

South Burlington School District Enrollment Committee

June 15, 2022

Proposal

Introduction

The South Burlington School District (SBSD) enrollment committee, comprised of teachers, staff, administrators, community members, and parents began their work in late 2021. The committee was tasked with brainstorming and then evaluating solutions to increasing enrollment at the district's elementary schools with the understanding that current enrollment is already creating hardship at Orchard School (OS) and Rick Marcotte Central School (RMCS). The schools are overcrowded: there is not enough space for private meetings and staff offices, congregate spaces are limiting arts, physical education and music schedules, and classroom sizes have increased over optimal levels due to space constraints. Future enrollment forecasted by a contracted demographer shows that enrollment will continue to grow, particularly at OS and RMCS, but also at Gertrude Chamberlin School (GS). While this committee did not look specifically at the middle and high school, the fact that enrollment and capacity issues affect these schools as well was part of the context for our discussions.

Options Analysis

The enrollment committee met fifteen (15) times between December 2021 and May 2022 to discuss the current elementary enrollment situation and potential solutions. The committee leaned on the expertise of its members as well as its architectural consultants from Dore + Whittier (D+W), Rani Philip and Lee Dore. Several options were put forward as ways to ease the enrollment pressure, some of which had previously been considered within the SBSD. The committee discussed advantages and disadvantages of various options over the first meetings ranging from doing nothing to redistricting with a number of permutations in between. The committee then decided it would be useful to have a quantitative evaluation of members' opinions. The committee assembled several criteria on which to evaluate each option and a scoring matrix was developed. It was decided that cost, solution timeframe and project duration of each option would be evaluated separately from the scoring matrix. The cost/timeline analysis

complemented the scoring matrix, and evaluated whether an option solved the enrollment pressure in the short (< 2 ys), medium (~5 ys) and/or long term (10 ys). The full list of criteria used in the scoring matrix and the cost/timeline analysis are presented as an Appendix to this proposal, but in general, the committee looked for an option that would:

1. Meet or possibly exceed education outcomes (student-centered approach),
2. Have a cost the community may be able to support (budget conscious);
3. Relieve enrollment pressures in the projected timelines (short term and longer term solution);
4. Not increase inequities for students.

A summary of the results from both analyses is presented in Table 1, with options listed sorted by higher scoring matrix scores (more desirable options), and Chart 1, where options are sorted from lower to higher estimated implementation costs. It should be noted that cost estimates do not factor in the potential need to hire additional FTEs or costs incurred by changing bus routes, etc.

The option of doing nothing was considered among the other options. Nevertheless, throughout the discussions teachers and school administrative staff gave examples of how the lack of classroom, office and/or congregate space was negatively affecting teacher and staff wellbeing, as well as student development (e.g., larger class sizes) and school experience (e.g., less time for arts or music; early or late lunch times). Doing nothing, thus, was not considered a truly viable option, and this was demonstrated in the scoring matrix results.

Table 1: Summary of Scoring Matrix and Cost/Timeline Results.

Options	Scoring Matrix Total (unweighted)	Scoring Matrix Total (weighted)	Total Cost Estimate (million\$)	Solution Timeframe	Project Duration
Additions to OS and RMCS	118	140	6 - 7	Long term	2 - 4 ys
Consolidation into one new school	91	116	82 - 100	Long term	5 - 8 ys
Build 4th elementary school	73	99	28 - 35	Long term	5 - 8 ys
Add ZEMs to OS and RMCS	32	44	2 - 3	Short/Mid/Long term	6 - 12 mo
Redistrict	-9	-1	< 0.1	Short term	1 yr
Move all G5 to FHTMS	-9	-3.5	11 - 14	Long term	3 - 5 ys
Move pre-K and K to GCS	-23	-15	8 - 10	Long term	3 - 5 ys
Move pre-K-G3 to OS and RMCS; G4-5 to GCS	-25	-21	6 - 8	Long term	3 - 5 ys
Set up outside units at OS and RMCS	-69	-79	2 - 3	Short/Mid term	6 - 9 mo
Move OS and RMCS G5 to FHTMS	-78	-87	10 - 12	Long term	3 - 5 ys
Do nothing	-139	-170	0	N/A	N/A

Table notes:

1. These costs do not include capital improvement plans expenses (CIP).
2. These costs do not include any educational improvements to/redesign of existing facilities.
3. These cost estimates are in 2022 USD.

