

MUHLENBERG SCHOOL DISTRICT
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes
February 1, 2023
Lecture Hall, Muhlenberg High School
www.muhsdk12.org

Call to Order

The Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District was called to order on Wednesday, February 8, 2023 at 6:32 PM by Board President, Mr. Garrett E. Hyneman.

Members Present

President – Mr. Garrett E. Hyneman
Treasurer - Mr. Richard E. Hoffmaster
Secretary – Mrs. Cindy L. Mengle
Assistant Secretary – Ms. Janet Howard
Member – Mrs. Kristyna Eagle
Member – Mr. J. Tony Lupia, Jr.
Member – Mr. Mark J. Nelson
Member – Mr. Miguel Vasquez
Solicitor – Mr. Brian F. Boland, Esq.
Recording Secretary – Mrs. Linda Figueroa

Members Absent

Vice President – Mr. Otto W. Voit, III

Administration Present

Superintendent – Dr. Joseph E. Macharola
Assistant Superintendent – Dr. Alan S. Futrick
Business Manager- Shane M. Mathias, CPA
Assistant Business Manager - Mrs. Susan Hawkins
Supervisor of Special Education - Ms. Lori Morris
Licensed Behavior Specialist – Mr. Zachariah Milch
Director of Human Resources - Dr. Jessica Heffner
Director of Pupil Services - Mr. Michael Mish
Data Administrator – Mr. Kevin Vanino
Athletic Director – Dr. Tim Moyer
High School Principal – Dr. Jeffery Ebert
High School Assistant Principal - Ms. Julianna Ciccarelli
Junior High School Principal – Mr. Steve Baylor
Junior High School Assistant Principal - Ms. Jennier Doyle
Junior High School Assistant Principal - Mr. Daniel Kramer
C. E. Cole Intermediate Principal - Mr. Haniff Skeete
Elementary Principal - Mr. Kyle Crater
Elementary Assistant Principal - Ms. Ginny Hornberger
Elementary Assistant Principal - Ms. Leila Mesinger
Social Worker - Ms. Emily Carmichael

Visitors

Jolyn Casper
Linda Roebuck
Amy Sharp
Don Main- Marotta/Main Architects
Scott Eldridge- Marotta/Main Architects

Educational Presentations

A. Building Projects - Marotta/ Main Architects

Dr. Macharola discussed this being the first of many meetings to discuss the needs of the school district's emerging growth. With the projection to grow well over 5,000 students; the school district buildings need to be addressed. Dr. Macharola took a moment to thank the Board and then introduced Marotta/ Main Architects.

Marotta/ Main Architects presented:

Summary of Findings/Demographic Study

- Current housing stock is selling briskly.
- There are 186 new residential units expected to be built within the next two (2) years.
- The residential developments will eventually increase live births.
- The number of families relocating into the District will increase student enrollment.

Enrollment Projection

- Enrollment is projected to increase between 1 and 2% per year for the foreseeable future. This equates to a 15.1% increase over 10 years, affected by these factors:
 - Higher live birth rates
 - Percentage of live births that enroll in public school
 - More homes have student-age children, and ratio of students from those homes is increasing
 - There is still some residential development occurring in the area

Architectural & MEP Feasibility Study

Methodology & Approach

Existing Conditions Assessment

- M/M and BIA walked through each school to observe and record existing material condition, accessibility features, building uses/programming, etc.
- Analyzed site, parking, and traffic flow in and around the campus.

Educational Evaluation

- M/M met with District leadership, school principals, and other key personnel to better understand the strengths, challenges, and needs in each school.
- Investigated metrics such as class size, utilization, and school scheduling.

Development of potential design options

- Used 2031 (ten year) enrollment projections as a starting point.
- Considered how many classrooms will be needed in ten years, based on target occupancy rates.
- Viewed the campus and existing buildings holistically, taking site and community factors into account.

Building Conditions Assessment

- Overall, the District's buildings are in very good condition. Most of the concerns noted by faculty and staff were related to building design and functionality, not material condition.

Occupancy Assessment

- Grades K-6 currently have an average occupancy of 25 – 31 students per classroom, significantly higher than the target (best practice) of 18 – 25.
- MJHS and MHS are both operating at 96% utilization, well above the target (best practice) of 75 – 85%.

Target Enrollment

- As the foundation for our potential project options, M/M evaluated the projected enrollment data against best practice target occupancy and classroom utilization rates.

