

**Central and East Lawrence Elementary School Consolidation Working Group  
January 2, 2012, Meeting Minutes**

**Revised Agenda:** The co-facilitators distributed a revised meeting agenda after receiving e-mail communications from some Working Group members with topic requests (Addendum 1).

**Discussion:** Members had suggested at the December 19 meeting that each school group consider and make presentations about their needs should their own schools be closed. Members shared the following concerns:

- School groups are not prepared to discuss this topic tonight.
- The discussion seems non-productive - To what end?
- Some of the groups have already made proposals that involve closing their own schools.
- The group should instead hone the scenarios and select only those they want to discuss.
- A poll of members showed consensus for removing the topic from the agenda and leaving it off the agenda for the group's next meeting.

**Hillcrest Shares "Belt Concept:"** Leslie Newman, Hillcrest, said that her group simply wanted to share its "belt concept" as a framework for discussion, rather than as a formal presentation of a new proposal. A poll of members showed consensus for hearing a brief summary of the concept and distributing it to members in written form (Addendum 2).

Following Newman's comments, members discussed the "belt concept," including the following questions/comments:

- Does the "belt concept" change the fact that Hillcrest has only 146 students (40% of its population) living in its reside area? Newman responded that Hillcrest's numbers are a result of the school being an ESL cluster site.
- What are busing costs associated with the "belt concept?" Newman said that the intent wasn't to bus students to Hillcrest from peripheral areas, but to manage anticipated future growth as a result of revitalization of the urban core area.
- How does the "belt concept" affect other schools? Newman said that they left that issue open for discussion by the full group.
- How does the "belt concept" support Hillcrest as a three-section school? Newman said that Hillcrest is already a three-section school with 356 students that could accommodate up to 400 students in the future.
- The name "belt concept" may be a misnomer, since the area described is more of a stripe or path.

**Use of Small Groups for Discussion:** The co-facilitators suggested small-group discussions as a way to encourage hearing from all voices in the group. They shared a concern that only about 50% of members had regularly participated in large-group discussions during previous meetings.

In preparation for discussion, they asked the large group to review chart-paper summaries of the proposals for accuracy. Dawn Shew, Kennedy, asked that the boundary shifts included in Kennedy's proposal be added to the summary. Noting that overlap exists among proposals, Josh Davis, New York, labeled the chart-paper summaries "A-G" for discussion purposes, as follows:

- A) Pinckney Proposal – Expand Sunset Hill. Close Hillcrest (possible home for Boys and Girls Club).  
Kennedy Proposal – Combine Hillcrest and Sunset Hill at Sunset Hill, moving some students in the northeast boundary area of New York, north of 9<sup>th</sup> Street, to Pinckney and students from the western-most part of Hillcrest's boundary to Quail Run.
- B) Pinckney, New York, Kennedy & Cordley Proposals – Combine Kennedy and New York at East Heights' location or southeast of 15<sup>th</sup> and Haskell.
- C) 1. Sunset Hill Proposal – Keep Hillcrest open to take students from Pinckney. Close Pinckney.  
2. Converse of C1 – Combine Hillcrest and Pinckney at Pinckney.
- D) 1. New York Proposal – Combine Cordley and Kennedy at new site southwest of 19<sup>th</sup> and Haskell.  
2. Cordley Proposal – Combine Cordley and Kennedy at new site near 15<sup>th</sup> and Haskell.
- E) Cordley Proposal - Combine Cordley and New York at expanded/upgraded Cordley site.
- F) New York Proposal – Combine Cordley with New York at an expanded New York school.
- G) Close no schools in central area.

#### **Unlabeled Chart-Paper Summaries:**

Hillcrest Proposal – Expand Hillcrest at current site to a three-section school, pulling in students from Sunset Hill and possibly Cordley and Pinckney.

Cordley Proposal – Do no harm.

Sunset Hill Proposal – Expand Sunset Hill at current site.

**Small-Group Discussions:** The co-facilitators invited members to discuss in mixed, small groups what proposals, or aspects of proposals, they see as viable, in order to forward information to consultants RSP and Associates for analysis. Lois Orth-Lopes, Cordley, shared a map of elementary schools for use in discussing the scenarios (Addendum 3).