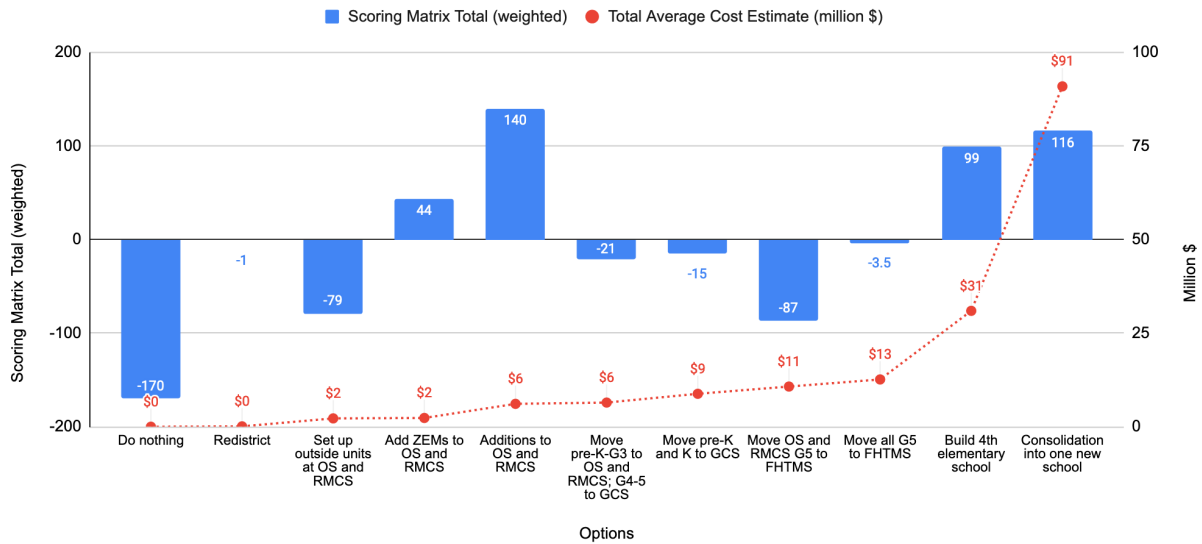


Chart 1: Summary of Scoring Matrix/Cost analysis, sorted by lower to higher cost. Notes from Table 1 apply.

Discussion

The option “Additions to OS and RMCS” received the highest score in the scoring matrix evaluation. This is reflective of the fact that committee members (representative of the community at large) are proud of and relish their local neighborhood schools. Adding the necessary space to continue providing education at the three elementary schools has benefits including having schools within walking/biking distance to residents and minimizing student disruption. However, given the available land constraints at the elementary schools, there is a limit to the amount of learning and congregate space that can be added at each site. What this means is that it is likely that even if additions are built at OS and RMCS schools, after ten years of increasing population (as currently forecast), an additional option would be needed to accommodate growing enrollment. Additions to OS and RMCS would require 2 to 4 years to be completed at a comparatively lower cost estimate of \$6 million.

The second and third highest rated options are also the most expensive: consolidation and building of a fourth elementary school, are estimated to cost, respectively, an average of \$91 and \$31 million. Consolidation costs would be offset to some degree by the sale of the land currently occupied by the three elementary schools. Either of these options could be set up in a way that

alleviates enrollment pressures beyond 2032. The committee members acknowledge that consolidation into a new elementary school would mean equitable, updated, accessible learning spaces that benefit all students in the district. However, this option ranked lower in parent acceptance. While a fourth elementary school would give some children the benefits of a new school with adequate spaces and accessibility, this option ranked low in community equity. Both of these options would require considerable financial resources and time to be completed.

