

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Unatego Facilities Study Advisory Committee  
FROM: Alan Pole and Bill Silky  
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of October 15, 2015  
DATE: October 17, 2015

**Attendance:**

Committee Members: Terry Brown, Jeanne Butler, Heather Coleman, Ron Decker, Ed Frazier, Scott Garno, Kim Gascon, Patti Hoyt, Katie James, Lew Keyser, Ernie Kroll, Elaine Lowe, Katherine Mazourek, Kelly Poje, Melanie Ruff, Fran Secor, and Kim Trask

Consultants: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

Observers: Maureen Haehnel, Kathy Knox, Ruth Modinger, Robert Knox, Tyler Post, Ed Horan, Allison Collins, Kelly Wilde, Kelli Hafele, Angela Flavell, Vicki Beames, Winifred Slawson, Barbara Stanton, Annette Holbrook, Dick Downey, J. McDermott, Stuart Anderson, Glenn Seroka, and Jean Seroka

Location: Unatego Junior-Senior High School

1. Superintendent Dave Richards was ill and was not able to attend the meeting. In his absence, middle school principal Patti Hoyt welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the study consultants. After the consultants provided their backgrounds, committee members were asked to introduce themselves and discuss their connection with the school district.

2. Alan Pole reviewed the purpose of the study that is to answer the following question:

*Is there a better way....educationally and fiscally....to use the existing schools and to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future? If so, how should the facilities best be used?*

3. Meetings of the Advisory Committee will be held from 6:30-8:30 pm as follows:

Date	Topic	Location
October 15	General overview of the study process including the committee's role; review of the district's current position	Junior Senior High School
December 3	Complete review of the district's current position; explore possible future organizational options	TBD
December 17	Review of draft report and tentative recommendations	TBD

While the meetings of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 pm, optional tours of the two elementary schools will be held before each of the next two meetings beginning at 5:45 pm. These tours are for committee members and for anyone that will be observing the meeting that will follow.

4. A contact list of the members of the Advisory Committee was shared with email addresses. Members of the group were asked to verify the accuracy of the information since email will serve as the primary means of communication between the consultants and the committee members. Meeting materials will be emailed to all committee members prior to the meeting. Paper copies of the materials will also be made available at each meeting.

5. Meeting notes will be provided after each meeting. The notes will be emailed to all committee members and copied to the superintendent. It will be the responsibility of the superintendent to distribute the notes within the district, as he deems appropriate. It is anticipated that, at a minimum, notes will be provided to board members and posted on the district's website. The Power Point that is used at each meeting will also be posted on the district's website after the meeting occurs.

6. All meetings of the advisory committee will be open. Members of the public will be welcome at these meetings. At the conclusion of each meeting, the observers will have the opportunity to offer comments or ask questions.

7. Alan Pole presented a Power Point overview of the study process and the role of the advisory committee. He indicated that the function of the committee is to advise the Board of Education and the consultants, to communicate with the public about the process, and to prepare informative materials. In short, the committee will add a cultural context for Unatego as the various aspects of the study emerge. The superintendent is not a member of the committee but serves as a resource to the committee. Committee members are expected to attend all committee meetings, freely express their points of view, be key communicators with stakeholder groups, and be a respectful, contributing member of the committee.

He emphasized that the consultants bring an outside, unbiased perspective and will ensure that the process is open. They will produce meetings notes after each committee meeting and will be responsible for the final report. The recommendations in the report will benefit student learning and will be educationally sound and fiscally responsible. They will also be independent of special interest groups.

8. Bill Silky presented an overview of past enrollments for Unatego as well as projected future enrollments for the district. The study begins by reviewing enrollment trends since enrollments influence all decisions regarding staffing, class and curricular offerings, facilities, transportation, and finances.

Enrollment has been declining since at least 2010-11 when the analysis began. Since 2010-2011, the enrollment in Unatego has declined from 1,042 students to 895 students in the 2015-16 school year, a decline of 14.1%.

To predict future enrollment, the consultants employ the Cohort Survival Projection method that uses information on the number of births in each school district over a period of years and calculates patterns of enrollment. A cohort survival ratio is developed that tracks how each cohort of students changes as it moves through the grade levels. This ratio, used with the live birth information, predicts what the enrollment will be for a period of years given consistent and predictable conditions. It does not take into account significant economic development changes such as a major employer leaving or entering the area and other similar changes. However, it is not anticipated that either of these conditions will be taking place in Unatego.

Using this method, the enrollment in Unatego is predicted to decrease from 895 in 2015-16 to 774 students in the 2022-2023 school year, an additional decline of 13.5%. The number of home schooled students, non-resident students, and resident students enrolled in non-public schools are all factors that are considered in projecting enrollment. It does not appear that any of these factors will significantly influence the enrollment projections that were made for Unatego. Bill also reviewed demographic information for Otsego County as well as the major towns and villages within the school district. This review clearly demonstrated that, like the school district enrollment, a general decline for past years has occurred and a similar decline is projected into the future.

9. Alan Pole provided an overview of the district's facilities as evaluated by the Building Conditions Survey conducted in 2010. The district is in the process of having its Building Conditions Survey updated. Information from that survey should be available for a future meeting.

10. Alan also reviewed the elementary school class sizes as well as current space utilization for all three of the district's buildings. It was clear from the presentation that there is a significant amount of space in each of the buildings that is not being used to its maximum capacity. Bill Silky then reviewed a number of factors relating to grade alignment concluding that there is no "one best way" to organize school district grade levels.

11. Bill Silky provided a brief overview of the special education services in the district and well as the single trip transportation system that is currently being used in the district. He also reviewed the district balance sheet for June 30, 2015 that showed an unassigned fund balance of only \$280,725. Finally, Bill noted that the district has been determined to be in moderate fiscal distress.

12. Committee members were then asked to work in groups to determine the three most important “take-aways” that they had learned at the meeting. The groups reported the following responses:

- ✓ The district is experiencing declining enrollment which is expected to continue;
- ✓ The district has excess space in its buildings;
- ✓ The district is in financial difficulty;
- ✓ The time that students spend on the bus should be considered as part of this study;
- ✓ Keep the public informed about the progress of this study

13. The meeting was opened up to the observers for questions and comments. There were a number of comments that were made from those in attendance.

14. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Thursday, December 3, 2015 at one of the elementary schools. An optional tour of the school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The meeting of the Advisory Committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on October 15. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on 12.3.15. We will let you know where the meeting will be held prior to December 3. In any event, the tour will begin at 5:45 and meeting will start at 6:30!!

C: David Richards