



Brooks and Associates

Civil Engineering - Marketing - Technical Support

MEMORANDUM

TO: File
FROM: Kathy Burgess
SUBJECT: New South Anchorage Area High School
Building Design Committee Meeting
October 20 & 21, 1999
DATE: October 25, 1999

October 21, 1999

Terry Hyer, of ECI Hyer, welcomed all those attending and began a round of self-introductions. He reminded everyone that the building committee is a working committee to facilitate 2-way communication between the project design team and representatives of the various elements of the Anchorage community that the new school will serve—students, teachers, administrators, parents, neighbors, and the residents of South Anchorage.

The work of designing the school moves from macro to micro, from general to specific detail. The first job, the one to be undertaken at this meeting, is to review and confirm the Secondary Education specification adopted by the Anchorage School District in 1998. Next will be conceptual design, deciding the relationship of different types of space to one another. Schematic design follows, where spaces are drawn as rooms, then design development, which shows more detail of the rooms and some of the furnishings. Construction documents, the very detailed drawings needed to build the structure, can then be produced. There is a bidding phase in which contractors are invited to do the work, and finally, the construction phase when the building is created on the site.

Esther Cox, ASD Project Coordinator, briefly reviewed some of the new ideas in secondary education that guided the development of the Ed Spec. School should be more personalized—a large school can be subdivided into smaller units where students and staff can get to know each other better. This is being done in the middle schools and has been very successful. There should be nurturance of students; a thorough use of technology and there should be flexibility in the school structure and curriculum to accommodate program changes over time. Lastly, there must be community input and involvement in the school.

At this point there were several questions asked by committee members of the project team.

Q: How many students will there be in the new school?

A: It is to be designed for 1600 students. At 150 sq. ft. per student, that amounts to a building size of 240,000 sq. ft. The site is 49 acres. Topography will affect the building's position on the site; the design will be tailored to the site. There will be buffering areas that will not be built on.

Q: The buildable area of the site is only 42 acres; where within this will the building be located?

A: We will not be focusing on that question at this point. There are similar considerations for all school development, and the program we discuss today could be for any site.

Q: Is what we do today adaptable to another site?

A: Yes—we are at a very macro level right now. We are discussing program, not walls and halls.

Q: Is the new high school philosophy like the middle school pods?

A: Yes. But the mandate of the Ed Spec is to make a design that is flexible enough to use that form of organization or any of several others.

Q: Is the house concept a priority?

A: Flexibility is the priority.

Q: Are the Ed Spec area sizes minimum or maximum numbers?

A: Maximum.

Terry Hyer summarized the Building Design Committee's previous meeting in September. Members had articulated their vision for the new school. Some aspects were:

- The school should be community-friendly with access for the public.
- It should fit in its neighborhood.
- There might be a thematic relation to Alaska industries.
- Car transportation will be an important consideration for the school; perhaps the use of the automobile can be reduced.
- It should have a small-school feel.
- There should be equity with other Anchorage high schools.
- It should be built of durable materials.
- There should be amenities that will make students want to stay on the campus.

The committee also imagined a day in the life of a New School student and discussed roles and expectations of education and the community. These exercises helped the project team find the goals and values that could be the foundation of the design.

A discussion on “What’s right for South Anchorage High School” told the team that the school should have the flexibility to implement the “house” form of school organization as well as the department form, separated grades, magnet programs, and schools-within-the-school.

An attempt at the September meeting to review the Ed Spec.’s space limits for optional areas revealed how difficult the committee found it to give up any program possibilities.

A participant then asked why the current meeting was being held at Service High School, rather than at Huffman Elementary, closer to the building site. The answer was that by

locating in a high school it is easy to get up and look at spaces of the size and type we will be discussing—main gym, classrooms, library, and so forth. Someone also humorously remarked that the chairs in a high school are larger and more comfortable for adults.

Next was a full-group discussion of the committee's expectations for the new school. The following is a summary of the comments made:

- Outcomes have been positive for a large number of students in the current style of high school education—why change? The new secondary education philosophy is an attempt to understand what in the old system is working and what is not working, and to change so it *all* works.
- What about the village concept—small scattered school buildings? That's a possibility that could be considered.
- This school may be too far from the student population it's supposed to serve; it's very close to Service High.
- I want this school to be on the cutting edge of technology and yet incorporate what we have now that's working.
- There is a need for a performing arts facility that will serve both the school and the South Anchorage community.
- It should be a hardworking facility both for the school and the community.
- It's difficult to design well for a future you can't see.
- We need to build a place that's safe and secure, yet warm and welcoming to students and others.
- The school should be welcoming and create a sense of community. Goldenview Middle School is a good example of a place that creates smaller communities within a larger community.
- As a parent I am eager to see this school built so that my kids can go to a neighborhood high school.
- As a student I have pride in my school, both its building and its activities. I want this facility to have an environment that helps its students feel this pride. It should have connections to other schools and facilities. It also needs to be easy to maintain.
- It should be a place that the faculty like. At my school there are good and bad classrooms and the environment makes a difference in how I feel about a class.
- It needs to be a place with a lot of natural light.
- The way learning takes place is changing. There is a shift toward integrated learning, team teaching, small and large groups. We need to have that flexibility.
- Teachers can find teaching isolating. I know of a school in Seattle that has small areas for teacher interaction scattered all over the building.
- This is a great opportunity to create facilities for neighborhood use.
- This will be an opportunity to build a community school from the ground up. The new school should also embrace diversity.
- It would be great if the committee could see Goldenview Middle School to experience what's new in secondary school design and what's good about it.
- We moved to the Goldenview area to be near its facilities.

