

**CITY OF PARK RAPIDS  
CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION  
NOVEMBER 26, 2019, 5:00 PM  
Park Rapids City Hall Council Chambers  
Park Rapids, Minnesota**

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Ryan Leckner called the Park Rapids City Council Workshop for November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019, to order at 5:00 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL:** Present: Mayor Ryan Leckner, Councilmembers Erika Randall, and Robert Wills. Absent: Councilmember Liz Stone. Councilmember Tom Conway arrived at 5:30 p.m. Staff Present: Administrator Ryan Mathisrud, Planner Andrew Mack, Police Chief Jeff Appel, Liquor Store Manager Scott Olson, Public Facilities Superintendent Chris Fieldsend, Treasurer Angela Brumbaugh, and Clerk Margie Vik. Others Present: Lynn Dyer from ICS Consulting Inc. and School Boardmember Sherry Safratowich.

**3. DISCUSSION:**

**A. Park Rapids Area Schools Community Listening Session Results:**

Lynn Dyer, with ICS, stated tonight you'll hear the feedback from the listening sessions and the results from the Educational Adequacy Session. We conducted nineteen different sessions with the stakeholder groups. We started this process on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July. Every one of these groups had the same questions, the only deviation from that was the student session. We modified that one. We gave them three different questions. We asked you questions. We asked you to put your responses on post it notes. We then did one priority activity at the end for a facilities question. All of our groups, including the students had the same process.

Dyer stated the first question we asked was what are the positives that they identified in the Park Rapids School District. We divided the results from external and internal so that it didn't muddy the waters. The internal group, with the school staff, was a larger number and we didn't want that to skew the results. From the external group we found some common themes that aligned with the internal group as well. The positives that were identified were the ACES program, a strong community ed program, the ALC, a kind and caring staff, extracurricular activities, and fine arts. On the internal side, the positives were a great caring staff, extracurricular activities, the community ed program, community support, increased enrollment, and people are proud of the new facilities across your district.

Dyer stated the challenges from the external side are bullying, drug and alcohol issues, open enrollment, finding and retaining quality teachers. On the internal side, space concerns for classrooms, ALC, bus garage, and some auditorium issues that they would like to see addressed. Another challenge was communications between staff and the administration within the district, not enough staff for support staff, consistent discipline policy, technology upgrades, mental health issues, and bullying.

Dyer stated we asked everyone the lottery question, with the exception of the students, if money were no object what would you do? On the external side a community

center, a sports complex, tennis courts, expand the vocational trades programs at the high school, mental health issues, and expanding performing arts opportunities within your district. On the internal side, updating the high school, a community center, hiring more certified staff including special ed and also non-certified, increasing wages, mental health, and technology upgrades.

Dyer stated we asked what advice would you give the decision makers in this process. The external group said what's best for kids should be first, listening to staff and community, forward thinking and open-mindedness, communicating and being transparent, being fiscally responsible. On the internal side, the advice was listen to staff and community, students first, communicate, be transparent, think about the future, be open minded, be fiscally responsible, and then looking at the pros and cons and then prioritizing. We did ask one different question of the school board, what are the expectations of this process. The board said to help them make sound decisions based on the data, and to help them generate a long-term plan, even though they have a long-term plan to help assist and facilitate some of those decisions. You'll see a variety of other comments that came across.

Dyer stated we asked the students a couple of different questions. What are the positives and the challenges, who are you competing against? They think they are competing against themselves, classmates, time, teachers, and some additional answers. We asked what would you like for your younger siblings that you didn't have. They answered more class opportunities and electives to choose from, air conditioning, better food, a soccer team, more gym space, more AP class opportunities, and a variety of other responses. We asked them what does a diploma mean to you. A key to college, freedom, to become an adult, to survive high school. The cross section of kids included seniors, juniors, and sophomores, kids from ALC, honor students, and kids from activities. It was a blended group of kids.

Dyer stated we asked the external groups what's the best way to communicate. The newspaper is the way for people in your community to be communicated with, social media, Facebook, mailing, public meetings, radio, text messages, and meeting in community groups.

