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Community Engagement **PROPOSAL** Warren County School District

Prepared Personally For:

Amy Stewart, Superintendent
Paul Mangione, Board President

Warren County School District

Proposal Issued:
11.28.2022

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Project Understanding/Expression of Interest

Over the last decade, the demographics of the Warren County School District (WCSD) have been changing. There are fewer students in the district overall and the rural nature of the county impacts attendance and transportation. The district has worked to consolidate buildings with the high schools being the last to consolidate.

Over the next few months, the leadership would like to undertake a community engagement process to invite the public to explore options for academic reconfiguration and potential reuse of any of the school buildings that could or should be taken out of service. Ideally, the process includes three facilitated in-person public meetings, held on regularly scheduled committee meeting dates, with the option for participants to join virtually, if desired.

This proposal is being submitted based on a discussion with Amy Stewart, Superintendent and Paul Mangione, President of the school board. Strategy Solutions in collaboration with Rodney Green, former Interim Superintendent and consultant will provide consulting and technical assistance to prepare for and facilitate a community engagement process to provide input into facility planning options and decision making by the school board.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes anticipated from this engagement include but are not limited to:

- Work collaboratively with Rodney Green to assist the school board and administration to understand and vet the facility use options and select the best alternative based on objective criteria. This will include identifying the options available, as well as developing criteria to select and implement a preferred option for facility use that best meets the needs of students and community into the future.
- Assist WCSD in developing the agenda and relative content for a series of board work sessions and meetings as well as community engagement sessions designed to maximize community input while helping to identify options and provide input into the facility planning process.
- Facilitate three community engagement public meetings as well as selected focus groups and interviews and a community survey that provide a broad-base of community input into the facility planning process.
- Provide WCSD with a summary of the comments and input from each group.

As the facilitator, Strategy Solutions' staff will:

- Work with Rodney Green to develop and implement a transparent process that engages the community in the facility planning process and supports the board in their decision making to select the best alternative based on objective criteria.
- Provide consultative support to the board, Superintendent and others involved in the process to prepare for input sessions and interviews and develop a topic guide that includes questions to facilitate the discussion.
- Develop electronic polls during the sessions so that the board members can rate/rank ideas and options provided by the public during the sessions.
- Facilitate the sessions.
- Provide a summary of the discussion at each session within 3 days after each session.

Project Approach

To guide this process, we recommend that a Work Group be created that includes the board chair, the Building and Grounds Committee chair, and the Superintendent. The purpose of this group is to work with the consultants to prepare for each of the sessions and craft the agendas and approaches to maximize the input from the community and support effective decision making. The recommended process includes:

- **Initial Board Work Session:** the purpose of this initial work session is to educate the board about the process and expected outcomes, adjust the process and timeline as necessary to ensure that the board's intended outcomes are met and to begin to discuss objective criteria that can be used to evaluate options.
- **Individual Interviews with Key Stakeholders:** this will include individual interviews with school board members and key members of administration (the 4 high school principals, the Director of Special Education, the Assistant Superintendent/Curriculum Director, and the Director of Facilities. The purpose of the interviews is to gather input on potential ideas and options that could be considered for the district, criteria for decision making and to understand the needs and interests associated with potential ideas and options.
- **Board Work Session:** the purpose of this session would be to finalize the criteria that will be used for decision making based on input from the key stakeholders.
- **Board Meeting/Public Engagement Session #1: Ideas and Options:** This public session would provide the opportunity for the public to brainstorm with the board and administration and suggest additional potential ideas for potential academic reconfiguration of the schools. The public will be asked to react to the ideas and options that were generated in the stakeholder interviews as well as to identify other possible ideas and scenarios as well. This meeting will also include discussion of the criteria that the board will use in ultimately choosing a preferred option, so that the public is aware of the various factors that will go into the decision making. This meeting will conclude with the board conducting an initial rating and ranking of potential options to limit the number of options to be considered to 4 or 5, that the administration would then analyze and vet for discussion at the next public meeting.
- **Community Engagement/Outreach:** After the initial options are selected, SSI recommends conducting a series of focus group discussions with various constituent groups in the community as well as a community survey. We recommend the "captive audience" method of focus groups whereby we would attend an existing meeting of a specific group, where people are already convened. The purpose of these focus groups would be to discuss the ideas and options under consideration and to gather input on the plusses, potentials and concerns associated with each of the options. Recommended groups include:
 - **Chamber of Commerce**
 - **Warren County Planning Commission**
 - **Teacher's Union**

The SSI consultants would facilitate the discussion provide a summary of each meeting. If these groups do not have scheduled meetings during timeframe allotted on the project schedule for this activity, we would ask each group to convene a special meeting to provide input into this process. The survey would be distributed through the district.

