

Arlington School Committee

Facilities Subcommittee Meeting, September 9, 2020

-DRAFT Minutes-

Attendance

Subcommittee members: Jeff Thielman (Chair), Kirsi Allison-Ampe, M.D.

District administration: Dr. Kathleen Bodie (Superintendent), Jim Feeney (Interim Facilities Director), Michael Mason (CFO), Robert Spiegel (Chief Human Resources Director), Matthew Janger, Ph.D. (AHS Principal), William McCarthy (AHS Assistant Principal)

Other Attendees Jane Morgan (Chair, Arlington School Committee), Len Kardon (Member, Arlington School Committee)

Mr. Thielman called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Minutes of the previous meeting

Dr. Kirsi Allison-Ampe moved approval of the August 26, 2020 minutes. Second by Mr. Thielman. Approved 2-0.

HVAC Report

Jim Feeney gave an overview of working being done to bring ventilation equipment to standard throughout the district and a report on tent purchases. He took questions from School Committee members as well.

Mr. Feeney gave the following summary of his team's work in schools that house K-8 students in Arlington:

- He and his team are resolving any ventilation concerns in all seven elementary schools, the Gibbs 6th Grade School and the Ottoson Middle School. Mr. Feeney reported that his team has not encountered an HVAC issue that it cannot resolve by September 21 in APS classrooms housing K-8 students.
- Mr. Feeney said he is not able to upgrade filters in 'ductless' units that accommodate only manufacturer filters, which are located in the Stratton and Gibbs main office areas, as well as the Thompson multi-purpose room. These spaces do have dedicated fresh air intakes, but the return air filters cannot be upgraded.
- His team is providing upgraded filters in all units serving classrooms.
- He reported the district has leased tents from Taylor Rental for the elementary schools, Gibbs, and Arlington High School. He is seeking to lease a tent for Ottoson Middle School. The tents at

Arlington School will be placed in the courtyard, allowing for some outdoor activities and gatherings in the fall.

- Mr. Feeney's staff is making repairs to the Gibbs tomorrow (Thursday, 9/10/20).
- The facilities staff is installing Merv-13 filters throughout the district.
- He confirmed that his staff will complete HVAC updates at all K-8 schools (seven elementary schools, the Gibbs, and the Ottoson Middle School) by September 21.

Mr. Feeney then discussed the HVAC needs of Arlington High School. He highlighted these points in his presentation:

- His team is in the process of repairing HVAC in three social studies rooms on the third floor, the band room, and art room
- He reported that the 4 LINK classrooms do not have operable fresh air intakes.
- He was concerned about being able to repair two of the Down's House classroom units, but it now appears that his staff can service these two units as soon as they identify replacement parts.
- Mr. Feeney said that rooms 108, 321 and 322 have units that are beyond repair; he is researching other potential options.
- His team has concluded that rooms 507A and 503B (larger, language classroom spaces that had been subdivided over time) will need duct work modifications to ensure each space has its own supply and return air feeds.
- Rooms 111A and 111B are large spaces with no operable windows. The spaces have mechanical ventilation with fresh air intake. Because of the lack of windows, however, the school is reluctant to use them for instruction.

Subcommittee members asked Mr. Feeney if he could prepare a report on the costs of installing mechanical ventilation with fresh air intake, as well as other upgrades, in every space at AHS used by students and staff in previous school years. The subcommittee is interested in knowing what it would cost to upgrade as many spaces as possible for in-person instruction. Mr. Feeney said he could get cost estimates in about two weeks.

Arlington High School

Dr. Janger and Mr. McCarthy presented a plan and rationale to postpone full hybrid instruction at Arlington High School to the second semester (late January). They cited the following reasons for the postponement:

- Ventilation issues in several classrooms and learning spaces,
- Windowless rooms, including some with adequate mechanical ventilation and fresh air intake,
- Classroom size limits, particularly factoring in six feet of space between desks, and
- The need to staff the Remote Academy.

Dr. Janger and Mr. McCarthy then took questions and heard comments from subcommittee members and School Committee members.

Len Kardon said that he wished he and the committee had been clearer in early July that the purpose of the hybrid model was to get kids into the school as much as possible. The August 10 motion's intent was

to get students in school as soon as possible, and it is disappointing that a full hybrid model is not possible until January.

Mr. Kardon said the hybrid model the school leadership inputted into the scheduling system does not work, but there is no evidence that the principal and his staff looked at other hybrid options, such as bringing in one grade at a time or scheduling only a few core subjects (Math and Science, for example) in the school.

Mr. Kardon said that the main motion the committee adopts responding to the Principal's recommendation should direct the district's leadership to tell the School Committee what it would take in terms of facilities, even modular classrooms, and staffing to operate a hybrid model. He asked the AHS leadership team to look at other hybrid models.

Mr. Kardon asked Dr. Janger what it would take to get students into the school in January. Dr. Janger said three variables would make a return to in-person instruction more likely:

- Modifying the assumption of six feet of space between desks in each classroom; the spreadsheet sent to Dr. Bodie supporting his memo contains a tab with classroom availability at a smaller distance than six feet.
- Utilizing video (livestreaming) so that students can be in the classroom or watch instruction by video.
- Different sized cohorts than he has in the current hybrid model.

Dr. Kirsi Allison-Ampe said that not returning students to school sooner would cause social and emotional stress on many teenagers and their families. Dr. Janger said he is conscious of this and is planning activities that bring students to campus for some activities over the course of the first quarter.

Dr. Allison-Ampe asked if the district had looked to lease other spaces at churches and community centers, and Dr. Bodie said her team had reached out but did not have any luck.

Jane Morgan said that a concern she is hearing from parents is that AHS adult staff have not laid eyes on students since March, more than six months ago. She said that a sound remote plan is one in which school faculty and staff call students when they do not submit work on time or miss class.

Dr. Janger said that he and his teaching staff are in conversations about a follow-up plan for students who struggle with the remote learning model. He said the school is planning on bringing high needs students to school in September, and he would be working with the Special Education staff to implement this plan.

Dr. Janger said that he and his staff will provide more details to parents and the School Committee on the remote instruction plan later this month, he is happy to provide a more detailed report on the students' experience with remote learning in general by November, and he will be able to present a plan for in-person hybrid learning at AHS by mid-November.

The subcommittee agreed to work with the district's leadership to identify funds that could be used to upgrade facilities so that in-person instruction could take place at AHS starting in January. Mr. Thielman noted that the new AHS facility will not be ready to sometime in the winter of 2022, meaning we have three semesters of education at AHS occurring between now and then.

Other items from the August 10 School Committee motion

There was no discussion under this agenda item

APS Capital needs submission to the Town's Capital Planning Committee

Mr. Mason reviewed APS' capital requests. Dr. Allison Ampe and Ms. Morgan said the requests seemed like the right ones for the district to make. Mr. Mason is submitting the request on Thursday, 9/10.

Next Steps

The subcommittee discussed drafting a motion accepting the Superintendent's recommendation with requests for additional reports and information by mid-November. Mr. Thielman agreed to draft a motion based on today's discussion and share it with the full School Committee as early as possible on Thursday, September 10, 2020.

New Business

None

Adjournment

At 2:48 p.m., Dr. Allison-Ampe moved adjournment of the meeting. Mr. Thielman seconded. Adopted 2-0.