

Questions for replacement school for existing Booth M.S.

The following questions were submitted in response to the FCBOE website posting titled “J.C. Booth Replacement School Hearing.” The questions have been arranged by specific subject area.

Student Instruction Considerations:

1. How has the FCBOE measured the future instructional impact of placing students into a significantly larger school? For example, we know that existing Booth M.S. was below the state average in the Progress Score for several years, and consistently measured at the bottom of all Fayette County middle schools on this measure (except for Bennet’s Mill, which went from best to worst after the FCBOE redistricting and subsequent massive enrollment changes). Has the FCBOE determined the source of Booth Middle School’s academic failures, and are you certain that it was not related to its then already large size? [The current enrollment of Booth Middle School is 1,185. The capacity of the replacement school would be 1,400. The intent is to be sure we do not under-build or over-build as replacement or renovation plans are decided. We feel that building for an additional 215 student capacity in this location is prudent.](#)
2. If the answer to question “1” above is not yes, how can you assure Fayette parents and students that you are not going to make a large middle school problem even worse? [There are middle schools in Georgia, and across the country, with both smaller and much larger enrollments than either of the proposed plans. There is not a one-to-one relationship based solely on school enrollment.](#)
3. Given the validated importance of school climate to student achievement, how will spending significantly more on a massively larger replacement Booth M.S. improve school climate? [School climate is very important to students, staff, parents, and the community at large. Based on initial feedback from students, staff and parents, there is a large percentage of those who feel the climate will continue to be strong. The 2018 Booth Middle School Climate rating is currently a 5 on a 5-point scale \(or 95.60\).](#)
4. Has the FCBOE evaluated and prioritized all capital projects (including digital learning) in all schools and compared this list to perceived benefit of spending \$16+ million in EXTRA education funds for a new Booth versus the cost of renovating existing Booth M.S. (see “Cost Considerations” below). [The system Five-Year Facility Plan has been developed and approved by the Fayette County Board of Education in conjunction with the State Department of Education. All construction projects in the plan are based on projections and priorities, and are](#)

addressed in order of need. (More of this information is provided in the public hearing presentations.)

5. Similar to question “5” above, before spending millions of extra capital fund dollars on building a replacement school, will the FCBOE have funded all other higher impact, student learning priorities? [The ESPLOST referendum addresses five major categories: Facilities, Textbooks, Transportation, Technology \(Safety\), and Bond Debt. Each category receives a proportional share of the total.](#)

6. The questions above assume that the FCBOE has a list of capital projects prioritized based upon cost and expected positive impact to student learning. Does the FCBOE have such a list? If so, where does the incremental cost of building a NEW Booth M.S. rank? When will the FCBOE share this list with the public? [The ESPLOST III list of potential projects can be found on the school system website under Departments/Finance/ESPLOST. This list was developed with the ESPLOST III committee, school system staff, and board member input. The projects were aligned with the school system’s strategic plan. Each project was assigned to a phase 1, 2 or 3 to be addressed as funds become available. There are always more facility projects than there is funding. The district has been addressing facility needs and is in a sense “playing catch up” with many deferred facility necessities. The projects in ESPLOST III were projected to cost significantly more than what would be collected in the five-year ESPLOST. All construction projects in the Five-Year Facility Plan are based on projections and priorities, and are addressed in order of need. Projects not completed in this cycle will be rolled over to the next five-year cycle.](#)

Student Safety Considerations:

1. Has the FCBOE analyzed school violent incident reports throughout the state to ensure that students and teachers will be safe in the hallways and classrooms in middle school that has 250% more students than standard required middle school funding size (1,400 versus 400)? [Student and staff safety is one of the school system’s top priorities. The replacement middle school will house the current number of students at Booth, which is 1,185. No other students would be added except that those who live in the attendance zone, or through normal special permission procedures.](#)

2. If the massive size of the school requires prison-like conditions to maintain order and safety, how will this impact the school climate, and student achievement? (See also, “Student Instruction Considerations” above.) [All schools in the system have climate rankings of either 4 or 5. Student discipline and behavior is a shared responsibility between parents and the school system. School safety improvements have been added at each of our schools such as safety vestibules, cameras, access control, etc. We have worked hard to improve safety conditions at all of our schools as every school district in the country has done. We believe our schools](#)

provide a welcoming environment, and do not believe “prison-like” conditions exist at any of our schools in Fayette County.