Dyer stated we took each of our groups and we asked everybody the facilities question. Then we broke it down into different segments. The response from community groups to the facilities needs question, we went to Osage and their top concern was fixing those tennis courts. Increasing classroom space was a concern, community center tied to the school district to incorporate both students, staff and community use. The men's coffee group would like to see upgrades in technology at the high school with an emphasis on the robotics program, evaluate safety and security for students and staff, and more vocational classes. The Essentia Health Board would like to see a community center, space for future growth with the schools, and the Century parent drop-off improved. The pastoral group wants to see improvements to the student drop-off, security district wide, abatement of asbestos in all the schools. The Park Rapids Arts Council wants to evaluate all of the tech needs in all of the buildings, security upgrades to all of the buildings, evaluate the classroom design for flexible seating for teaching in collaborative types of situations, and an auditorium update.

Dyer stated we had two meetings in the Park Rapids community. In one of those sessions we had upgrades to the auditorium, classroom space at Century, increase the parking at Century, improve parent drop-off and the flow issue at Century. The Chamber of Commerce group wanted to see an identified long-term plan for the district, a community

center, more flexible learning spaces at the high school, expanding the industrial arts and the technology courses at the high school. The City Council asked for improved security at both buildings, a new high school, expanded tech facility, improve the drop-off at Century school. The Park Rapids community session number two said community center or gym space, more classroom space for the elementary, and updating all of the tech ed classes.

Dyer stated what we found as the common thread for all of these was the community center becomes an item that is attractive to them. Having a multi-use facility was common across the board. Improve security for the district, technical education for high school classes, and the ag, vocational, food, and business classes. More classroom space, primarily that's an elementary issue. The Century drop-off, the tennis courts, the high school, and Frank White updates, and auditorium updates.

Dyer stated the certified staff, non-certified staff, administration, anybody within the school payroll, would be the internal staff. Century staff's concerns were classroom space as their number one concern. Safety, the drop-off area for the parents, and the bus garage. Middle School would like to see a community center. They think that would solve some issues and would give them additional gym space, places for kids to go after school, and the after-school programs could be expanded. They also want more classroom space at the Middle School, security for the entrances, developing more playground space with fencing to restrict how far kids can go, and the bus loop. The elementary staff have concerns with space issues, specialty services space, mental health issues, drop off at Century, classroom space, district wide security at entrances, and fobs on all of the doors. At the high school, with the certified staff, their biggest facility need is updating the bathrooms and locker rooms. They are not ADA compliant. The community center came in at number two concern. Update and relocation the ALC. Secure entrances for the district and general maintenance and upkeep for the buildings district wide. The non-certified staff would like to see technology updates, correct HVAC issues, district wide security updates, and work on the roof for the high school and Frank White. The bus drivers would like to see the bus garage area be fenced, a new bus garage, better traffic flow, more parking for pick-up and drop-off at the elementary and middle schools, and secured entrances. The administrative team wants a community center, a better drop-off and pick-up area, move the pre-school to Century, and more gym space. The early childhood staff wants to relocate the early childhood program, improve HVAC in the early childhood building, and cleaning and maintenance for all of the buildings. The school board would like to see added gym space at the high school, a multi-use community center, added classroom space at the high school, improve the pick-up and drop-off at Century, and move pre-K to the elementary. The students felt that they would like to see the high school updated, more event parking space at the high school, HVAC at the high school, more gym space, better building maintenance were all concerns expressed by the students.

Dyer stated the common threads that we found from the internal group are updates to the bathrooms and lockers, HVAC, roofs, and other types of things for both the high school and Frank White, parent parking for the Century drop-off and pick-up area, community use space, more classroom and specialty space district wide, safety and security district wide, bus garage and ALC space, and moving early childhood over to Century.

Andrew Mack stated there is a recurring theme about a multi-use community center. Is there a defined utilization that people talked about for it to be used for? Dyer stated we had anywhere from a community space that would have a gym that could be used for different types of activities. Some said they wanted an indoor track, tennis courts, a facility

for after school activities, for it to be used by senior citizens. It was across the board. It was a place that could be developed to meet whatever needs your community might identify. It was really a wide-open response that we got.