GRADE	2031/32 PROJECTED ENROLLMENT	TARGET OCCUPANCY (BEST PRACTICE)	TARGET UTILIZATION (BEST PRACTICE)	# OF REQUIRED CLASSROOMS
K	287	18		16
1	309	21		15
2	326	21		16
3	321	23		14
4	338	25		14
5	349	25		14
6	370	25		15

GRADE	2031/32 PROJECTED ENROLLMENT	TARGET OCCUPANCY (BEST PRACTICE)	TARGET UTILIZATION (BEST PRACTICE)	# OF REQUIRED CLASSROOMS
7	381	25	85%	18
8	411	25	85%	20
9	392	25	85%	19
10	419	25	85%	20
11	416	25	85%	20
12	417	25	85%	20

Potential Project Options -Selected For Further Review

MEC/Cole Option 2: (2) Elementary schools to house K-4 population; C.E. Cole converted back To grades 5-6.

Jr. High School Option 1: Addition/Renovation to MJHS

- Existing Auditorium and Gymnasium wing to be renovated
- Existing classrooms to be replaced with new, three-story classroom wings
- Building will accommodate approx. 1,184 students

High School Option 2: Add (8) classrooms and relocate Tech. Ed. spaces; option to renovate/expand existing pool area; build new gymnasium addition.

- Add eight (8) standard classrooms, plus three (3) relocated Tech Ed and FCS classrooms
- Renovate existing pool and add new spectator seating area
- Construct new gymnasium with seating capacity of 1,400

Cite Circulation

Existing: All four (4) District schools share a campus, which becomes highly congested with parent and bus traffic during drop-off and pick-up times. Parking and thru-site circulation should also be improved.

Proposed: Vehicle and pedestrian safety can be improved by adding several parking areas and building a bus loop connector between the Junior High and the High School.

Opinion of Probable Cost

MEC/Cole Option 2 - New K-4 Building

- Total Construction Cost: \$43,044,808
- Total Project Cost: \$52,514,665

Mech./ Finish Upgrades - MEC

- Total Construction Cost: \$3,259,229
- Total Project Cost: \$3,976,260

MJHS Option 1 - Renovations/Addition

- Total Construction Cost: \$66,391,069
- Total Project Cost: \$80,997,104

MHS Option 2 - Renovations/Addition

- Total Construction Cost (comprehensive scope – A, B, & C): \$26,469,725
- Total Project Cost (comprehensive scope – A, B, & C): \$32,293,064

Mech/ Upgrades - MHS

- Total Construction Cost: \$521,640
- Total Project Cost: \$636,401

New Administrative Building

- Total Construction Cost: \$4,978,697
- Total Project Cost: \$6,074,010

New Through-Campus Bus Connection

- Total Construction Cost: \$545,463
- Total Project Cost: \$665,464

Anticipated Drawdown Schedules

Option 1:

- Project #1 – New K-4 Building- Project Start: May 2023 / Project Complete: June 2026
- Project #2 - Rodaway: Project Start: May 2023 / Project Complete: September 2024
- Project #3 - Mech/Finish Upgrades MEC: Project Start: February 2024 / Project Complete: September 2024
- Project #4 - Mech Upgrades - MHS: Project Start: February 2023 / Project Complete: August 2024
- Project #5 - MJHS Renovation: Project Start: January 2024 / Project Complete: February 2027
- Project #6 - New Admin Building: Project Start: January 2024 / Project Complete: February 2026

- Project #7 - MHS Renovation & Addition: Project Start: January 2025 / Project Complete: June 2027
- Option 2:
- Project #1 - MJHS Renovation: Project Start: May 2023 / Project Complete: June 2026
 - Project #2 - Mech/Finish Upgrades - MEC: Project Start: February 2024 / Project Complete: September 2024
 - Project #3 - Mech Upgrades - MHS: Project Start: February 2023 / Project Complete: August 2024
 - Project #4 - New K-4 Building: Project Start: January 2024 / Project Complete: February 2027
 - Project #5 - Roadway Project: Project Start: January 2024 / Project Complete: September 2025
 - Project #6 - MHS Renovation & Addition: Project Start: January 2025 / Project Complete: June 2027
 - Project #7 - New Admin Building: Project Start: May 2026 / Project Complete: January 2028

Next Steps

- Confirm Order Of Projects and Overall Direction
- Commence Schematic Design (SD) Process On First Project
- Project scope and budget are reviewed by school board at the end of Schematic Design (SD) and Design Development (DD) phases

Questions/Comments/Concerns:

Mr. Nelson asked which building did the recent increase in enrollment effect. Dr. Macharola responded that it is "across the board;" there are a couple areas where it was a little more saturated in the Junior High, however it is pretty much spread throughout the district.

