

Tilghman Elementary School
Facility Utilization Committee Meeting
Talbot County Education Center

Meeting Minutes

November 6, 2017

I- Call to order

The facilitator, Rob Levit of Annapolis, MD, called to order the meeting of the Tilghman Elementary School Facility Utilization Committee at 8:30am on November 6, 2017 at the Talbot County Education Center.

II- Roll call

Rob Levit conducted a roll call. The following persons were present:

Megan McDaniel- Easton/ St. Michaels Elementary School Parent
Erin Spurry- Bozman/ St. Michaels Elementary School Parent
Indra Bullock- St. Michaels Elementary School Principal
LuAnn McKelvey- Tilghman Elementary School Teacher
April Motovidiak- Tilghman Elementary School Parent
Joyce Crow- Tilghman Elementary School Principal
Cristy Morrell- Critchlow Adkins Childrens Centers Executive Director
Sandy Kleppinger- Board of Education District 7
Jay Shotel- Community Rep/Tilghman resident/ Vice President TAYA

Also present were the following employees of Talbot County Public Schools:
Kevin Shafer (Plant Operations and Maintenance Manager), Lynne Duncan (Assistant Superintendent for Administrative and Support Services), Eugenia Lewis (Administrative Support- Transportation), and Angelina Khlok (Administrative Assistant- Human Resources.)

The following persons were not in attendance:

Marlene Thomas- St. Michaels Elementary School Critchlow Adkins Director
(Cristy Morrell stood in for Marlene Thomas.)

III- Topics of Discussion

Mr. Levit asked the committee to respond to the following question, “In your own words, on your sticky, please write down what the issue is at hand we are discussing today and place it in the box at the front of the room.”

The committee wrote the following responses on a sticky note, and placed it on the dry erase board:

- Increasingly low enrollment at Tilghman Elementary School
- Proper utilization of public funds and equity of class sizes at Tilghman Elementary School
- Existence of Tilghman Elementary School functioning as a school

- Closure of Tilghman Elementary School due to cost
- How to increase the utilization of Tilghman Elementary School
- We need to keep the affected children's needs at the top of our list

Mr. Levit asked the committee to respond to the following question, "In your opinion, what is the true significance of this issue?"

The committee wrote the following responses on a sticky note, and placed it on the dry erase board:

- Closure will affect all students enrolled in Tilghman Elementary School and St. Michaels Elementary School in negative matter
- Importance of Community school- where are our priorities?
- Could affect the entire community and students at both schools and could affect the number of resources at St. Michaels Elementary School
- Tilghman Elementary School has best test scores in county, the significance of this issue is overcrowding of classes, kids getting lost, test scores and learning declining if they are moved
- How will staff be affected? Where will I work next year?
- Potential of losing classroom space at St. Michaels Elementary School
- Survey- smaller class sizes wanted for their students

Mr. Levit asked the committee to respond to the following question, "What would be your ideal outcome?"

The committee wrote the following responses on a sticky note, and placed it on the dry erase board:

- Redistrict- we have two overcrowded schools in the county- Instead of closing under utilized school- Redistrict overcrowding, prevent overcrowding at St. Michaels Elementary School- get Tilghman fully utilized.
- Increase enrollment at Tilghman Elementary School, keep all class sizes small, and keep Tilghman Elementary School open
- All schools in Talbot County had class sizes of Tilghman Elementary School. Realistic? Probably not.
- Increasing district for Tilghman Elementary School to maximize utilization and decrease St. Michaels Elementary School
- Redistrict to allow higher enrollment- Transportation for out of area, bring Pre-K and 6th grade back to Tilghman Elementary School
- Keep school and find more uses
- School remains but not with any less staff that is there now and more students attend.

Mr. Levit asked the committee to respond to the following question, "What is the driving background information about how this issue arose?"

The committee wrote the following responses on a sticky note, and placed it on the dry erase board:

- How important a community school is to Tilghman. It is a touchstone for a lot that happens there for families.
- Declining enrollment at Tilghman Elementary School, Equity throughout county. Plan for enrollment increase.
- Talbot County Public Schools are grossly underfunded
- Student/teacher ratios and testing scores are showing strong numbers in Tilghman

Elementary School

- Under utilization of Tilghman Elementary School- Last redistricting was 21 yrs. (+/-) that actually affected Tilghman Elementary School
- Tilghman Elementary School enrollment figures impacted negatively when Superintendent and Board of Education moved Pre-K and 6th Grade. Why was school built for so many kids?

Mr. Levit asked the committee to respond to the following question, “What actions have been taken so far?”

The committee wrote the following responses on a sticky note, and placed it on the dry erase board:

- Keep losing staff due to low enrollment- this will continue if school is open with same low enrollment
- None that I am aware of in the past 7 years my kid has been at this school.
- Developing this group
- Bus children from Tilghman Elementary School and St. Michaels Elementary School
- Tilghman Elementary School community has come together to help find a solution
- Evaluating usage of Tilghman Elementary School
- Closure of Tilghman Elementary School has already been determined, we are just following the timeline
- Discussions have been started- Superintendent is listening.

Mr. Levit asked the committee to respond to the following question, “What is the next best option? Where do we go from here?”