- **Board Meeting/Public Engagement Session #2: Options Analysis:** This session would begin with a presentation by the consultant team that includes the input gathered from the community engagement, outreach focus groups, and survey, as well as the pros and cons of each of the options that were selected at the first meeting, including the available data that would support or refute the viability of the potential options. To prepare for this session, Rodney Green would work with administration to gather the data on the various options and prepare the presentation of the summary data.

Following the presentation, the public will be given the opportunity to provide their input into the various options, sharing their perspectives on the plusses, potentials and concerns related to each of the options. The SSI team will facilitate this discussion to ensure that all voices are heard.

- **Board Work Session:** the purpose of this session would be to rate/rank each of the options based on the objective criteria. The consultant team (including SSI and Rodney Green) will facilitate this discussion to ensure that all voices are heard.
- **Board Meeting/Public Engagement Session #3: Implementation Plan:** This session would also begin with a presentation by Rodney Green that includes the recommended implementation plan for the selected option. To prepare for this session, Rodney will work with members of administration to determine the action steps, timeframes and budget associated with implementing the selection option. Again, both the public and board members will be given the opportunity to provide their input on the plusses, potentials and concerns related to the implementation plan. This will provide the board and administration with valuable information regarding steps that may need to be added to the implementation plan to address concerns and maintain positive public relations during the transition period. If the selected option includes any buildings removed from service, the agenda will include brainstorming possible alternative uses that could be considered in the future.

SSI will facilitate the board work sessions and the community focus groups. The public engagement sessions will include a virtual participation option through Zoom. The work sessions will be designed to utilize the OptionFinder audience response polling system to enable the board to rate/rank potential options as appropriate. In our experience, for virtual participation, we have found that input is enhanced by posing questions in the chat feature as well as verbally and asking participants to provide input in writing as the discussion continues. We also have given in-person participants the ability to provide anonymous input by giving them the option write down their thoughts and ideas that they may not have had the opportunity to share during the discussion. They then leave their written comments with us at the end of the session.

Work Plan

The proposed work plan for the project includes:

| Timeframe | Activity |
|--------------------|---|
| January 2023 | Initial board work session to finalize the process, discuss decision making criteria and schedule for the project |
| | Work with the project work group to finalize the schedule and discuss contacts for community outreach |
| January - February | Conduct individual interviews with board members and key stakeholders |
| March | Facilitate Public Engagement Session 1 exploring options for academic reconfiguration and selection of 4-5 options |
| March - April | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct public input sessions on 4-5 options (includes focus groups and survey) Work with school district to gather data on the feasibility and cost associated with each of the 4-5 options |
| May | Facilitate Session 2 presenting options and discussing plusses, potentials and concerns with various options |
| May | Board Work session to select preferred option |
| June | Facilitate Session 3 presenting implementation plan and discussing plusses, potentials and concerns associated with the implementation plan |

Cost & Terms

The cost for SSI to facilitate this process for WCSD is \$20,000 which includes consultation support leading up to the sessions, individual interviews, session facilitation, and the summary of input obtained both in person and virtually from each session. This includes Rodney Green's fee for his role in supporting this process. Payment terms include:

- \$8,000 initial payment upon contract signing.
- \$6,000 on delivery of Session 2 summary.
- \$6,000 on delivery of Session 3 summary.

The cost does not include travel to Warren. Estimated travel is \$695.31.

The following are estimated travel costs for 5 trips (3 sessions and 2 days for focus groups):

- SSI: 73.5 miles to Admin Office per trip
- Rod Green: 149 miles to Admin Office per trip
- 2022 federal mileage rate at 62.5 cents

Acceptance

Please sign and date the original and enclosed copy of this proposal and return the signed original to Strategy Solutions, Inc. The above proposal has been read, acknowledged and agreed to this 9 day of January, 2023.

Warren County School District

Paul J. Mangione, Board President

ATTEST: _____
Ruth A. Huck, Board Secretary



Debra A. Thompson, President

Our Team

Deb Thompson will be the main meeting facilitator. She will offer consultative support to the Steering Committee prior to and after the sessions to ensure desired outcomes are met.

Jacqui Catrabone will be responsible for setting up and managing the virtual sessions as well as developing the summaries of the input. She will provide facilitation and consultative support as needed throughout the engagement as well.

Rodney Green will work with members of administration to identify and vet possible options as well as determine the action steps, timeframes and budget associated with implementing the selection option. He will provide oversight to this engagement as it relates to curriculum, academic options and impact on students.



