

Our group was formed in June 2013 with the task of performing a thorough & comprehensive evaluation of the Dixon Public School District's current facilities, and to develop a long-term plan to help guide present and future Board of Education members in providing a safe & educationally stimulating environment for our student (and doing so in a fiscally responsible manner) with a Comprehensive Plan to be presented to the Board of Education by June 2014.

We are here in April 2014 -ahead of that schedule- because our schools need help and they need it now!

Through these 10 months we have:

- Heard from experts in Security, Health/Life/Safety issues & ADA and found our schools lacking;
- Toured all the schools & grounds and found cracking & crumbling walls & ceilings and vital systems at or past their expected lifespan;
- Looked at current space utilization and found it to not be optimal;
- Reviewed current Operating costs and short & long-range maintenance schedules and found them to be inefficient and increasingly costly;
- Studied taxes, bonding & the State's Capital Development Board grant funding and found there are possibilities; and
- Toured the new elementary school and high school at Rochelle and were frankly, jealous.

We talked a lot. We are a diverse group with many points of view and a variety of opinions. Our path to this recommendation was not straight. We wandered all over the place. Should we build new or rehab existing schools? Which building should we start with? Which grade levels? Should we buy land? If so, where and to build what? And how can we let everybody know about the poor condition of our buildings?

What we could agree on was that Dixon's kids deserved better, that our district was failing to compete with its neighbors in terms of facilities and 21st Century Learning, and that it was within the power of the people of Dixon to remedy the situation.

We asked the architectural firms of Green & Assoc. and ARCON to help us. After seeing their presentations we came to the realization that in order to successfully accomplish our goals we would need expert help and that the next step to be taken would require expenditure by this Board.

Tonight we are not delivering a Comprehensive Plan, but rather a call to action entitled Vision 2020.

The Strategic Planning Task Force of the Dixon Public School District 170 has concluded that its facilities are deficient in the following areas:

- 1) Their basic mechanical infrastructure is inefficient, obsolete or non-existent;
- 2) The physical building conditions are deteriorating beyond the scope of maintenance;
- 3) There is inadequate practice & performance space for both athletics & the arts;
- 4) They fail to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- 5) They lack up-to-date safety & security systems; and
- 6) They fail to provide the space and furnishings conducive to a 21st Century Learning environment.

These criteria are met in other facilities in other districts – not unlike ours – which begs the question: Why not here? Why not for our kids? These deficiencies need to be corrected in order to provide a safe & educationally stimulating environment for our students. This is our goal and the guidance we offer you and future members of this board.

We believe the inadequacy of our facilities as they currently exist, and the cost of operating and maintaining the existing facilities in the Dixon Public School system cannot be justified.

Through the lens of the year 2020 all our schools will be facing very tangible and costly “end of life” realities. Dixon High School will be 91 years old. It was only 50 years ago that the modern electronic marvel of the 4-function calculator replaced the slide rule. Much has changed and the pace of that change is accelerating. Simply put, our facilities have not kept up.

Dixon is currently at a tipping point. Our schools can either be an engine that helps to propel us toward a period of growth & prosperity or they can be an anchor that holds us back from reaching our potential. The community needs to be made aware NOW of the serious issues we currently face; be given realistic options for addressing them; and allowed to make an informed choice about the educational opportunities it will make available to its children. The school district’s stewardship of the community’s investment in education needs to be married to a clear vision of hope for better opportunities & brighter tomorrows for our children and generations to come.

We, therefore, recommend with urgency that you, the Dixon Board of Education hire a consulting firm to facilitate the process of sharing with the community the need for updating the district’s schools and developing a plan for renovating the existing schools and/or building new ones that will support the changing landscape of public education.

The Task Force appreciates being entrusted with this challenge and hopes that the Board and Dixon Community find this information valuable.