Members discussed proposals A-G in small groups. The following is a sampling of what some of the small groups reported regarding the scenarios, which does not represent a consensus by the group as a whole:

- A is not viable; it's too large. It could be considered viable with boundary changes.
- B is viable, but not reasonable with 470 students. Viable as a three-section school.
- C1 is possible and viable.
- D1 is not viable; it's too big.
- E is viable and should be considered.
- F is viable, but closes central schools.
- G is not measureable.
- A, B, C, D2, E and F are OK to submit.

- All of the proposals have nuances that the group doesn't have time to discuss. The group needs data from RSP in order to better weigh the proposals.
- The converse of C was added as C2. Members questioned what would happen to the ESL program at Hillcrest if the school were to close? Pinckney representatives answered that ESL service could be moved to Pinckney or elsewhere. A member asked about Pinckney's lot size. David Unekis, Pinckney, said that including the adjacent Clinton Park, it is four acres. He added that Pinckney has architectural drawings to support an expanded two-story school on that site.
- A small group reported that they were unable to reach agreement on any proposals, their conversation was emotional and some members "have their heels dug in."
- Another small group reported that they believe it's too much of a stretch to close two schools, but that one school could be closed. They didn't identify which school to close.
- Another group reported that a Kennedy/New York consolidation at the southeast corner of 15<sup>th</sup> and Haskell, with a dedicated early childhood wing, could work. They added that they discussed closing no central Lawrence schools.
- Members suggested that a large-group discussion is a better environment in which to ask questions and seek clarification.
- Members suggested giving 2-3 proposals to RSP to see what the analysis looks like in order to spur the group's discussion at the next meeting. Others said they were uncomfortable sending anything to RSP at this time. A suggestion was made to vote on all of the proposals and send the top four to RSP for analysis. Members noted that they want to be able to hear RSP's presentation to the school board on Monday before making any decisions about proposals. Others were concerned with making decisions tonight, since several members were absent from the meeting, likely due to the holiday.
- Members reiterated concerns about the Working Group's time line for making a recommendation. They suggested expanding meeting times, adding meetings to the existing schedule or asking the school board to extend the group's time line.
- Members shared concerns about the lack of clarity with regard to the definition of "viable."
- In response to questions about the role of RSP and Associates, Superintendent Rick Doll explained that RSP would redraw boundary lines and return to the group specific student count information from each of the data categories previously discussed (ESL, Free/Reduced, Special Education, etc.). A member asked if RSP could also be asked to consider walkability. Doll indicated that yes, in addition to analyzing walkability, RSP would also make suggestions to the group about the scenarios. He clarified that district staff will analyze potential cost savings and Gould Evans architects will provide consultation services related to construction or facility modifications and associated costs. Doll said that if a few proposals were honed by the group, RSP could return an analysis in two weeks' time; however, that turn-around time would not be realistic were the group to submit all of the proposals at once.
- Members shared concerns that identifying proposals for analysis by RSP and Associates may be viewed by the public through media coverage as having given tacit approval of, or preference for, those proposals.
- Members emphasized that it would be important to have time to discuss RSP's analysis after receiving the information from them.

**Polling of Members:** Members were polled about the following issues:

- Whether to send any proposals to RSP for analysis. The consensus was no.
- Whether to use small or large groups for discussion at the next meeting. The consensus was to discuss proposals A-G in a large group at the next meeting and to use time limits for the discussion.
- Whether the liaison subcommittee should ask the school board for an extension to the group's timeline. The consensus was yes, the liaison committee will ask the school board on Monday, January 9, to extend the Working Group's timeline.
- Whether to add January 23 as a tentative additional meeting date. The consensus was yes.
- Whether the liaison subcommittee should also ask the school board to revise the group's charge from closing two or three schools to closing only one school. The consensus was no, not to ask the question, unless the group was prepared to respond to the answer.