A Little Background about Us ...

Strategy Solutions, Inc. delivers creative solutions to ensure the sustainability of nonprofit, public and private organizations, and to create healthy communities. Our unique approach blends analytical research capabilities, group process techniques, best practices and planning tools — resulting in remarkable outcomes.

Strategy Solutions (SSI) is a certified WBE (Woman Business Enterprise) with a mission to create healthy communities. Our staff has been at the forefront of Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNAs) since 1993, with our Founder and President, Debra Thompson, completing the first CHNA for Erie County that became the model for the PA State Health Improvement Planning Districts. Active in the Association for Community Health Improvement, SSI has a national reputation for excellence in healthcare, community and nonprofit planning.

Our projects and clients have been recognized as best practices by the Pennsylvania, New York and Ohio Departments of Health, the Council on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Welfare, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Pennsylvania and Maryland Workforce Development Associations, The National Standards for Excellence[®] Institute, the PA Association of Nonprofit Associations (PANO) and the International Economic Development Council.

SSI has intentionally expanded our practice into community, economic and workforce development to better understand the role(s) these entities play in creating healthier communities and to be better equipped to help organizations and communities “connect the dots” and learn strategies to bridge the “silo-ism” that a barrier to community development.

WE DELIVER STRATEGY THAT ...

Transforms Organizations to the Next Level

When an organization has hit its limits to growth, a typical strategic planning process will often fail to accomplish results. Next-level transformation requires a more comprehensive approach to work together in new ways, creating a new business model, and identifying strategies to get there.

Accomplishes a Key Initiative

Even the most successful organizations need support from time to time to accomplish initiatives or solve complex problems. When your team feels stuck, that’s where our team shines. Through analysis, education and group process, we help clients accomplish impossible projects.

Provides a Toolkit to Ensure Sustainability

Developing and implementing needs assessments, creating policies and procedures, training to support board governance, strategic and succession planning, primary and secondary research, quality, accreditation, outcomes and impact measurement — these all require specific technical skills. If your organization has multiple needs or seeks to build capacity, we can help.

DEBRA THOMPSON, BS, MARKETING, MBA

Debra Thompson is President of Strategy Solutions. In this position, she provides strategic planning facilitation, training and planning, research and project management services to organizations and communities. Debra is also an adjunct faculty member at Duquesne University where she teaches organizational development and program development/evaluation in the Master of Organizational Leadership program. She was also an adjunct professor at Gannon University for 10 years where she taught Strategic Planning, Research Methods and Program Development. She is a certified trainer, consultant and peer reviewer for both the PA and National ***Standards for Excellence in Nonprofit Ethics and Accountability***® and a member of the National Standards Council, where she helps to set policy for the standards and approve accreditation applications for organizations across the country.



Deb received her Master of Business Administration from Gannon University. She has also completed advanced training in Strategic Planning, Quantitative and Qualitative Market Research, Total Quality Management and Leadership Development, Systems Thinking & Facilitation (through affiliates of MIT). She has 20 years' experience teaching at the master's Level at Gannon and Duquesne Universities.

JACQUI CATRABONE, BS PSYCHOLOGY, MA, SOCIAL WORK

As Director, Nonprofit and Community Services, Jacqui is responsible for providing leadership, facilitation, organization, project management and client coordination support for training, research, planning, facilitation, organizational and program development and evaluation projects for nonprofit and community/government clients. She is a certified trainer, consultant and peer reviewer for the PA ***Standards for Excellence in Nonprofit Ethics and Accountability***®.



With an undergraduate degree in Psychology from the Pennsylvania State University and a Master of Social Work degree from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, Jacqui brings a depth and breadth of project management and program development experience to SSI clients. Her significant accomplishments include the facilitation of the Northwest PA Regional Economic Development "Roles and Players" Analysis for the Northwest Commission, that resulted in better working relationships between the county-level economic development & planning agencies and the commission. Jacqui is a trained facilitator for the development of program logic and outcomes measurement models using the United Way approach.

RODNEY GREEN

Mr. Rodney Green has 38 years of experience in public education, with 25 years as a school administrator, including serving as a Superintendent in the Everett Area School District and the Spring Cove School District. For the past 10 years, he has worked extensively as an educational consultant. Rodney served as a board member for the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools and has been a lifelong advocate for the expansion of opportunities for rural learners. During his administrative career, he was directly responsible for the planning and implementation of several school construction projects. As part of those projects, he closely engaged the public and staff on related issues including school consolidation, grade realignment, special education resource planning, and efficient staffing practices."