Dyer stated we talked in the listening sessions about looking for similarities and common responses. We did see the common responses as high school and Frank White updates. The Century drop-off is an issue, which is a reoccurring theme in all school districts when people don't drive and park responsibly. Yet maybe the configuration of that one could be re-figured. It's a concern that both sides have expressed. Community center use for the gym, and other multi-use facilities. Improving the district's security and additional classroom and specialty space. On the community side, expanded technical education, tennis court improvements, and a new bus garage. Right now, you are leasing a bus garage, and moving the ALC and pre-k.

Dyer stated the second part of what we do is educational adequacy. That is strictly space related. We went into each one of your buildings. We identified eighteen categories, and then we evaluate the spaces in the schools and we apply criteria that's been developed by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). For each of these eighteen categories MDE has identified guidelines, that are suggestions, not mandates, of what a school, in order to educate students in our current century, and moving forward, should be. These guidelines were established in 2004. They just updated them this past summer. We apply these guidelines in the eighteen categories. When we walk into a general ed classroom the size should be 850 to 950 square feet. If it's a pre-k/kindergarten classroom it should be 1,200 to 1,500 square feet. We look for adequate storage cabinetry, counter top space, an adequate number of outlets, and natural light. Natural light has become a key component to educating students today. Interactive white boards, and furniture that's movable. Teaching styles have changed and it encourages more collaborative kinds of learning, group and interaction with students, and flexible situations where you can configure a room in a number of different ways. Those are all of the examples that we use when we go through and do this educational adequacy component.

Dyer stated we do this with the certified staff because those folks live in those spaces. They know if the space that they are working in meets the needs that they have identified to educate your kids and give them the best opportunity for learning. The process that we go through is a post it note activity. We ask them within each one of these eighteen different categories, the positive things about their classrooms with yellow notes, the perceived areas of satisfaction. For the blue notes we ask them to give us their areas of dissatisfaction. Those that they think should be changed to improve the overall quality of education. Then we move on to the next category. We take every post it note and we log it into a spread sheet. We ask the staff to give us their top five identifiable needs and we frame it in a way that if the school could do a few things, what are your top five must needs, the Big Five. Then that data is put into a spread sheet.

Dyer stated in addition to what the staff told us, my partner and I walk through every building and classroom and inspect them based on MDE guidelines. We aligned their criteria with ours to see if we were all on the same page. Then we gave everything the final color code. The comments are colored, green for adequate, yellow for questionable, and red for inadequate. The results are as follows:

Century School: Three reds: security/supervision, student commons, parking/bus drop-off. Three yellows: staff lounge, site suitability, technology. Their Big Five were special ed space, security, parent drop-off, more classroom space, and a work area for the students.

Middle School: Four reds: security, student commons, physical education/athletics, parking/drop-off. Three yellows: main office/nurse, site suitability, technology. The Big Five are community center, general parking, update technology, safe entrance, playground equipment.

High School: Eight reds: classroom size, security, science labs, music classrooms, staff lounge, physical education, hallways/locker rooms, non-compliant washrooms. Seven yellows: cafeteria/kitchen, main office, art classrooms, student commons, technology, special education, career/tech education. Their Big Five were bathrooms, security, ALC classroom, special ed classrooms, HVAC issues.

Early Childhood: Five reds: classroom size, security, main office, staff lounge, site suitability. Three yellows: parking/drop off, special education, and support services. The Big Five were classroom size, security, main office, special education, and hallways/lockers/restrooms.

ALC Space: has location problems, classroom learning space, and are in need of a hands-on area.

Dyer stated in the recap we focus on the reds and say how can we make a red into a yellow, or possibly make it a green. Side by side we see some common themes. We have classroom size and suitability, across the board you have security concerns that we'd recommend be addressed, staff room and planning space for the high school and Frank White, and the parking drop-off for Century. Those are the common themes that we are seeing across the board.

Dyer stated everything that I've went over can be viewed at [www.project309.org](http://www.project309.org) Every document that we have is posted there, all of the listening session results, all of the educational adequacy results, and all of our presentations. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present the data to you.

**3. ADJOURNMENT: A motion was made by Wills, seconded by Randall, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 5:50 p.m.**

[seal]

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Mayor Ryan Leckner

ATTEST:

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Margie M. Vik  
City Clerk