Mr. Nelson questioned how many total elementary classrooms there currently are in MEC. He explained the Board made a decision years ago to essentially pick up 10 classrooms and move them over to COLE. He asked what is the theoretical occupancy of MEC or COLE and where is the district. Mr. Main responded that they had to present options that address the overall population. He discussed as each of the options were presented in August, they were prepared by looking at the projected enrollment 10 years out; they looked at the best practice occupancies for those classrooms, which then gave them the required standard classrooms per grade. When looking at COLE, if you pull that grade out of COLE, that building would be right-sized for the next school year; that's how the options were prepared. Mr. Nelson advised part of the question is if looking at it from a fire marshal standpoint, there is a theoretical capacity for each building and then there is the actual number of students. Mr. Nelson advised when looking at the MEC there are the 44 classrooms presented, and then in theory there are 10 more "old" classrooms. He explained there are a total of however many students, but have a theoretical capacity of 4 times 270 and then maybe a theoretical capacity of an addition.

Mr. Hyneman talked about his presence in MEC about two or three times a week. He spoke about there not being any empty classrooms. Mr. Crater responded there are not. Dr. Macharola reiterated that when Mr. Nelson was speaking he stated "theoretical" and he thinks from an engineering standpoint he's trying to get a grasp of the overall picture; there is no space. Mr. Nelson agreed, and discussed his questioning of having a large number of students and trying to squeeze them into four walls (building) and this has certainly been done at COLE. Mr. Main advised that this is reflecting the occupancy at the youngest level currently, and pointed out that the district is at the 25 students per grade level per classroom; that is based on the number of classrooms that's in the building based on occupancy. Mr. Nelson advised that he knew COLE was full and was receptive to the architect's explanation.

Mr. Nelson questioned Option 1 (MEC/COLE New School for Grades 3-4), why this would not be the best option. He discussed they would now be taking 11 classrooms out of MEC and putting them into a new building. Then taking 10 or 11 classrooms out of COLE and putting them into a new building, and questioning if this didn't get to the certain number needed (students in classroom). Mr. Main advised that this option would get the district to that number, however some of this would need to go to the Administration in terms of the grade configuration, grade level within the buildings, and how that relates to the community of the school. He advised they could get to the right number of students in classrooms with both of the options previously presented. He spoke about the concept of the K-4 building was as the Muhlenberg population grows, and there are kids of different ages that are coming into the district, this type of building would be set up for a future addition would give the district the most flexibility within a grade structure to accommodate the 2031-2032 population but also a population beyond this. Mr. Nelson talked about a K-4 building, which needs to be staffed K-4 with administration; while a 3-4 building the district theoretically could take the existing educational staff of three and move them, take the existing staff of four and move them, then just be adding supplemental staff as the district would add classrooms. He explained where as in a new building K-4, the district would be duplicating the staff that is currently in the MEC building plus what staff is servicing grade 4. Mr. Main discussed these two options were similar in scale, where the district would be building buildings that have more square footage, and each classroom would have a full-time teacher and administrative component. He advised this would be the case whether or not the district builds a K-4 building or 3-4 building. Mr. Nelson asked that with Option 2, the plan is to duplicate MEC, whereas there would be elementary center 1 and elementary center 2. Mr. Main confirmed there would be two elementary centers K-4; alleviating and removing 4th grade out of COLE allowing this building to go back to grades 5-6. Mr. Main explained the other option would be all of the 3rd graders and all of the 4th graders completely in their own building. He explained the options are similar in the amount of classrooms, it is just the difference in configuring the grades. Mr. Mian talked about the new building being designed to allow for future expansion, the footplan like this would allow the district to have a future wing that could be expanded there, that gives the district broader population expansion and future expansion as the district is thinking about the building ten years forward. Mr. Nelson discussed from a staffing standpoint, this option means the district would be duplicating the staff from MEC. Dr. Futrick explained that the district would also have to add, currently at 11 classrooms per grade, and going up to 16 classrooms per grade; the district is looking at 5 new teachers to get

to that level. Mr. Nelson asked to confirm whether it is the 3-4 building or the K-4 building, the total number of teachers needed is the same for both options. Everyone agreed. Mr. Main advised it is the same number of teachers, it's just deciding how the district wants to structure it; also less moves for the students if they built the new K-4 building. Mr. Hyneman spoke about two reasons for adjusting the buildings, one is classrooms will be taken out of one building and added to another building and this doesn't mean those classrooms will be empty since the plan would be to take students out of existing classrooms so there are not too many. He commented that students can flow into the other classrooms as the district does not want to have 30 students in one room.

