

HCS Facilities – after MGT – What’s Next?

Fist of 5 – Where are we on this issue?

- I think HCS needs an intentional plan to address its deferred maintenance.
- I think HCS is not using all of its facilities to their optimal capacity.
- I think the community WANTS to be involved in the decision making process for how to move forward.
- I think the community SHOULD be involved in the decision making process for how to move forward.

Background

- Hamilton County has not tackled a \$1.36b problem before.
- 1999 – a community-led group convened by the school board and county commission developed a 3-phase, 10-year plan. It resulted in 100% of the first phase being completed.
- 2017 - Mayor's Budget Working Group (MBWG) asserts that the school system has opportunities to find efficiencies in its physical plant. *They estimate more than \$200m in deferred maintenance.* The MBWG also recommends closing schools and rezoning, including creation of a “base closing” style civilian panel to shepherd the work.

What Now?

Addressing our buildings is critical for the long-term sustainability of Hamilton County Schools. We must make forward progress.

- To build public trust and the plan needs to include many community voices.
- To earn support from elected leaders, the plan must have broad public support.
- To be feasible, the plan must align with available funding.

How might we...move toward a realistic, community-supported plan?

Idea: Replicate the 1999 citizen panel model for today's needs.

Create a citizen-led team to engage with the entire community to with a broad charge.

Chris Crimmons, leader of the 1999 work, points out the two most important elements for the success of the plan:

1. School Board and County Commission each passed a resolution requesting formation of the group, thereby creating legitimacy for the work and expectation of support for the resulting 10-year plan.

2. The 1999 task force first determined with significant community input the vision for the facility plan – addressing what citizens wanted the school system's physical plant to look like.

In 2020, work could include:

- Host community conversations – the MGT “engagement” sessions have done more harm than good. We need real community engagement.
- Determine the vision for the facility plan – what is the appropriate blend of efficiency, academic success, and community impact?
- Periodically report progress to the public, the School Board, and the County Commission
- Visit other school systems – or task school system staff to do the comparative data collection.
- Determine what standard of facility is appropriate
- Create a community-supported 10-year master plan
- Create a priority list and timeline for implementation of the plan.
- Deliver plan and implementation schedule to School Board for ratification.
- Once ratified, deliver (with the school board) the plan and implementation schedule to the County Commission for ratification and funding approval.
- Act as a “watchdog” for plan implementation until work is complete; including making an annual report back to the community.

Lots of questions to consider...

Who would serve? How would we ensure buy-in from all districts? To what extent might the school board and the commission respect the recommendations of the panel? What does leadership of this panel look like? Who gets a vote? Do some serve without voting privileges?

