

March 3, 2022

**HOPKINS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
DISTRICT FACILITIES PLAN HEARING REPORT
AMENDMENT NO. 1**

A public hearing was held on March 3, 2022, at 5:30 PM CST at the Hopkins County School District's Career and Technology Center which is located at 1775 Patriot Drive, Madisonville, Kentucky 42431. The purpose of the public hearing was to propose a District Facility Plan amendment developed by the Hopkins County School's Local Planning Committee. The Local Planning Committee (LPC) voted 15-0 on February 10, 2022, in favor of the proposed new amendment and the Hopkins County BOE voted 5-0 on February 15, 2022, to approve the plan as amended.

Pete Galloway, Kentucky School Plant Managers Association Facilitator, was selected by the board to serve as the locally-appointed hearing officer. The Hearing was properly advertised. Amy Smith, Superintendent, and Marty Cline, Assistant Superintendent of the Hopkins County Schools, were in attendance along with approximately twenty-two individuals. (see attached sign in sheets)

COMMENTS

Pete Galloway, facilitator, called the Public Hearing to order. He outlined the purpose of the hearing and the hearing procedures in accordance with 702 KAR 4:180. It was explained that those persons wishing to speak would be given the opportunity and that written statements have been accepted. All considerations will be made available to the Kentucky Board of Education via the hearing officer's report. Copies of the new DFP were available for those in attendance.

The hearing officer highlighted the proposed new District Facility Plan amendment. The amendments to the school centers on page one of the plan included both South Hopkins Middle School and Earlington Elementary School changing from permanent centers to transitional centers. Southside Elementary would be changed from a PS-5 center to a PS-8 center. Also, Hopkins County Schools Academy would be a 6-12 center.

There were no changes in Priority 1 on the new plan.

Priority II removed Earlington Elementary and South Hopkins Middle School from the plan as districts are not allowed to spend restricted funds on schools that are classified as transitional.

Southside Elementary School would receive about 24,000 square foot of additional space to house additional students from Earlington and South Hopkins MS.

Priority IV changes included purchasing an additional 16,000 square foot facility that would be renovated for a central office.

Priority 5 amendments included new construction in excess of the maximum area allowed by KDE in order to include a storm shelter in auxiliary gyms at each of the high schools.

The total “unmet need” of the Hopkins County School District is \$87,228,924.00.

The floor was opened to those who wished to make a statement or for any letters, emails, or notes of concerned to be presented. Six individuals signed in to speak.

Katy McGothlin, an Earlington parent, spoke against the amended DFP stating that ESSER funds should not be used to combine schools and she was concerned about transportation and safety issues.

Karen Groves, an Earlington grandparent, said three-fourths of her property taxes went to the schools. She felt the district needed to be more transparent.

Holly Sharber, a parent of an Earlington and a South Hopkins student, said that even though the correct protocol was followed she felt the parents did not know what was being planned. She felt students had been through emotional stress due to Covid and the tornado. She said Earlington was a top performing school.

Tessa Oglesby, parent of students in Earlington and Hopkins County Central, wanted to know what has changed since 2019 and that she would like to see the architect's report.

Kari Jo Edwards, a parent of two Earlington students, submitted a written report which is attached. She questioned several items of the amended plan.

Stephanie Martin, an Earlington parent, said her son loves school and questioned if the plan could be successful with the opposition shown.

There was some discussion which followed that did not deal with the actual amendment.

Mr. Cline announced a town meeting to answer any question on March 14 at 5:30pm at South Hopkins Middle School.

Dr. J.W. Durst, board member, spoke briefly to the group.

Following those comments, the hearing was adjourned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the new District Facility Plan as amended by the Hopkins County School District's Local Planning Committee and adopted by the Hopkins County Board of Education be approved as the District Facility Plan for the Hopkins County School District. A copy of the new plan is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

Pete Galloway

Pete Galloway, Hearing Officer / Facilitator
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March 3, 2022

Kentucky Department of Education
Kentucky Board of Education

Dear Board Members,

My name is Kari Jo Edwards. I am contacting you as a concerned parent of a second grader and a fourth grader, who attend Earlington Elementary. I could give a lengthy discourse on how amazing our school is, and the extraordinary care, time, and effort each teacher, administrator, and staff provides every single day for our students. While I cannot speak on this topic of closing our school without some ardent speech, I will try to focus on the facts and concerns of the amended District Facilities Plan, which have been seemingly glossed over and dismissed during this approval process.