Ms. Howard asked if there are any concerns regarding the proximity of an elementary school that is close to the high school in terms of safety for the elementary school students. Dr. Macharola discussed the "ebb and flow" currently and the fact that the elementary school is on campus the district doesn't really have issues that you would normally see in other environments. He advised it is a concern but it comes down to the culture of the Muhlenberg area and the fact that the district already has an elementary school that is basically on the same campus; all that separates them is the field. Dr. Macharola talked about the current foot traffic, the district's numbers continue to grow and there are more and more walkers. He discussed the majority of the students at the high school drive and they also receive bus transportation. Dr. Macharola spoke about the actual number of riders in the district and that he initially does not have any issues with the proximity being that close to the high school as we already have an elementary school on the same campus. Mr. Eldridge advised one of the main focuses when starting a building project like this would be looking at the traffic and the flow on campus. Dr. Macharola talked about other urban areas and schools where high school and elementary schools actually interact with one another and it really does come down to the culture. He reiterated he believes the district would be okay here. Dr. Macharola discussed the current "big brother, big sister" concept here in Muhlenberg which is why the high school students are let out early not only for transportation reasons but to help the family.

Mr. Hoffmaster questioned where Marotta/Main Architects received the number for demographics. Mr. Main advised the demographer met with local realtors to local municipalities. He advised he looked at the trends in the housing market, new housing as all of this is factored in; its local research. Mr. Hoffmaster asked about the low income housing and if this was factored in. Mr. Main responded that all of the new housing projects that started at that time were factored in. Mr. Nelson asked if Marotta Main used independent means. Mr. Main advised that they did; Montgomery Associates.

Mr. Hyneman asked about the existing spectator seating for the pool located in the high school and the additional seating being presented to construct on the other side of the pool. Mr. Eldridge confirmed this.

Mr. Nelson asked what happens to the existing gym once the new one is built. Mr. Eldridge responded it will become an aux gym.

Mr. Hoffmaster asked what would happen to the old pool. Mr. Eldridge explained that there is money built into the budget to rehabilitate/renovate the existing pool; and they would be just adding additional spectator seating. Dr. Macharola asked for more explanation on the rehabilitation of the pool and questioned if this would mean for them to tear the pool out and build a new one or just fix the issues (which is a lot of issues). Mr. Eldridge advised that they would be tearing out the majority of the pool including walls, rebuilding the sides, putting in new ventilation, making sure it meets the requirements of the starting blocks, etc. He went on to explain that they would be keeping the space where the pool is located but all of the "guts", all of the piping, and filtration will all be replaced. Mr. Eldridge advised that this is a major renovation.

Mr. Hyeman commented that the new gymnasium will allow the entire student body, however he asked whether the current auditorium can house the entire student body. Mr. Mish responded that it does currently, however it is at its almost capacity.

Mr. Hyneman talked about his biggest concern is the transportation/traffic congestion when adding another school and being on one campus. Dr. Macharola spoke about three to four years ago on Shar Avenue with the old single roads and major congestion on Kutztown Road, Bellevue Avenue, and everywhere around the campus. He advised the municipalities cannot navigate and change the roads, they have to stay where they are. He advised the district previously began to utilize the inside pathways for the buses to alleviate for safety reasons to transport from one side to the other side. Dr. Macharola discussed that the Sharp Avenue and Kutztown Road side of the campus is very congested not only with buses, but a large number of parents drive their children to school and parent pickup. He explained the district does things methodically, having the buses navigate before school lets out and having the junior high and high school leave well before the elementary levels leave. He advised these situations will always be of a safety concern and are well aware of the needs for the district. Mr. Hoffmaster discussed a previous inquiry regarding opening up a passage from 5th street highway, freeing up traffic on Sharp Avenue. Dr. Macharola advised of a huge safety consideration this could lead to with the safety of the campus. Mr. Eldridge discussed mapping this and looking at all of those populations and looking at the cues; really studying this as a first step. Mr. Hyneman also mentioned the students that walk will need to be taken into consideration.

Ms. Howard questioned why the district has or hasn't considered breaking into two separate campuses; is it that land not available or the cost would be astronomical. Mr. Lupia and Mr. Nelson advised there isn't any land that we own. Mr. Nelson advised that the township has chosen to build on a multitude of land throughout the community making it even more difficult even if this was an option; making the only place available is this district's campus. Dr. Macharola talked about this being a good question and reiterated that it is not an option.

