students go during the renovations. If you build new, the kids can stay where they are while a new building is being constructed.
- 10. How long after this levy passes would the school need to come back to the community to ask for more money?**
 - Answer – The last levy was passed in 2011 for an operating levy. The district has not gone back to the community since then. We have stretched our dollars.
- 11. Hasenstab Architects is the pre-bond architect. They are not guaranteed that they will get to design the building if the levy passes. What happens if the levy passes and Hasenstab doesn't get the architectural contract after their pre-bond work? How does that work with the design they are presenting to the community?**
 - Answer – If a different architectural firm is selected for the comprehensive design after the bond issue is passed, it is highly likely that they will use the information presented already as building blocks to help them move forward with the design. These questions can also be a part of the interview process with potential architectural firms. They can be asked, before being hired, how they will handle this.
- 12. Who makes the final decision on what is designed?**
 - Answer – The board will make the final decision on what goes to the ballot. Once the levy passes, it is a very involved process with administration, the board, the teachers, community groups, and the students to have input in the Architect's design.

13. Will we know what is inside of the building? Will there be changes in the curriculum with a new 21st century school? Will there be changes in safety? Will things change on how things are being done now?

- Answer – Yes, there will be changes. There will be student-centered learning. The design will enhance all of these issues and help students be critical thinkers and problem solvers. The school will be designed to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards, which will ensure energy efficiency, sustainability, and improved indoor air quality.

14. Does the OFCC have regulations on safety for the design of the buildings?

- Answer – Safety in schools is a high priority. The OFCC has a design manual that dictates the particulars about how they want the spaces designed. That manual has evolved over the years to include an emphasis on safety. As Architects experienced in designing schools, Hasenstab also has knowledge of how to design-in safety for new buildings and also how to renovate older buildings to include safety measures. It is a primary consideration and will definitely be a priority.

15. How many years is the bond on for? How long do we have to pay for this?

- Answer – The last levy was for 37 years on the bond side. We will have to reconvene with the finance committee to go back over the term and the financing details. We will have new numbers for this year. Interest rates have changes since last year. Inflation has changed since last year. The goal is to take a new look at the interest rates and tax structure and look at what will be the best choice for the taxpayers and the bond.

16. Who puts together the actual bond?

- David Conley from Rockmill Financial Consulting will be putting together the actual bond.