- Will there be an indoor track in the new school? Yes. There is provision for it in the Ed Spec.
- As a basis of comparison, what are the sizes of the other Anchorage high schools? East is 320,000 sq. ft.; West is 322,600 sq. ft.; Bartlett 310,000 sq. ft., Dimond 305,000 sq. ft.
- I would like to see the maximum possible wooded area kept on the site.

Amy Yurko, of Perkins & Will, began the process of leading the committee through a verification of the Education Specification. The Ed Spec gives a space “budget” for the design of a school to follow. Some areas are required to use particular amounts of space, but others are optional. The designers consult with the design committee to determine the program priorities for these options. Not all optional space can be included; as the facility as a whole needs to stay within its limit of 240,000 sq. ft.

A participant asked if dollar cost is a consideration at this point. There already is a fixed budget for the building of the school.

It was also stated that there is no intention of including a swimming pool in the new high school. Swimming pools are owned by the municipality, not the schools. The host school pays for maintenance and operation of the pool and must rent it from the municipality in order to use it for a swimming program.

The meeting then broke for a dinner interval. During the meal participants were asked to discuss shared use of the school, both within the high school program and shared community use. Afterward the following comments were shared:

Program Sharing

- Performing Arts and a cafeteria might share space like in the new Dimond High School design, although acoustical quality would be a concern.
- The library and computer labs could share space—both are quiet activities.
- Academic “pods” could each have a common multi-use area.
- Technology is great, but it would be sad to see books go away entirely.
- All areas of the school should be wired and networked for computers.
- In many ways a lab is a lab. Laboratories could be multi-function.
- Plenty of book storage is needed.
- Moveable walls are helpful for space sharing by subdividing.
- The Library should be a comfortable, welcoming space. Snack machines or food and drink areas, if done well, might have a place in a library. The library should be a place for activities other than research.
- The library and computer areas should be central to the building and accommodate both research and recreational reading.
- Students and teachers need independent study areas.
- A central commons area would create school-wide community.
- Some thoughts on lockers: Kids need a personal space at school. They need secure storage for their stuff. New students need exposure to a spectrum of students at their

school; lockers should not be segregated by year. Perhaps there could be temporary or seasonally assigned lockers for large amounts of sports gear or project items.

Community Sharing

- There could be a coffee stand in the library open to the community, perhaps run by business classes.
- Computers, the library, home economics facilities, indoor and outdoor athletic facilities could be shared with the community.
- There should be directory at the entrance for wayfinding by nonschool people.
- People need to feel comfortable entering and using the school facilities. They don't like to have to ask questions.
- There should be signs directing people to the various room numbers.
- There should be an open area indoors at the entrance.
- The library, media center, and gym could have separate outdoor entrances for after-hours use.
- The career resource area should be near the library for public use.
- Open areas of the school have to be supervised by administration and staff.
- The kitchens could be available for outside group use.
- Some areas should NOT be public—administrative offices and teacher workspaces.
- We should use proven marketing strategies to encourage user familiarity from other spaces such as malls, airports, and theaters.
- Full spectrum lighting would be a good idea.
- A theater would be desirable for both the school and the South Anchorage community.
- Sports facilities should be open to the community.
- There could be ski and bike trails on the grounds.
- There should be a community school.
- There should be business community involvement.
- There needs to be a way to be welcoming but to have good security. During the school day there can't be much sharing with the community.
- We need to remember that with wider use there will be wider responsibility for security, cleanup, and safety.
- The municipality should share the operating costs for community use.
- As people change careers more often there is increasing need for adult education in places like the local high school.
- There is an operational cost to using a facility more; there is a social cost to not using it.
- Technology changes so rapidly that increased use of equipment makes the investment more worthwhile given its limited lifetime.
- Schools don't directly get rental revenue from their facilities, but those funds are used for school repairs. Enrichment fees from community schools are put back into the school.
- One good community use of a school is as a safe haven and activity center for latchkey kids. Also, it is a good place for interaction between senior citizens and kids.

- Those who would like to see a change in the current swimming pool arrangement between the school district and the municipality should write to their assembly person, the school board members, and the mayor to initiate a change.

After the dinner break, the verification of the Ed Spec resumed.

The overall task was to subtract a total of 8,000 sq. ft. of optional program space to yield a total building space “budget” of 240,000 sq. ft., 150 sq. ft. per student for 1,600 students.

