

BHS ReEnvisioning Steering Committee
Recommendation to the Superintendent
February 2018

History

In 2013-2015 a committee of teachers, administrators, parents, and community members gathered together to assess the needs of the BHS community. Some of the activities were an accessibility walk-through, workshops with teachers and staff surrounding visioning, as well as gathering information from community members.

In May of 2017 Superintendent Obeng formed an ad hoc committee comprised of community members. The BHS ReEnvisioning Committee was formed with Signe Daley, Martine Guilik, Jim Holway, and Kate Stein. Lorraine Carter-Lovejoy became integral to this committee in the autumn. The Steering Committee oversees the Resource Committee which is comprised of 45 community members with a core of 14 people who regularly attend meetings. The roles of the two committees are defined below.

Resource Committee

1. To research aspects of the school renovation in depth for the steering committee and report back. This will spread the work around and allow the steering committee to spend its time bringing together all the various considerations. The steering committee will make the final recommendation to the superintendent.
2. To act as ambassadors to the community at large, helping spread the word about the final plan and explaining why the community needs to vote yes for the construction bond.

Steering Committee

1. Guide Resource Committee
2. Make a recommendation to the superintendent
3. Launch a broad Public Relations Campaign for a future capital bond vote which will allow us to have a “new” Burlington High School/BTC

The committees have met regularly from June 2017 - December 2017.

Process

The Steering Committee has guided the work since May 2017 and had many joint meetings with the Resource Committee. Probing questions have been asked in the meetings with the Resource Committee, and their expertise has been used in many aspects of the process. The committee reviewed and revised information from the 2013-2015 committee and we moved forward based on work that had been previously conducted. In addition to solidifying the design directives that were to be presented to the community, the committee decided to bring forward two design concepts: 1) a new building and 2) the renovation of A and B buildings with new construction surrounding the two buildings. The third design concept (from the 2013-2015 era) of renovating all of the current BHS buildings was discarded due to the high cost and the thought that the concept would not meet enough of the design directives. The committee requested that Black River Design bring the plan for renovation using existing assets up to the same level of detail as the new building concept.

Many parts of the process happened concurrently. For example, early on the Steering Committee recognized that videos similar to those that were produced for the March 2017 bond vote would be very helpful to a public awareness campaign. Thanks to Jim Holway and Vicky Smith for spending so much time to make this video. As the video was being produced, work was continuing on planning for community input sessions, student input sessions, parent coffees, and NPAs. Three community input sessions were conducted at the end of October 2017 and four opportunities for student input were held at the high school spanning from November and December, as well as other formal gatherings (please see the Points of Contact spreadsheet for details). Formal meetings began with a slide presentation (when the technology permitted), followed by a question and answer period, and ending with a feedback gathering period. All of the presentations that were attended garnered acknowledgement that the BHS facility could be a better learning environment for today's students.

When the three community input sessions were concluded, Martine, Lorraine, and Kate read and collated the data. Attached are the comments from the google forms and from the handwritten comments. In addition to the community input, the letter from Black River Design dated September 13, 2017 presents a strong case for renovation.

This group only touched on alternative funding sources as there were no experts in this field on either the Steering or Resource Committees. Many conversations with community members asked about funding alternative to a bond; for example grants and donations.

In addition to the design directives presented, community members also would like the building to be as environmentally friendly as possible.

Conclusion

It was interesting to hear from BHS alumni from the 1970s and 1980s regarding how surprised they were at how much was the same from when they attended school. There was a general feeling from this group and others that BHS should be a shining star and that it should attract families to our city.

The Steering Committee also would encourage the Superintendent to explore additional forms of funding in addition to a bond. There are many potential naming opportunities.

In addition to the community input, the letter from Black River Design dated September 13, 2017 presents a strong case for renovation. A comment from the Community Input Meeting at Champlain Elementary sums up many of the points pro renovation, “Keeping usable space, not rebuilding BTC, on an established site, can add on in future years, cheaper, other versions for renovation, keep the boiler, keep the auditorium, keep the playing fields, one entrance, no water table issues, you still have the building on the hill away from noise, keep the gym.”

The Steering Committee recommends to the Superintendent the concept of renovation.