

**PHYSICAL PLANTS AND FACILITIES COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

DECEMBER 16, 2024

6:00 P.M. FOLLOWING CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES, BOARD ROOM

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Cody Brown - Chairperson

Mr. Daniel Sullivan

Ms. Stephanie Snell

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT:

Ms. Savanna Cochran

Ms. Tammi Holden

Mr. Kevin Lindvay

Mr. Paul Mangione

Ms. Mary Passinger

Mr. John Wortman

Mr. Gary Weber

Mr. Eric Mineweaser

Mr. Jim Grosch

Mr. Mike Kiehl

Dr. Patricia Hawley-Mead

Ms. Liz Kent

Ms. Lynn Shultz

Ms. Taylor Trisket

Mr. Rick Gignac

Ms. Jennifer Dilks

Mr. David Undercoffer

Mr. Brian Hagberg

Mr. Adam VanOrd

Mr. Amy Stimmell

Ms. Betsy Sobkowski

Ms. Danielle Gulnac

Mr. Jason Markiewicz

Mr. Jim Evers

Mr. Joshua Vincent

Ms. Julia Murphy

Ms. Kendra Darr

Ms. Kylie Harris

Ms. Lacey Schuler

Ms. Lisa Franklin

Ms. Lisa Smith

Mr. Lyle Dosser

Ms. Lynette Swab

Mr. Matt Madigan

Mr. Mike Craddock

Ms. Misty Weber

Ms. Natalie Black

Mr. Neal Kent

Ms. Nova Holeva

Mr. Shawn Bedow

Ms. Shelly Wagner

Approximately 43 members of the public present.

1.0 Opening Activities

1.1 Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 6:54 p.m.

1.2 Public Comment

Troy McFate	<p>Mr. Troy McFate raised concerns about the capacity and costs associated with the Eisenhower sewage plant in light of potential school consolidations. He noted that the facility's maximum population is 1,006, while current enrollment and staff projections for Eisenhower and Youngsville exceed this limit. He highlighted that adding administrators, teacher aides, food service workers, custodians, and additional staff would push the population even further beyond the capacity. Mr. McFate questioned the costs of expanding the sewage system, including operational expenses such as testing, chemicals, filters, and the required continuing education for personnel. He pointed out that the district's fact sheet lists no costs for the Eisenhower system, indicating a potential lack of understanding about the current expenses. He also asked about the financial penalties related to a QZAB loan if Eisenhower becomes an elementary school, a question he had posed in a previous meeting without receiving an answer. While acknowledging the need for school consolidation, Mr. McFate emphasized the importance of centralizing schools to reduce transportation times and ensuring facilities are well-equipped, safe, and do not negatively impact real estate taxes, which are critical for funding the district.</p>
Wendy Wilcox	<p>Ms. Wendy Wilcox stated that the back-and-forth discussions over the past three months have been unproductive and have only caused animosity between the community and the board. She agreed with earlier speakers that the process is creating division rather than fostering solutions. Ms. Wilcox highlighted that the closure of Youngsville is not a permanent solution to the district's challenges. She acknowledged the two main reasons for the closure—financial strain and the goal of equity in education—but argued that the current plan does not adequately address either issue. She pointed out that the district is projected to face another deficit of \$16 million within three years, even with the proposed changes. Also, noting that some classes currently offered at Youngsville will be lost with consolidation, undermining the goal of providing equitable education. Ms. Wilcox emphasized that the decision affects not just the school district but the entire county, calling for a county-wide approach rather than a decision made solely by the board. She urged the board to pause the closure motion and bring together community stakeholders, including those who have experience and innovative ideas, such as those involved with Warren Worx and the Career Center. She suggested leveraging the expertise and resources within the community to create a permanent solution rather than a temporary fix. She warned against framing the issue as an "us vs. them" conflict, stressing the importance of unity and collaboration and believes the county has the potential to address the issue effectively if everyone works together for the benefit of students, parents, and the community.</p>
Zach Sanford	<p>Mr. Zach Sanford voiced concerns about the school consolidation process, emphasizing the need for greater dialogue and long-term planning while raising specific issues regarding location, transportation, and special education. He criticized the current process for lacking meaningful, two-way conversations with community stakeholders. Mr. Sanford noted that</p>