**Agenda Planning:** During a discussion of planning the next meeting's agenda, members shared the following information/requests:

- A reminder that members are invited to the January 9 school board meeting to hear a presentation by Rob Schwarz, principal planner with RSP and Associates.
- School groups should e-mail any additional information or changes to their proposals to the co-facilitators by Sunday, January 8, so the information may be shared with the full group in advance of the next meeting on January 16.
- Superintendent Doll noted that January 23, which was added as a tentative additional meeting date, is also a school board meeting night, so district staff may not be available.

**January 16th Meeting Agenda:**

- In the large group, members will spend 10 minutes discussing each proposal, A-G.
- Define "viable."
- Members were asked to bring their data/background materials and come to the meeting prepared to discuss the pros/cons and other considerations for each proposal.

**Meeting schedule:** January 16, 23 (tentative) and 30.

**Central and East Lawrence Elementary School Consolidation Working Group**

**REVISED AGENDA**

**7-9 p.m., January 2, 2012**

**Lawrence Public Schools' District Office, 110 McDonald Drive**

**Multi-Purpose Room**

1. Presentations From Schools About What They Would Need if Their School is to Close.
2. Hillcrest presentation of "Belt Concept"
3. Facilitator Focus Questions & Discussion
4. Meeting Evaluation
5. Set Agenda for Next Meeting

**Meeting Schedule**

January 16 and 30.

## **“Belt Concept” Overview Presented by Hillcrest Representatives**

In working to analyze the potential consolidation of elementary schools in Lawrence, the Hillcrest team has developed the “Belt Concept” outlined below to frame and prioritize issues.

### **Description**

Rather than dividing Lawrence between east and west, the Belt Concept reflects a “belt” of the city going through the middle of town, from east to west. This belt captures the urban core of the city, from east Lawrence, through downtown, to central Lawrence and neighborhoods adjacent to the University.

### **Elementary schools in the belt**

The belt would be anchored by an elementary school in East Lawrence, and then include Cordley, Hillcrest, and Sunset Hill. Each of these schools could become a strong three-section school, with the capacity to take in an additional fifty to one hundred additional students beyond its current enrollment. Projected enrollment growth over the next five years will mean the need for additional elementary school seats. Providing additional capacity within the belt elementary schools (by expanding to solid three-section schools) could eliminate the need to build another new school on the periphery of the city over the next five to ten years. Enrollment is projected to rise in East Lawrence, while Cordley and Sunset Hill can be seen as “relief valves” for nearby schools reaching and exceeding capacity. With their central locations, trained staff across the board, and commitment to English Language Learners and their families, Cordley and Hillcrest play a vital role as ESL cluster sites in the middle belt.

### **Key Considerations**

The Belt Concept builds on the following considerations:

- *Support for the urban core of Lawrence and downtown area*, the symbolic center of the city. The Belt Concept recognizes the significant revitalization efforts occurring downtown and in East Lawrence, including new housing projects, a grocery store, economic enterprises, and the library renovation project. Strong elementary schools play a vital role in supporting the core – and there is a direct relationship between schools, families, and neighborhood vitality. Without these schools, neighborhoods are likely to become rental areas and significantly decline in value, pushing growth to the periphery of the city.
- The *University of Kansas* as the academic, economic, and geographic center of Lawrence. The Belt Concept also recognizes that Lawrence is a “knowledge city,” with the University as its center. The University needs strong elementary schools in close proximity to campus, for both international and non-international families. These schools provide a learning laboratory for university students and faculty, a welcoming environment for international families, and an anchor for university neighborhoods.
- An *analysis of the neighborhoods* in the “belt” area indicates that the size of homes is a good fit for “starter” homes and university families, and that older families are retiring and selling their homes in a predictable cycle. Again, there is a direct relationship between strong, sustainable elementary schools and the vitality of these neighborhoods.

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Scenario: \_\_\_\_\_

Deerfield

6<sup>th</sup> Street

Pinckney

Woodlark  
*Wp*

Sunset Hill

Langston Hughes

Quail Run

Hillcrest

New York

15<sup>th</sup> Street

23<sup>rd</sup> Street

Cordley

Schwegler

Kennedy

Sunflower

Broken Arrow

Prairie Park