3. How will the FCBOE protect students from traffic injuries, both pedestrian and auto, given the lack of road, cart path and side-walk infrastructure at the Replacement Booth location? (See also, “Traffic and Infrastructure Considerations” below.) This is a collaborative effort that will need to be addressed by all governing bodies. The Fayette County Board of Education and school system staff are willing to work with all parties involved in addressing shared safety considerations.

4. How will emergency vehicles access the new school, given the traffic congestion that will block access during morning and evening school commutes? They will access just as they do now in crowded conditions at other sites.

Cost Considerations:

1. Why is the cost of land acquisition not reflected in the estimate of cost on your web notice? Clearly, the land purchase is a significant cost for the new location and is totally unrelated to the existing Booth improvement plan. The cost of land includes \$1,856,600 for the 37.1 acres on Stagecoach Rd (3/7/2019) and \$550,000 for the property on Carriage Lane (1/17/2019). The land was not purchased specifically for this project. When the school system became aware of the availability of the Stagecoach property, the intention was to take advantage of the opportunity to purchase a large tract of land in the Peachtree City area. Other potential sites in Peachtree City were not available or feasible for a future school.

2. Has the FCBOE considered holding the property and selling it at a future date; or trading the property for land elsewhere – in a location more appropriate for school construction? As the Fayette County Board of Education reviews the two options under consideration and a decision is made, if the Stagecoach property is not to be used, the board will consider options moving forward. However, if the board decides to build on the property, it should be known that the State Facilities Division has evaluated the school site and determined it is a good site for constructing a school.

3. What prompted the FCBOE to purchase a parcel of land that has no existing road access, without first getting commitments from Peachtree City, Fayette County and the State Department of Transportation for road access? Initial conversations regarding access to the property were shared with officials from Peachtree City. The city of Peachtree City will determine their next steps.

4. Did the FCBOE request, through the GADOE, that the existing Booth M.S. be phased out in order to reduce surplus instructional unit inventory and to earn additional entitlement for the Replacement Booth M.S. (and to avoid losing entitlement for future school educational

facilities projects)? Multiple conversations have occurred with the Georgia Department of Education, but until a final decision is made it is not prudent to make such a request at this point. Depending on when and which decision selection is made, we will need to continue utilizing the current facility. (Note: removing Booth MS from inventory would increase the funding for a replacement school by \$1.966 million, but would reduce the funds available for modernization of the current Booth MS by \$6.9 million. This is a net loss of state funding of \$5 million.)

5. Did the FCBOE request Total Modernization funding to increase state bond funds that could be contributed to the renovation of existing Booth M.S.? Yes, the system qualifies for \$6.9 million in funding that will be used for renovations and modernization at the current Booth MS.

6. What is the projected annual cost in lost Capital Outlay Entitlement (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-260) as a result of not having phased out existing Booth M.S. and therefore losing future state capital outlay entitlement? If the middle school is replaced, then the new facility would start to earn entitlement funds. The current location could earn entitlement funds based on the usage. There is the potential that the current facility would be phased out of inventory. However, plans are to utilize current available funding (see #4) to modernize the current Booth MS.

7. Why is the FCBOE proposing to forgo state bond funded capital outlay funding that is available to pay for up to 80% of approved projects (the FCBOE Required Participation for approved projects cannot exceed 20% for required reimbursable expenses)? As shown in number 4 above, by leaving the current Booth MS in inventory, the school system is maximizing state capital outlay funds available for all projects.

8. Has the FCBOE considered projects that will provide available state capital funding and/or reduce the negative impact of adding additional instructional units (in the new school) without phasing out existing Booth classrooms? As shown in number 4 above, by leaving the current Booth MS in inventory, the school system is maximizing state capital outlay funds available for all projects.