	<p>while public comments are allowed, they do not foster real discussion or deliberation, leaving questions to be answered later via spreadsheets, which he believes is insufficient. He highlighted the challenges facing special education students, whose population remains steady despite declining overall enrollment. He expressed concern about increased busing times and the associated stress for special education students under the proposed consolidation plan. Mr. Sanford reiterated that Youngsville is centrally located and geographically strategic, as stated in the district's FAQ document. He questioned the feasibility of future plans to build a central school in Starbrick, arguing that it is unlikely to happen, especially with Warren's school remaining open indefinitely. He acknowledged the possibility of reducing the number of high schools to two in the future and suggested that these schools should ideally represent an East-West model rather than maintaining a northern-centered approach. He warned against the long-term implications of current decisions that might hinder effective planning for future attendance areas. Mr. Sanford asked for details regarding a \$21.65 million figure listed under Eisenhower Elementary and Middle/High School in the FAQ document, asking for clarification on whether this figure represents repair estimates and, if so, when those repairs would be necessary.</p>
Elizabeth Feronti	<p>Ms. Elizabeth Feronti shared her husband's difficult experiences after the closure of Sugar Grove Elementary, including long bus rides, limited extracurricular participation due to time constraints and farm responsibilities, and the feeling that his academic success came despite a lack of district support. She explained that her family chose to live near Youngsville to avoid similar hardships for their child and expressed frustration that the district might repeat history by closing Youngsville schools. Ms. Feronti emphasized the value of extracurricular activities alongside academics, noting that they teach time management, teamwork, and help students build connections. She argued that long bus rides and school consolidation would reduce students' ability to participate in these activities. She also highlighted the financial burden cyber and charter schools place on the district, referencing a \$14,000 per-student cost for cyber education in 2023. Ms. Feronti expressed concern about the district's Virtual Academy, noting that out-of-district enrollment had dropped nearly 50% without clear cost savings and suggested the academy could be used to offer classes across the district, especially to Youngsville students, to prevent consolidation. She stressed the importance of keeping schools within communities to maintain their appeal and prevent economic and social decline. Ms. Feronti warned that closing Youngsville would harm the community and voiced her willingness to explore alternatives, such as establishing a charter school, if the closure proceeds. She urged the board to collaborate with the community to find solutions that benefit both students and families, rather than making unilateral decisions. Ms. Feronti concluded by asking the board to prioritize children's well-being and not "do this to our children," reinforcing the community's dedication to preserving local schools and keeping families in the area.</p>
Harold Dunkle	<p>*Mr. Harold Dunkle donated 3 minutes of his time to Ms. Feronti.</p>
Barb Lutton	<p>Ms. Barb Lutton addressed the board to express concerns about the proposed school consolidation, emphasizing the need for equitable education. She defined equitable education as ensuring all students have</p>

	<p>the necessary resources and support to reach their potential, regardless of background or location. Ms. Lutton criticized the consolidation plan for potentially creating more inequities, noting that students' geographic location should not limit their educational opportunities. She raised concerns about missing information in the fact sheet regarding classes and opportunities at Youngsville and requested updates or clarifications. Additionally, she questioned whether the changes would result in larger class sizes and insufficient resources, such as a lack of textbooks, which is already an issue in some district schools. Ms. Lutton stressed the importance of providing adequate resources and adapting to students' unique needs. Referencing her advocacy for trauma-informed education, she argued that moving students to Eisenhower would fail to address their individual challenges and needs. She asserted that Youngsville provides a more supportive environment for students than Eisenhower and expressed doubt that the move would offer equitable support. Ms. Lutton advocated for a fair educational environment where students can achieve their goals without being limited by social or geographic factors, believing that Youngsville better supports these principles than the proposed consolidation plan.</p>
Misty Moore	<p>Ms. Misty Moore addressed the school board to advocate for keeping Youngsville's school open and expressed concerns about the proposed consolidation. She shared her personal history of advocating against the closure of Tidioute High School years ago and noted her family's decision to move back to Youngsville, believing its school was secure. Ms. Moore expressed disappointment that Youngsville now faces a similar closure threat. She criticized the consolidation plan for failing to offer new curriculum enhancements, noting that some existing classes would be removed, and argued that the primary motivation behind the closure appears to be financial rather than educational. Ms. Moore challenged claims that the entire Youngsville building must be brought up to code. She explained that maintenance updates like HVAC, plumbing, and electrical work would not require full ADA compliance upgrades unless major structural changes were made. She emphasized that Youngsville already meets many ADA requirements, with only minor deficiencies, such as signage. Ms. Moore argued that basic maintenance improvements would not incur massive additional costs and suggested that the maintenance expenses cited by the board may be exaggerated. She urged the board to reconsider the true costs of keeping Youngsville operational compared to the long-term financial burden of consolidation and the eventual construction of a new building. Ms. Moore questioned the logic of consolidating now only to face higher construction costs in the future, advocating instead for a thorough reevaluation of the financial implications of the proposed plan.</p>
Annie Cook	<p>Ms. Annie Cook presented data showing a 95% increase in administrative staff and a 39% rise in principals, despite declining student enrollment. She criticized the Central Office for employing excessive staff, claiming that many administrators have two secretaries each. Ms. Cook accused the board of acting as a "rubber stamp" for administrative decisions and urged them to cut unnecessary costs. She referenced a past board that reduced Central Office staff, only for those positions to be reinstated later. Ms. Cook argued that resources and funding disproportionately benefit larger schools like</p>