I will begin by citing the LPC Meeting #2, from February 3, 2022. Andrew Owens, architect with Sherman, Carter, Barnhart, presented the amended proposal. Quoting the minutes, "Proposal designated SHMS and EES as Transitional Centers. They identified Southside as a site for addition/renovation, moving the middle school from SHMS to that facility, as well as moving some students from EES. This would create a larger P-8 center." From this point there appears to be little time or interest in questions, except from Mr. Scott Moore, the lone LPC representative from EES. At which, the LPC was encouraged to 'rely on the architects' and if they will approve this draft, 'the process can continue on schedule' and the draft will be sent out to the KDE that night for first review. In the next meeting, February 10, 2022, when asked for evidence that EES should be shut down permanently, architect Justin McElfresh responded that "this is difficult. Some is professional judgement and aging of the building systems."

This amended plan was based solely on architectural and financial reasons and decided upon by a professional that has no experience in education. This is the evidence given for the closing of an entire school, thereby entirely changing the educational programs for the southern portion of the county. This is the evidence for closing a school which has been given the ranking by U.S. News & World Report as the #69 (of 838) in elementary schools in Kentucky and #2 in Hopkins County. This would involve shutting down a school and splitting the student population, which The Public School Review has given a 10 out of 10 rating and in the top 10% in KY elementary schools, despite over 75% of the student population being considered economically disadvantaged. From

"The Kentucky Schools Facilities Planning Manual," Section 502.9.1 states the amended DFP shall be reviewed by the KY Board of Education using the same process required for approval of a new DFP. Section 103.4 shows that the LPC is responsible for research using data consisting of the following: student assessment material, transportation information, fiscal information, instructional information, and demographics. By all evidence from the architects as well as the LPC meeting minutes, the 'amendments' were not based on any of this relevant and required data. These changes were based on financial data alone, and while this is of great relevance and importance, the KDE itself states that other factors must be considered. We are not talking about small changes made to an originally approved plan. We are talking momentous changes, directly impacting over 1200 students in our district as well as indirectly affecting all students and school zones and creating an entirely new school and educational system. Considerations of the academic performance, enrollment projections and transportation concerns were never considered for this amended plan.

When reviewing the amended DFP, many concerns have arisen that have not been addressed by the LPC or the Board of Education and no supportive evidence has been made available. Examining the numbers provided for enrollment and capacity immediately reveal several issues. First, the capacity of the new school is planned to be 907. The enrollment numbers for Southside (443) and South Middle (421) total 864, a difference in capacity of 43 students. This number of students would make up the population coming to the new school from EES. The remaining estimated 300+ students would be shifted to other schools. This indicates that the need will exist to re-district all elementary school attendance zones. There has been no mention of nor any plan established or attempted to be communicated to the schools or parents. This lack of attention and planning is dismissive of a population of students that is already statistically at a disadvantage. Further examination reveals more discrepancies and questions. The attached Chart 1 breaks down the enrollment and capacity numbers and shows the differentials. As Charts 2 and 3 show and will be later mentioned, the math within this DFP does not account for re-districting and is dismissive of over 350 EES students that make up the current enrollment. I will briefly remind the KDE that many of these students had their lives turned upside down in December. Many families lost their homes and have been living with other families, hotels and other temporary situations. Now they are being told their school will be shut down, which for many was the only place of support and solace. Meanwhile, this plan is being presented as 'a pretty, new, free school,' but it will not be for them. That part will just have to be figured out later, per the Board of Education, because this DFP is 'only about facilities, not students.' Viewing the differentials for each school, changing school attendance zones to place each elementary at capacity still leaves a number of students unaccounted for, as illustrated by the math. We are leaving this community to hope for the best and leaving a considerable window to fall between the cracks with no plan to prevent failure. This plan fails the community and the children of Earlington.

determined to be housed for a middle or high school. It is calculated by dividing base capacity (25 multiplied by the # classrooms) by 0.75. Therefore, the addition of nine regular classrooms makes the calculated capacity of the middle school to be 300. The facilities manual does not discuss such capacity calculations and requirements when related to P-8, so from my understanding this would be the expected capacity of that space for middle school students, which is 121 students less than current enrollment. This figure has not been explained and no evidence to justify. The specific listing of new construction is another issue not discussed. No square footage or budget has been listed to allow for:

- 1) Site development
- 2) Road access
- 3) Parking
- 4) Additional restrooms/locker rooms
- 5) Cafeteria
- 6) Kitchen

Without information to support any of these additions, it is left to assume there is no budget assigned for them and the current spaces should be sufficient for the 900 student capacity as listed. The lack of funding for site development and road access seems to make this project ultimately impossible, as those aspects are fundamental and required for any other progression. As much as this plan is being touted as an 'addition' or 'renovation,' this will be a huge project both structurally and administratively, which neither have been appropriately planned. My final concern for this portion of the plan is that even though 4.4 million dollars has been allotted to a gymnasium, it is not identified as a tornado/storm safe structure. I understand with the new standards, the priority of such goes to the high schools initially. But, from my understanding, because Hanson is an entirely new structure, those standards apply to the gym built there, whereas South is classified as 'addition/renovations,' so it is not required to be storm safe. Considering the history of weather-related events and especially in this portion of the county recently, this safety measure would not be something that should be skipped over or where the Board of Education would choose to save money. If this plan or a similar one is approved, the safety of our students should be made a priority. This part of the plan, or lack thereof, illustrates that this amendment was not created with the best interest of our children in mind or with the staff or parents' input and support.