Large group room space was reduced; the number of academic classrooms lowered to 36, a number evenly divisible into four building areas. The library/media center space was scaled down, as was the careers cluster of rooms. There was extensive discussion of the amount of space needed for life skills/intensive needs classes. It was uncertain what size intensive needs population the school should prepare for. A specialist in this area would be asked to the next day’s discussion in order to provide the best information available from the school district.

At the close of the meeting Terry Hyer thanked all who participated. Binders containing the Ed Spec and other information were distributed to committee members before they left.

October 21, 1999

Terry Hyer welcomed all those returning for the second session of the Building Design Committee meeting. The committee’s goal for the second session is to finish reviewing the program spaces in the Ed Spec and complete the adjustment of options to achieve the mandated size for the school.

Jerry Sjolander, of Anchorage School District, was present to help in the discussions about special education and intensive needs classes. Jerry said that special education can be offered in any regular classroom. It may also require from time to time some small group rooms for special testing needs or tutoring, but these are already part of the Ed Spec plan. Jerry and a few participants separated from the main group for a lengthy discussion of intensive needs requirements while the main committee continued with its discussion of other reductions in optional space.

Academic small group rooms were reduced from 8 to a total of 4, one per academic area. There can also be a divisible classroom in each area that could provide seminar rooms. The committee added space for 150 large lockers for seasonal or daily use by students who need to store bulky sports gear or project materials.

Small group alcove space was removed from the library allowance, but Amy demonstrated how the room could still be designed to have functional alcoves in the regular space. Library space-sharing ideas were discussed. The library and cafeteria could share some space; a café space could be part of the library; technical and business

areas could also share. Amy drew examples of schemes for sharing of space between a media center and cafeteria.

In the visual arts area it was decided to take out the gallery/store area and various options for having the gallery and store functions were discussed. A favored option was to have the store and concession stand located in a café that was located in or near the library.

There was a long discussion about including a theatre in the performing arts area. Many committee members felt a need for a quality performance facility in South Anchorage. There are ways to combine a stage and cafeteria space—it is being done in the new Dimond High School plans—but only a dedicated theatre can have the top-quality acoustics. The final recommendation was that if there is a way to squeeze a theatre into the school it should be done.

A discussion of JROTC centered mainly on the rifle range space. Technical innovations in shooting might include electronic rifles or portable ranges. It was also observed that riflery is a school sport for both boys and girls. A JROTC specialist will be present at the next meeting to inform decisions in this area.

In physical education space one lane was taken out of the indoor track and an auxiliary gym/dance room was subtracted. There was considerable discussion about narrowing the track. Some people felt that if the track has to be narrow it should be eliminated and runners could use the hallways after school hours as is the custom in many Anchorage secondary schools without indoor tracks. The track might be used by the community, but there are several indoor tracks in South Anchorage. It was decided to consult someone from a high school P.E. department when the issue is considered further.

In the career cluster the sizes of Family & Consumer Science, Business, and Technology areas were reduced, but none were eliminated. Administration space was left as in the Ed Spec.

There was discussion of the size of cafeteria space needed. The committee pondered how many students will use the cafeteria at lunchtime and the benefits and problems of a single or multiple lunch period. Many felt that cafeteria space could be minimized by having diverse areas for lunch. Lunch is a time for socializing and interaction of students with each other, with teachers, and for teachers to interact with one another. Diverse lunch options might better foster such socializing.

The committee briefly considered some shapes and formats of academic cluster areas, for example plain classrooms in wings that led to science rooms side-by-side at the ends, preserving both the synergy of science classes grouped together and the inclusion of science rooms in each cluster's territory.

By the end of the Ed Spec discussion enough area reduction had been done to bring the proposed total within the specified limit at 239,795 sq. ft.

The next Building Design Committee meeting will take place December 6 and 7 in a different location—Goldenview Middle School library. The meetings will be 3:30 to 8 p.m. both days. On the 6th there will also be an optional tour of Goldenview at 3 p.m. so that participants can see the features and facilities of a new secondary school.

ATTENDEES:

PROJECT TEAM & SPECIALISTS

Ray Amsden, ASD Facilities
Rob Balivet, ASD Project Manager
Dick Boysen, ASD Facilities
Anne Brooks, Brooks & Associates
Kathy Burgess, Brooks & Associates
Ed Conyers, ASD Facilities
Esther Cox, ASD Project Coordinator
Greg Frosberg, ECI/Hyer

Terry Hyer, ECI/Hyer
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Howard Partch, USKH (Dimond)
Jerry Sjolander, ASD Special Ed.
Jon Steele, ECI/Hyer
Amy Yurko, Perkins & Will

BUILDING DESIGN COMMITTEE

Pat Abney, Anchorage Assembly
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Tony Bennett, Turnagain View
Connie Bensler, Goldenview
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Jesse Martin
Mark Mason, East
Beka Menzel, East
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Dale Normandin, Chugiak
Guy Okada, Dimond
Pat Podvin, Service
Mary Rasmussen, Mears
Janine Redding, Kasuun
Sallie Ross, Service
Debbie Rozman, Goldenview
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