The addition of zero energy modular (ZEM) spaces to OS and RMCS is an attractive option because of its relatively low cost (~\$2 million) and similar attributes to the first ranked choice. The benefit of this option is that it can be set up in a shorter time frame, and thus address the enrollment pressures sooner. In addition, these ZEMs could be moved to the High School or Middle School at a later date if it was considered necessary while renovations occur in those buildings. Similar to the first option, the addition of ZEMs is constrained by available space, but reasonable estimates suggest they could alleviate enrollment pressures at OS and RMCS until 2032. ZEM's are installed with best in class levels of insulation and heating, cooling, and ventilation systems to maximize both the comfort and environmental conditions of the classrooms. In addition all materials utilized in ZEM construction are EPA airplus compliant which correlates to significant reductions in VOC outgassing of materials.

The fifth ranked option, with a score close to 0, was to move all fifth graders to Frederick Tuttle Middle School (FHTMS). Moving a whole grade from the elementary schools is estimated to alleviate enrollment pressure for more than 10 years, as classrooms and congregate spaces can be reassigned to fit Pre-K to fourth grade needs at OS, RMCS and GS. Committee members agreed that moving fifth graders to FHTMS could expand curricular and extracurricular opportunities for fifth graders, as well as benefit sixth graders. However, most committee members believe that the current FHTMS building and the programming/professional practice is not suited to welcome fifth graders. Committee members generally preferred to wait to implement any fifth grader move until FHTMS can undergo remodeling or new construction. Even if the FHTMS building cannot be upgraded, teachers in the committee noted that

substantial planning (at least two years) is critical before the SBSB can undergo such transition to ensure staff and teachers can be prepared to adapt to the change and the SBSB is able to explain the transition to parents and the community at large. If the transition occurs without a remodel/construction, additional ZEM units may need to be added to FHTMS to ensure adequate classroom/congregate/staff office space is available.

Redistricting had a similar total score as the move of fifth graders to FHTMS. Redistricting is an important tool that can help make the elementary schools more equitable in numbers and composition. This option alone, however, does not actually relieve enrollment pressures in the medium term.

While the committee was discussing options, the SBSB moved ahead to install three outside units at OS and RMCS (trailers). Existing trailers, which are 8ft x 20ft are both expensive to rent and are too small to alleviate any of the current classroom or congregate space constraints facing OS and RMCS. These trailers are not connected to the building and require students or staff to go outside to utilize them, which will become particularly impractical in the winter. In addition, renting these trailers is expensive with a minimum ongoing cost of \$583 per month to rent per trailer. Staff and teachers from OS and RMCS present in the committee explained that the trailers did not meet expectations and are not even a viable *short term* solution.

As part of the discussion of the different options, committee members were made aware of other concerns of the SBSB, including the need to fund more than \$100 million in building maintenance and improvements as part of the Capital Improvement Plan. With these other costs in mind, it became apparent that consolidating into a new elementary school or building a fourth elementary school, while attractive options that could solve the enrollment issue more definitively, also have a high price tag that would make it difficult to fund at this point.

Recommendations

After substantial discussion, the committee members recommend that the SBSB resolve enrollment pressures at the elementary schools in a phased approach.

Phase 1 would entail the addition of ZEMs to OS and RMCS in the shortest time frame possible (within the 2022-2023 school year). Adding four ZEMs each (for a total of eight) at OS and RMCS would allow for sufficient space to accommodate students for the next six to ten years, based on current student enrollment projections and the number of students per classroom remaining within the current VT optimal ratios.

The committee understands that while these additional spaces would accommodate student enrollment forecasted in OS and RMCS until 2032, the congregate spaces and schedules are also affected by the high number of students and are not necessarily alleviated by the addition of ZEMs. Besides, according to the demographer's projections, by the 2027-2028 school year GS is also expected to be at maximum classroom capacity and require a solution.