Mrs. Eagle asked Dr. Macharola if there is any thought as to how it will be determined which elementary students will be assigned to which elementary school (regarding the building of two K-4 buildings). Mrs Eagle commented that she believes this is where the community will question. He responded that there hasn't been any determination at this time.

Mr. Nelson asked about the new building costs of MEC/COLE there being roughly 9 million in "soft cost" and roughly 14 million of "soft cost" in the junior high, why the big difference. Mr. Eldridge and Mr. Main discussed how they are getting from the construction cost to the total project cost, is they apply a "multiplier" at this very early stage. Comparing other K-4 public schools ranging anywhere from 18% to 25% range of the construction cost is what the "soft costs" are. Mr. Main advised they are using a 22% "soft cost multiplier"; from a planning standpoint taking the estimated construction cost times 1.22. He explained in the "soft cost" percentage there are permitting fees, architectural and engineering fees, furniture and fixtures, and construction contingencies that make up this percentage. Mr. Nelson asked to see more of the "hard numbers," and advised that there are variable costs and construction costs, but then there are fixed costs associated with construction. Mr. Main explained that the cost estimate is the design tool that goes with them the whole way through the process, explaining that these are feasible study cost estimates, then as they decide to go into a direction with each project they would go through schematic design coming back with another refined cost estimate. Mr. Lipa asked in regards to the higher costs, do they take into account any problems that may arise during construction like change orders or the unforeseen. Mr. Main responded yes that is accounted for in the project cost. He advises that they advise the district to hold a 5% construction contingency as this is a cautious number to hope to not use.

When discussing the anticipated drawdown schedule and the two options, Mr. Nelson advised that he believes they should begin the new K-4 building project first. Mr. Nelson advised that if doing Option 3, this would start with the new K-4 building and then discussing the next projects and having the Administration building last. Dr. Macharola and the board agreed. Mr. Hyneman commented that starting with the new K-4 building will alleviate problems with COLE; addressing two buildings at once. Mr. Nelson talked about the finishing upgrades and the mechanical upgrades, he would almost like to see (including Mr. Scott Kramer) is there a way to do project costs internally. Dr. Macharola agreed. The board agreed again with Option 3.

Mr. Hoffmaster asked Mr. Mathias if there was any way to get help from the government. Mr. Mathias discussed the primary funding source as the state has the previous planning time and in talking about the district's current debt has an income subsidy, but the district's newer debt since 2017 planning time is already gone. Mr. Mathias advised there is no help from the government at this time and is not aware of anything, however he will look into it.

Dr. Macharola wanted to talk about the parking lot and looking to absorb some of the overflow as they look into the new field and parking center below. Mr. Main spoke about the possibility of the playdeck which the cars parked on grade so the district would not be paying to build a parking structure and then adding a play surface that was a single story above it. He explained that there are two things this build does, one is that it gives more open playing surface and the other is that it gives the ability to be open or a lock down structure when open during school hours. He advised this location would be on Bellevue Avenue to the side of it. Mr. Main also advised that in looking at this option they would return the footprint of the building and build a more compact building in the hope to pick up more parking with this. Dr. Macharola commented that

with the more activities in the district, the playing field will be beneficial. Mr. Lupia asked about the parking lot option (playdeck), can they only build a playing field or can there be a structure with two or three stories. Mr. Main responded that they are able to build a structure over a parking area and it does get into fire ratings and things like this as well as being more expensive construction. Mr. Main explained the nice thing about just doing the playdeck is from a structural standpoint it is a very sturdy structure.

Dr. Macharola talked about the checklist for the Board would be to have everything scoped out, getting ahold of Mr. Kramer and advise him of what the Board is looking at.

Mr. Hyneman thanked Mr. Main and Mr. Eldridge for an excellent presentation as it was very comprehensive.


Hearing of Visitors - Muhlenberg School District taxpayers and residents have an opportunity, at this time, to comment on matters of concern, official action, or deliberation which are or may be before the Muhlenberg School Board. ***This period of time is for comments only; it is not a time to engage in a question and answer or debate with the board. Comments from the Board are at the option of the Board.*** The Board retains the option to accept all public comment at this time. Presentations ***will*** be limited to two minutes per person. In the event that the Board determines that there is not sufficient time for residents or taxpayers of the School District to comment, the Board may defer the comment period to the next regular meeting.

There were none.

Adjourn Meeting

Moved by Mrs. Eagle and Mr. Nelson, that there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting be adjourned. Meeting adjourned at 7:48 PM.

Attest:


Cindy L. Mengle
Secretary