

MINUTES
1/5/17 SITE COUNCIL MEETING

In attendance: Ray Aponte, Steve Richter, Sharon White, Sharon Rush, Steve Simondet, Mercedes Reynolds, Arthur French, Michael Luseni, Scott Schluter, Cynthia Simmons, Raquel Medina Perez, Marie Hassell, Karen Holly, and a large number of students, parents, district personnel, teachers, Foundation members, and community members.

Introductions:

Steve Richter opened the meeting and we went around the room for everyone to introduce themselves.

Steve Richter introduced himself as one of the Site Council co-chairs. Has been a member of Site Council for 5 years – the past 3 years at South High.

The Site Council in the past has not been a vocal or political group and just thought the district would take care of our needs. We feel they fell short this time in regards to the athletic complex. Several properties near South have been purchased and used for other purposes. Our concern is that South's needs are being overlooked and space is becoming less and less available for any future needs/expansion by South High. Want to make it clear we don't think ABE and Transition Plus aren't important. We just want to make sure South is being included and their needs looked at as well. There may be new sources of money but there won't be new sources of land. Want transparency in this process and to be included.

Superintendent Comments:

Superintendent Graff is passionate about public education and students. Wants to acknowledge that there will be transparency in this process and there will be follow up – not specifically by he himself but he will provide district staff to work with the Site Council.

He thinks it's good news that these conversations are focused on student centered goals. The safety of the track and space for special needs students are priority. The primary focus is to reinforce our commitment to South athletes.

He shared with the Board of Education what he saw as immediate needs and a grant was put forth to address those. The district did receive the grant so now a development plan has to be created through the Site Council and Ray, as Principal of South High. More funds are needed but this is a start.

Steve Richter questioned the time constraints we feel since ground breaking for the new ABE/TPlus building is scheduled for this spring. Mr. Graff made it clear that the ABE/TPlus complex is moving forward as outlined. That has been approved by the Board and will not change. He feels South has adequate space for an athletic complex comparable to the other athletic complexes in our district. Steve Richter questions how would we know that and feel assured of that if we haven't even seen any plans? Mr. Graff pointed out that wants vs. needs is how we need to look at it. Our improvements will be in line with district athletic needs and other complexes. Their goal is to have everything completed by the 2018/2019 school year.

Harold Benson from the Foundation pointed out that "we" have a vision and the district has a vision. Is this process a joint effort to investigate and put forth each vision, including financing and plans? What is the vehicle to communicate between interested parties?

Principal's Report:

Students came back from break Tuesday. Everyone is refreshed and he sees a lot of learning going on. The quarter is over at the end of January so there's still a lot of work to do.

Winter sports are up and running.

Next Friday (January 13th) we're having a 50's Swing Dance party in the commons.

Ray wants Site Council's support to form a committee to just address Barnard Field. He may create other committees in the future for other areas or needs as they arise. He feels we've been heard and thanked Superintendent Graff for his support.

History of Barnard Field:

Improvements for South's athletic complex have been discussed and proposed several times since 1995. There were huge architectural plans in the works in 1995 in regards to a third floor addition, parking and the athletic fields. Only the third floor addition was completed.

Scott showed new plans drafted in 2000 which again showed improvements to the athletic complex. This was the second plan showing 31st Street being vacated. That request went to the City for approval in 2003 but was not granted.

In 2014 the property on Lake Street was purchased. The Corcoran Neighborhood Association, City Council Member Cano, the South High Foundation, and Ray Aponte all endorsed a letter

from School Board Member Carla Bates asking for information regarding what was known as the “Midtown Campus” plan.

During all these plans starting back in 1995, Minneapolis Public Schools has had 8 different Superintendents.

Scott ended by showing part of a video clip showing our football team playing their first game under lights.

ABE/Transition Plus Building:

Jack Tamble outlined the ABE (Adult Basic Education) program. It currently serves about 1,000 students a day. 70% of those are taking English classes. Many are working towards their GED.

Rochelle Cox was in attendance to speak about Transition Plus. It provides special education services for students 18 to 21 years of age. These students haven't yet graduated but are taking college courses, vocational classes, and working on living skills. They service about 250 to 350 students.

Anita Newhouse (parent of a special education student and athlete) feels ABE/TPlus can become part of the South High community. She feels education and athletics are both important pieces for students to become the best learners and citizens they can and that both South and ABE/TPlus want that outcome for their students.

Update on Barnard Field Improvements:

Trent Tucker, Director for district athletics, has always been an athlete and knows the importance of having a good and safe complex.

Jay Pomeroy became involved in this process just before winter break. His mentor worked with Minneapolis School in the 1970s. Jay himself worked on projects at Roosevelt and the turf installation at Washburn. He feels a quality athletic complex can be created in the space allowed.

It was asked why we can't delay construction plans so we have time to come up with concrete plans for the field? Would that be too costly? Superintendent Graff said he didn't know of the cost effects or why it should be delayed. These were two entirely separate projects – South High athletic complex and the ABE/TPlus complex. We need to focus on just our project.

It was asked how the programs are going to partnership. Mr. Graff envisions an opportunity to create global citizenship. With the proximity of South, the Y, and the new ABE/TPlus building, it's a create opportunity to promote and enhance the diversity that South already embraces. He envisions TPlus students coming back to South as mentors, South High parents using ABE creating entire families taking advantage of Minneapolis Public School education together.

One educator in the group pointed out that this is entirely new era of youth. Is that being taken into account – future planning meeting their needs? She didn't feel that just collaboration would motivate a student to get out of bed in the morning but athletics may.

It was reiterated that all programs on the table are important. How they interact is an ongoing process.

The South High community has been heard. We still have concerns regarding what space is available.

Arthur French made a motion to form a committee to work directly with district staff to continue this process in regards to Barnard Field. That motion was seconded by Sharon Rush and put to a vote – 6 yay, 0 nay. Motion passed.

Future Agenda Items:

Superintendent Graff would like to see a meeting of this committee and district representatives set up in the near future (before the next scheduled Site Council meeting in February).

Will coaches have the opportunity to serve on this committee as well?