This is why committee members recommend **Phase 2**, an eventual transition of fifth graders to FHTMS to address enrollment pressures in the long term. To enable this transition, the enrollment committee proposes that SBSB create a Transition Committee comprised of teachers, administration and community members to explore the viability of a successful move of fifth graders to FHTMS, taking into consideration the possibility of adjusting the current building, ZEM additions, or a major overhaul, depending on funding availability within the next ten years. The Transition Committee should also consider whether it would be a good idea to redistrict the elementary schools at the time of the transition of rising fifth and sixth graders to FHTMS, to minimize student disruption. Finally, several enrollment committee members suggested that the SBSB create an Infrastructure Committee similar in composition to the enrollment committee, that would be tasked with advising SBSB on building improvements/maintenance within the context of the CIP and potential new construction of high school and middle school buildings. This committee could also develop a climate action plan for the SBSB to ensure that infrastructure investments can lead the SBSB to a lower carbon future. In the event that a transition of fifth graders to FHTMS cannot occur before GS is expected to reach maximum enrollment capacity, the

infrastructure committee should consider the possibility of adding ZEMs to GS until such transition can occur, if RMCS and OS provide positive feedback on the use of ZEMs.

Considerations on addition of ZEMs at RMCS and OS

Add ZEMs to both RMCS and Orchard school without compromising other affected areas. The number of ZEMs will be determined based on the allowable land and other space needs within each building.

- RMCS
 - Can place up to 4 ZEMs.
 - Not a lot of choice of where ZEMs can go, but good placement because it could add to 4th/5th grade wing.
 - Might need to move underground stormwater lines
 - Will need to move new preschool playground → can it be done June-August 2022?
- Orchard
 - Can place up to 4 ZEMs.
 - Trying to create continuity of building on each of the eastern side wings.
 - Would need to relocate stormwater lines.
 - Need to further study if sewer lines require relocation.
 - Could move sheds if we want to change orientation.
 - Would add hallway and doors to access new ZEMs.
- Advantages of ZEMs
 - Faster way to add comfortable, durable space to current building infrastructure (compared to typical construction project).
 - Can be (within limits posed by truck widths) customized in terms of length/width to adjust to site.
 - Can be used as classrooms or offices, include bathrooms or sinks, etc.
 - In the future, they can be moved to different areas if it is decided they are no longer needed at either OS or RMCS.
 - Are energy efficient and have excellent air quality and ventilation.

Transition of fifth grade to FHTMS within 4-6 years

Create a Transition Committee with teachers, staff, community members. Need at least two years of planning for the programming/developmental part.

During this period of time a plan will be put in place by the administration. Specifically, delineating what needs to be done over the course of the FY22-TBD school years to prepare for the arrival of fifth grade to FHTMS within the next 6 years.

Proposed Timeline for Infrastructure/Educational Planning at District Level

- o 2022-2023
 - PHASE 1: Add 4 ZEMs each at OS and RMCS.
- o 2023-2027
 - Plan/Design/Approve and Build New High School.
- o 2025-2029
 - Plan/Design/Approve and Build/renovate FHTMS.
 - If the building timelines are significantly delayed, could use ZEMs as additional space.
 - PHASE 2: Transition of fifth graders to FHTMS with or without redistricting.
- o 2029-2032
 - Identify/Approve CIP needs at the three PK-4 Elementary Schools and complete.
- o 2032+
 - Monitor growth with the city through a shared demographer to identify if an additional school/schools need to be built.

Appendix

Supporting materials, including [enrollment forecast](#), [cost analysis presentation \(Dore & Whittier\)](#) and [School Enrollment Options Scoring Matrix, Summary of Scoring Matrix Results 4/26/22](#)

- [Programming Update dated 11/30/21](#)
- [Programming Update dated 12/8/21](#)
- [Options Analysis Progress Review dated 5/10/22](#)
- [Why Zems?](#)

Enrollment Committee Members

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Consultation from Rani Philip and Lee Dore (Dore & Whittier Architects)