The new DFP is being advertised as having all the benefits without the cost. The real question is who is benefiting here? I contacted my local board of education members, with no response.

Furthermore, in the plans proposed for each of these elementary schools, zero new classrooms are being added. According to KDE guidelines concerning calculating capacities, one standard classroom is required per twenty-five students. Grapevine would require three, Jessie Stuart three, Pride two, and WBES four additional standard classrooms. With none of these are included, one is led to assume there is a lack of planning or budgeting to stay within KDE guidelines, and this plan is creating problems for which no one in this district has any answers.

The only other option would be to re-zone in a way that send EES students to West Hopkins. This school has the capacity for approximately 200 more students but is not equipped for such change. Logistical difficulties would emerge with the rural, remote location, which would involve sending EES students fifteen or more miles on rural roads. Most of these students would require bus travel. The increased transportation expenses and needs involved in this option have not been factored in, which seems illogical considering our district is already extremely short on bus drivers. Lengthy bus ride times are already an issue, and this would add an extra route on rural roads with several railroad crossings. Also, no consideration has been given as to the detriment to educational outcomes through attendance that could occur when a school moves from a neighborhood where many are in walking distance, and students must instead ride a bus for what would likely be an hour or more just to reach school. As a parent, this is nonsensical and is not an educational option I would want for my children. Exploring the possibility of any large influx of students to West Hopkins reveals several problems, not only from a logistical standpoint but also educational. West Hopkins, a P-8 model, has not shown to be successful in measurable outcomes. As the only evidence of how this district supports and runs P-8 model school, it is not one that would currently be desirable to duplicate or to add 200 students. Current rankings show West Hopkins to be #472 in KY elementary schools and #118 in KY middle schools. Rated 6th of 8 elementary and 3rd of 4 middle schools in Hopkins County. Performance is rated as 'Below Expectations' in reading and math for all grades. This is not with lack of effort from teachers or students, as I know many of them personally, but is unfortunately the current statistics. Pushing this school to capacity would be irresponsible without a solidified plan and commitment of resources to improve educational outcomes. No consideration is in the current plan for our district.

Other specificities within the plan have caught my attention. The current South Middle is 69,645 sq ft. The addition, which will contain all the area used for the middle school, is projected to be 33,350 sq ft. A decrease of space by over 50%, when the new capacity projection numbers do not adjust for any decrease in population. How will this be feasible, and how does that benefit our students? Also looking at the square footage and the listing of rooms/spaces to be added is alarming. Defined in the Facilities Manual, 'calculated capacity' is the number of students

Quoting from one's response to a Southside parent, "This plan is the least upsetting to the community. It will not be an issue and will not change transportation at all. This will affect Earlington." As a parent, I would appreciate answers and real plans, because the current DFP does not only change facilities, but impacts the entire educational system of our county. A 'new learning environment' and 'structural enhancements' do not necessarily facilitate positive changes. Nothing occurs without some cost, and financial considerations are not the only factors that must be considered when it comes to our children and their education. EES is the heart of the Earlington community, which is already underserved. The staff have created an amazing, nurturing learning environment that cannot be duplicated. Please consider other alternatives and the lack of planning and evidence beyond the financials before considering final approval of this amended DFP.

Thank you,

Kari Jo Edwards, Pharm.D.

PTA Parent

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Chart 1

SCHOOL	ENROLLMENT	CAPACITY	DIFFERENTIAL
Grapevine	295	361	-66
Hanson	560	600*	-40
JSES	473	550	-77
Pride	404	444	-40
WBES	357	450	-93
		TOTAL DIFFERENTIAL (-316)	
West Hopkins	421	656	-235

Chart 2

SCHOOL	CURRENT ENROLLMENT	CURRENT CAPACITY
Southside	443	550
EES	245	222
SHMS	421	503
TOTAL	1209	1275

***PROJECTED NEW CAPACITY *907**

Chart 3

NEW

9 Standard classrooms X 25 = 225 (Base Capacity) / 0.75 = 300 (Calculated Capacity)

(Current SES Cap) 550 + (New MS calc cap) 300 = 850 P-8 STUDENT CAPACITY

1209 - 850 = 359 (# OF STUDENTS CURRENTLY ENROLLED & UNACCOUNTED)