



PRESS RELEASE

Date: March 4, 2024

Contact: Nancy Kunkler

Email: nkunkler@wbsd-schools.org

Phone: (262) 335-5459

WBSD School Board Recaps Community Conversations, Discusses Next Steps **Community shared valuable feedback to support future long-range facilities planning**

West Bend, WI – The West Bend School District School Board received updates on the three Community Conversations on facilities from Superintendent Jen Wimmer and its architectural partner, EUA, during its March 4 meeting.

Wimmer provided a brief overview of the Community Conversations that were hosted by the district in late February. The sessions had more than 150 people in attendance across one staff and two community sessions. Of attendees who completed an exit survey, 100 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the session was informative and a valuable use of their time.

Community Conversation attendees learned about the findings of a recently completed facilities assessment, answered survey questions, and participated in a preliminary facility prioritization ranking exercise. Feedback and comments were compiled to share back to the school board and identified common priorities:

- **Addressing aging buildings:** A top priority for many community members, a number of attendees brought up building a new Jackson Elementary and addressing capital maintenance needs across the district.
- **Safety, security, and accessibility:** Ensuring buildings and entrances are secure and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- **Cost efficiency:** From maintaining a low mill rate to considering the impact on taxpayer dollars, cost efficiency was a running theme in discussing facility needs.
- **Thinking about the future:** Renovating spaces or building new could update spaces for current students, as well as engage future enrollment.

-more-

After reviewing feedback themes, EUA outlined several “big ideas” to consider as potential solutions are being developed:

- **Rightsizing:** Consolidate and/or close 1-2 elementary schools and Rolfs Education Center to match current and projected enrollment
- **Reconfiguring grade levels:** Consider shifting the 5th grade to the elementary level and the 6th grade to the middle level; consider closure and relocation of the Education Service Center (ESC) and Rolfs Education Center to alternate locations.
- **Building new:** Closely examine building a replacement Jackson Elementary and consider different grade level configurations.
- **Phasing the work:** Consider breaking out potential solutions into more than one phase to ensure needs are addressed in a fiscal manner that takes impact on taxpayers into account.

EUA and construction management partner Findorff will continue to work with the West Bend School District, school board, and the community to come up with potential solutions and costs centered around responding to needs and community feedback. These preliminary solutions and costs will be presented as potential options at the next round of Community Conversations on April 16 and April 25. Community members are encouraged to attend and share their feedback.

For more information on upcoming Community Conversations and long-range facility planning, please visit the WBSD website at west-bend.k12.wi.us.

###