

Notes for ABILENE FACILITY COMMITTEE Meeting on August 21, 2013, at 6:00 pm.

Speaker: G. Kent Stewart, Manhattan, KS.

KASB ENROLLMENT STUDY, January, 2012

...shows fairly steady enrollment with some increases in Grades K-5 through fall, 2016. If grade enrollments are changing faster than predicted, the study should be updated in October, 2014.

STEWART FACILITY STUDY, June, 2012

...Forward says the study, "turned out to be a two-question study."

...Q1. Major maintenance needs.

...Q2. Future of Garfield and impact of that decision on the Middle School.

...The six recommendations included the major maintenance needs, future of Garfield, and whether to expand the Middle School.

1. Celebrate school excellence and quality.
2. Prepare a five-year maintenance plan.
3. Support the maintenance and operations functions.
4. Commission an engineering study of mechanical and electrical systems at McKinley School and the High School.
5. Form a citizen advisory committee to study modernization versus replacement of Garfield and expanding the Middle School by adding instruction rooms and a practice gym.
6. Emphasize safety and security as everyone's business.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE STEWART'S RECOMMENDATIONS

...Q1. Why was a second (practice) gym recommended for the Middle School?

...Q2. Why wasn't a second (practice gym) recommended for the High School?

...Q3. Why wasn't modernization or replacement of the High School auditorium recommended?

RESPONSES:

PRACTICE GYM FOR THE MIDDLE SCHOOL—At the M S, I studied how the academic rooms are used particularly the science rooms; the physical education, interscholastic, intramural, and practice uses of the gym; and how a new elementary school could be placed to create a elementary/middle school Grades 4-8 education campus. I believe there is a yet to be determined a creative solution to the Garfield and Middle School projects as stated in Recommendation 5 on Page 31 of the Stewart report.

SECOND GYM (PRACTICE) AT THE HIGH SCHOOL—As stated above, this study did not include detailed evaluation of the high school building. I did not seek counsel concerning uses of the instructional rooms. I found the building large enough to house its students, and noted need for air-conditioning and engineering planning to upgrade the mechanical and electrical systems as stated in Recommendation 4 on page 30 of the report. I support staff and citizen desire for a practice gymnasium and auxiliary rooms as an addition to the High School.

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AUDITORIUM MODERNIZATION AT THE HIGH SCHOOL—Admittedly, the nearly 60-year-old auditorium needs modernization. I did not study the auditorium to offer specific recommendations for the same reason that the high school gym was not studied. From experience, high school auditoriums are relatively low use facilities. If electrical and mechanical engineering evaluations are done for the high school as stated in Recommendation 4 on report page 30, I assume findings and recommendations will include basic improvements for the auditorium. I support staff and citizen interest in modernizing the High School auditorium.

SUMMARY

Good architectural planning is well underway; although a better solution is yet to be presented concerning the Garfield replacement option and its relationship to the Middle School. With additional architectural design study, the solution may be one project as mentioned in Recommendation 5 on Page 31 of the Stewart report rather than two separate projects.

The committee and the school board are aware that some voters are concerned about the future and how quickly personal or community economic health can change. This concern is probably rooted in recent changes that have impacted or may yet impact Abilene. These include the Green Ford closure, the Alco executive office move, the hospital revenue bonds, the planned NW housing development, whispered changes involving more furloughing and unfilled job vacancies at Fort Riley, how an aftershock from the national economic downturn of 2008-2010 could affect Federal entitlement programs, and the potential impact of increased attention to Federal debt reduction.

Accordingly, concerning a capital improvement program proposal for eventual voter approval, this writer recommends polling samples of voters to determine the extent of their understanding of the need for school capital improvements and if they are likely to support those needs.

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