9. It appears that SPLOST funds will be used for the new school. Does the FCBOE believe that it has approval to build a school under previous SPLOST Resolution voter approvals? Yes, the ESPLOST referendum includes language for new construction in section iv. Building a replacement Booth Middle School was not specifically cited as a project at that time because the Fayette County Board of Education did not own property in Peachtree City.

10. If Fayette citizens do not approve SPLOST funding in the future, how much will have to be raised through local bond issuance? This is a hypothetical scenario that would depend on several factors, and assumes the citizens would choose a bond referendum over an E SPLOST as a funding mechanism.

11. What will be the added cost to Fayette county property owners (expressed in Local Tax Digest Mils) for all existing and new bond debt if the SPLOST funding is not approved after the new school is built? [This is a hypothetical scenario that would depend on several factors, and assumes the citizens would choose a bond referendum over an ESPLOST as a funding mechanism.](#)

Traffic and Infrastructure Considerations:

1. Has a traffic feasibility study been done to analyze the impact of having a 1,400 student school added to the traffic intersection at Highway 54 / Walt Banks and Carriage Lane? Has the State Department of Transportation given input on the feasibility? [A traffic study has been completed. We have asked the civil engineering firm to contact the Georgia Department of Transportation regarding improvements recommended with the turn lanes on Carriage Lane and Georgia Highway 54.](#)

2. What contingency plans has the FBOE put in place to ensure students will be able to attend a different Fayette county middle school, if the Booth Replacement Middle School is simply not accessible (due to severely limited road access) for more than a few hundred students? [We have two opportunities for all students in Fayette to apply for school choice, voluntary special permission and HB251 \(Georgia Choice Laws\).](#)

3. Given that FCBOE funds cannot be used for off premise road enhancement (per Georgia law), what specific, written commitments have been provided by the PTC council, the Fayette County Council and the State Department of Transportation for road improvement and construction? [There are no written commitments from either party at this time. This will be a work in progress over the next two years.](#)

4. How will the FCBOE ensure that the above-named funding entities will increase road funding, if needed, for road construction and improvement beyond existing commitments? How long does the FCBOE estimate it will take to induce these other governments to complete additional road projects to ensure access to the Replacement Middle School? [\(See questions 3 above.\)](#)

5. How will the FCBOE ensure safety of pedestrians (students) crossing highway 54 in the existing crosswalks given the massive increase in school traffic? [This is a question that would have to be addressed collaboratively by all governmental and law enforcement agencies; it is not solely a school system responsibility. The Fayette County Board of Education and school system staff are happy to work in this collaboration.](#)

6. Will sidewalks be put in along Carriage Lane so that the students crossing Highway 54 at the legal crosswalks will be able to safely walk to the new school? [We can put sidewalks on any](#)

of our property, including the connector from Carriage Lane. Any sidewalks on public roads would be the responsibility of the city.

Legal Considerations:

The school system considers all Fayette County Public Schools to be county schools and part of one school system. The Five-Year Facility Plan and capital project expenditures show that the school system has addressed facility needs throughout the system based on necessity, and has done so in an equitable manner. There is a list of completed projects in the J. C. Booth Middle School options slide presentation.

1. Has a legal risk assessment been prepared for a likely challenge by non-Peachtree City citizens who believe that the large amount of discretionary extra funding to build a new school for Peachtree City residents is contrary to Georgia's restrictions against gratuitous spending (favoritism). What about other requirements for equity for all Fayette County residents in school funding?
2. Has the FCBOE prepared alternative school districting plans for the likely eventuality that a court will order the FCBOE to remedy the favoritism exemplified by the large amount of extra spending on the new school?
3. This remedy will likely be mandated redistricting to send existing Booth students to other middle schools in Fayette County and allowing students not currently living near Peachtree City to attend the new Replacement Middle School. Are there other remedies to court challenges that the FCBOE is considering that would not involve redistricting?
4. Has the FCBOE estimated the additional transportation costs of the likely court mandated busing, or other remedy (if one exists)?