

# Long-Range Planning Committee

October 2, 2023

4:30 p.m.–7:00 p.m.

ESC Board Room

**Attendees:** Crysti Copp, Bob Colwell, Dave Culp, Terry Davis, Brad Leitner, Betty Timmer, Sonja Nix, Jennifer Hicks, Maria Alacron, Jack Reutzel, and Lucie Stanish

**Ad hoc attendees:** Clay Abla, Shannon Bingham, Amanda Clark, Melissa Cooper, Linda Jones, Diane Leiker, Marcy Phelps, and Mike Porter

## Minutes

1. Welcome, review agenda and approve minutes
  - a. Committee chairperson welcomed attendees and provided context for the meeting.
  - b. Minutes approved by committee
2. Debrief the community town hall input sessions and feedback
  - a. Community Feedback and School Boundary Changes
    - i. Committee members highlighted the passion and engagement of the community in addressing school-related issues.
    - ii. They all appreciated community feedback.
    - iii. Frustration was expressed over the lack of change in transportation plans despite school relocations from the community at the town halls.
    - iv. During the sessions, people voiced concerns about disrupting communities and upsetting children with school changes, and parents expressed worries about the potential impact on their children's education.
    - v. Calls for prioritizing families' needs and conducting further studies.
    - vi. Data-driven solutions were urged to address placement concerns.
  - b. School Overcrowding and Potential Solutions
    - i. Equity and impartiality in decision-making were discussed.
    - ii. Suggestions included addressing middle school overcrowding and prioritizing local schools for walking students.
    - iii. Concerns voiced about inaction on overcrowding in Ford Community.
  - c. School Boundary Changes and Community Concerns
    - i. Stability, continuity, community relationships, and practicality were identified as key concerns.
    - ii. Committee emphasized the need to address logistical and environmental challenges.
  - d. School District Changes and Community Concerns
    - i. Parents advocated for stability and prioritizing children's well-being.

- ii. Calls for careful implementation of changes and considerations for open enrollment.
      - iii. Frustration expressed over frequent moves by families and distrust in decision-makers.
    - e. School Boundary Changes and Community Input
      - i. Residents opposed boundary changes and advocated for in-district solutions.
      - ii. Transparency and inclusiveness in district efforts were questioned.
      - iii. Suggestions included addressing overcapacity in five-year increments.
- 3. Synopsis of scenarios
  - a. Middle School Model and Subsidies
    - i. Reevaluation of the middle school model to ensure equity and address programming gaps was proposed.
    - ii. Discussions included subsidy adjustments and the potential for changes in 2026.
  - b. Middle School Overcrowding and Potential Solutions
    - i. Consolidation of middle schools due to declining enrollment was discussed.
    - ii. Long-term uses for shuttered buildings were considered.
    - iii. Concerns were raised over the district-wide nature of overcrowding problems.
  - c. School District Enrollment Projections and Recommendations
    - i. Updates on data and recommendations were shared.
    - ii. Emphasis placed on retaining existing students and addressing demographic changes.
    - iii. Equity and constant student population changes posed challenges.
  - d. Middle School Boundary Changes
    - i. Concerns were raised about presenting limited options to the board.
    - ii. Sandberg opposed busing for walkable students, citing practicality.
    - iii. Calls for evaluating additional community suggestions before finalizing recommendations.
    - iv. Calls for "no change" options based on community feedback.
    - v. Importance of evaluating pros and cons of each scenario emphasized.
    - vi. Potential biases and inequities of boundary changes were debated.
    - vii. Concerns raised about transparency and balancing community input.
  - e. Middle School Enrollment and Staffing
    - i. Open enrollment prioritization was discussed, with calls for stability and capacity management.
    - ii. Concerns expressed about budgeting and staffing amidst enrollment fluctuations.
    - iii. Concerns raised over the impact of open enrollment on middle school transitions.

- iv. Principals were noted to prioritize serving local families within capacity limits.
  - f. School Boundary Changes and Their Pros and Cons
    - i. Pros included reestablishing relationships within communities and addressing right-sizing issues.
    - ii. Cons included transportation loss and potential for losing students to other schools.
  - g. Voting Methods and Ballot Ranking
    - i. Participants discussed ranking choices and voting procedures for boundary options and school names.
    - ii. Calls for fully vetting all options before decisions were finalized.
  - h. Elementary School Options and Boundary Changes
    - i. Concerns expressed about presenting limited options to the board.
    - ii. Emphasis placed on ensuring thorough evaluation and study of possibilities.
    - iii. Frustration over limited options and lack of comprehensive vetting was shared.
    - iv. The importance of long-term data and projections was emphasized.
    - v. Further study of elementary school boundary changes was encouraged.
    - vi. Clarity and decisiveness in decision-making were emphasized.
  - i. Pros and Cons of School District Reorganization
    - i. Pros and cons lists were proposed to aid decision-making.
    - ii. Questions raised about whether current options were optimal.
    - iii. Community members debated neighborhood improvements and green space impacts.
    - iv. Pros and cons of middle school options were highlighted.
  - j. Teacher Turnover and Classroom Sizes
    - i. Challenges with high teacher turnover and large class sizes were discussed.
    - ii. Concerns raised about impacts on stability and teacher morale.
    - iii. Adding classrooms and adjusting class sizes were proposed as solutions.
    - iv. Frustration voiced over large class sizes and limited space.
    - v. Concerns raised over potential future capacity issues and population declines in specific schools.
  - k. School Boundary Changes and Impact on Students and staff
    - i. Transportation costs and geographic challenges were discussed.
    - ii. Concerns raised about declining enrollment and teacher staffing.
    - iii. Fears expressed over losing staff and fracturing communities due to school consolidations.
    - iv. Feedback deadlines and growth projections were shared.
    - v. Long-term planning costs and future enrollment needs were discussed.
4. Presentation to the School Board Committee

- a. Committee discussed logistics for the presentation, focusing on accuracy and community support.
- b. The committee's top recommendation is no boundary changes for elementary schools
  - i. Robin was ranked as the #2 option, with Starling as #3, but there was little support expressed for Starling
  - ii. Data suggests the short-term overcrowding at Ford could be best managed at the district level as it is currently
  - iii. Modifying boundaries to move only 40 students out of Ford is disproportionate to the harm done to the impacted school communities and neighborhoods
  - iv. If the data projections are right, the district may need to consider boundary changes by 2026
- c. The committee's top recommendation is no boundary changes for middle schools
  - i. Chickadee was ranked as the #2 option, and Raven and #3, but both had little support
  - ii. Due to Open Enrollment, neither option right sizes Powell since impacted neighborhoods could just open enroll back to Newton
  - iii. LRPC wonders if there are levers the district could pull to encourage more enrollment at Powell
  - iv. If data trends are accurate, in the next 4-5 years a serious conversation will have to occur as to the future of both Powell and Euclid and a plan made for that future. An interim step to try to solve low enrollment at Powell means a continuous shifting for some students
  - v. Final Thoughts
    - 1. Let things rest, let the Ford community bond.
    - 2. Make an investment in on-going demographic data collections and analysis from now to 2026.
    - 3. Allow a newly constituted LRPC the time to digest the data and consider a full range of options for 2026.
    - 4. Be willing to consider novel approaches to combine schools or grades in a way that create robust schools with a full range of opportunities for all of our learners.
  - vi. Will present presentation to Board of Education October 12

## 5. Adjourn