	Eisenhower and Warren High School. She highlighted Eisenhower’s new facilities and Warren High School’s ample resources, contrasting them with the neglect faced by Youngsville and Sheffield. She noted that Youngsville High School has not received maintenance since 1985 due to an asbestos issue that has been hidden from the public, while both Youngsville and Sheffield have lost programs, classes, and resources, operating on minimal budgets. She criticized the Central Office for wasting taxpayer dollars by housing too many staff in an oversized building with unused classroom space. Ms. Cook suggested decentralizing the Central Office staff by sending them to individual schools to provide direct support. She opposed proposals to consolidate students into larger schools like Eisenhower, calling it a harmful "minimal solution" that would further hurt smaller schools. Ms. Cook also raised safety concerns about the dangerous roads leading to Eisenhower, especially at night. Ms. Cook accused the district of favoritism toward larger schools and discrimination against smaller ones like Youngsville and Sheffield. She urged the board to address financial issues by eliminating excess administrative staff, closing the Central Office building if underused, and reallocating funds to smaller schools. She reminded the board of their mission to prioritize students, not administrators, and called for fair treatment of all schools in the district.
Cap Cook	*Mr. Cap Cook donated his 3 minutes of time to Ms. Annie Cook.

2.0 Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

3.0 New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

4.0 Informational Items

4.1 Transportation Discussion

Mr. Kiehl provided a detailed overview of how the transportation system would work if the school districts of Youngsville, Sheffield, Eisenhower, and Warren. He emphasized the feasibility of the plan, using GPS data to optimize bus routes and reduce travel times. The plan involves reducing bus routes to 40 minutes or less and implementing additional vans to manage certain student loads.

Current Situation and Plan Overview

Existing Bus Routes to Youngsville:

- The district currently operates 11 bus routes serving Youngsville Elementary and Youngsville Middle/High School.
- These routes are optimized using GPS data to track stop times.

Route Reduction to 40 Minutes:

- Mr. Kiehl’s plan is to reduce every bus route to Youngsville to 40 minutes.
- Buses would arrive at 7:20 AM at Youngsville Elementary.

Detailed Example of Route Optimization:

- Mr. Kiehl gave an example of one of the longest routes, which covers Angley Road, Sanford Road, and Buell's Corner Road.
- By using vans for 4 students and eliminating turnarounds on the route, the travel time could be reduced to 40 minutes.
- Similar optimizations are made for other routes by using vans for small groups of students, speeding up the overall routes.

Van Use and Cost Estimate:

- To implement this plan, up to 6 vans would be required.
- The estimated cost for these vans is \$245,000 (budgeted amount).

Specific Adjustments and Considerations

Routes to Eisenhower:

- For high school students traveling to Eisenhower, they would be picked up in Wrightsville (southernmost point for Eisenhower buses) and then transferred to vans, which would take them to Youngsville Elementary.

4.2 Summary

Mr. Gary Weber outlined the steps that would follow if the board voted to close Youngsville High School and Sheffield High School. He explained that the district would immediately begin scheduling in line with current policies and procedures while maintaining approved course numbers. Priority would be given to students, starting with course selection sheets and working with families to identify courses and manage potential transfers. He noted the need to develop additional procedures and timelines for transfers to facilitate planning. Mr. Weber emphasized addressing key areas such as transportation, academics, master schedules, athletics, safety, and resources to ensure a smooth transition. The district would involve select committees, such as CIT and PACCA, to provide recommendations on academics, staffing, and course selections, with these recommendations extending into the spring and summer. He explained staffing decisions would be aligned with scheduling and budget adoption, and principals would need master schedules early to prepare for the next school year. To address transportation barriers, Mr. Weber proposed implementing after-school activity buses and exploring creative solutions for students commuting between locations for extracurricular activities. When asked about selecting coaching staff, he discussed blending staff to ensure a smooth transition for athletics and support for programs like band, while adhering to contractual agreements where applicable.

4.4. Other

There was no other to discuss

5.0 Other

There was no other to discuss.

6.0 Closing Activities

6.1 Next Meeting Date - Monday, January 27, 2025, following the CIT Committee Meeting

6.2 Executive Session

There was no executive session.

6.3 Adjournment at 7:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tracey Josephson, Secretary
Physical Plant and Facilities Committee