The committee wrote the following responses on a sticky note, and placed it on the dry erase board:

- Look at all options to keep Tilghman Elementary School open and keep from St. Michaels Elementary School/St. Michaels Middle/High School
- Look at details and information- which would each look like in reality. (Redistricting)
- Make it a STEAM Magnet School at either Tilghman Elementary School or St. Michaels Elementary School
- Implement plan to increase enrollment at Tilghman Elementary School (Magnet, Boundary adjustment, Advertising campaign to fill empty seats
- Questionnaire of parents interested in sending students to Tilghman Elementary School
- Look at redistricting as a whole, look at what’s best for kids, test scores, all alternatives to keeping Tilghman Elementary School open
- Provide bus transportation to out of area students but use existing stops like at Critchlow/St. Michaels Elementary School
- Redistrict and take a look at bus routes to allow min time on bus while keeping cost efficiency (for entire county) Bozman and Nevitt Rd.

All of committee meets in circle in the middle of the room

Mr. Levit asked the committee to respond to the following question, “Do you feel like your voice is being heard this morning?”

All participants replied, yes.

Mr. Levit asked the committee to respond to the following question, “What insight do you need from this group?”

The committee members replied with the following responses:

- How do we make utilization happen? Rather than just being talked about.
- With some of the out of the box thinking, lets look at the numbers and reality and does it actually solve the problem? Prioritize.
- Utilization, how realistic is it to make it a magnet school? Can we make it a GED program, or Vocational School? Reality of issue.
- Being open minded and finding solution
- We all have the best interest of the kids at mind. (Class sizes)
- Redistricting- how will moving to St. Michaels Elementary School affect Middle School students?

All of committee sits down in their seats

Mr. Levit asked the committee to respond to the following question, “What are some of the shapers, trends, implications and resolutions of this issue?”

The committee members replied with the following responses:

Shapers/Trends:

- Demographics- we have a population that is aging in the county.
- Stable enrollment in the schools, affordable housing, affordable childcare, transportation, revenue cap,
- Tilghman was named the “Hamptons of the Chesapeake”, Parents are sending their kids to Private schools instead of Public Schools based on the discussion of Tilghman closing
- Economy trend (2008 decline) People are building retirement homes and are not as invested in schools.

Implications for the community/Resolutions:

- Declining enrollment- people aren’t bringing in students to the school. Possibility of closing a school in the community, it affects every student- class sizes are huge for many students. Behavioral students. Too many distractions in class room (cell phones, behavior)
- Greater flexibility- how we assign our kids and where they go. There are areas in this community that are growing, It may be moving more central- 50 bound- Tilghman is more of a resort community. Community is very invested in school.
- Address class sizes- need to look at the whole school- whole school needs to be small. School activities and school events and school safety. The smaller school atmosphere is so important. Many more opportunities to be had at a small school.

Comment- we need more people at the table involved in this conversation from the County

Mr. Levit asked the committee to respond to the following question, How much control do we have over these issues?

The committee members replied with the following responses:

- Affordable housing- medium control

- Senior citizens moving in- low control
- Transportation issue- we have an influence

Mr. Levit asked the committee to respond to the following question, “How is this affecting the schools?”

The committee members replied with the following responses:

- Shifting enrollment
- limits funds/budgets
- expand programs
- staffing
- facility maintenance

Comment- this issue is bigger than just keeping the school open, it’s community wide.

Mr. Levit asked the committee, “Have we covered all scopes of options available at this meeting? What is each side of the spectrum?”

The committee members replied and came to the following consensus:

- Close School
- Stay open- exactly how it is now

Mr. Levit asked the committee, “Lets hear some ideas moving forward, what can we do, what can we recommend?”

The committee members replied with the following responses:

1. Bozman/Nevitt Redistricting- look at what’s best for kids, Test Scores, Alternatives to keep Tilghman Elementary School open
2. Pushing the line even further to Railroad Ave. option (or Martingham option)
3. Magnet school (Tilghman Elementary School or St. Michaels Elementary School)
4. Need more information
5. Raise utilization as community center (education, health, additional use.)
6. Re look at out of area policy
7. People don’t know what Tilghman has to offer (public relations campaign of some sort), marketing efforts
8. Best next option- look at details and information about all ideas
 - a. What would each option look like in reality? Example- redistricting, etc.
9. Provide bus transportation to out of area students, but use existing stops like at Critchlow/St. Michaels Elementary School
10. Fewer bus stops
 - a. Hub and spoke concept
 - b. Minimum time on bus- cost-efficiency

Mr. Levit asked the committee, “What recommendations can we make moving forward?”

The committee members complied the following recommendations:

An extension of the timeline; “we need more information before we can make a decision.”

1. Examine the redistricting options/effects

2. Cost/Benefit of each option
3. Policy for building function
 - a. To consider the effects of this on St. Michaels Elementary School
4. Providing information on the following:
 - a. Redistricting numbers (farther than Martingham, Railroad Ave.- how many kids would that bring to Tilghman Elementary School)

Mr. Levit made the following suggestion to the committee members:

“We need to provide what are you going to do with that extension of time, how is the information going to be disseminated, how much time do you need?”

Meeting again on November 20th

Comment- Can we invite anyone to come visit Tilghman Elementary School during Nov 15th?

IV- Additional Remarks made by the committee members:

- Resource redistribution- where would money/personnel go
- Keep in mind these are countywide implications
- Losing Critchlow Adkins space is always a concern.
- Talbot County Public Schools does not have a small schools policy. Only a few counties on eastern shore that do not have one
- We need to make an area where all kids come to get on bus? We have one bus that goes to Tilghman Elementary School with one kid on the bus that could be better utilized.
- 6 or 7 years ago- why was Tilghman Elementary School not given any students and everyone was sent to St. Michaels Elementary School?
- When we think of cost, we need to think of cost ratio per students, it wouldn't cost any more to have 14 students per class vs. 9 students per class. It is not a cost issue but a ratio issue.
- Tilghman Elementary School is not too costly; there are too few students.
- There are three ways to increase enrollment:
 1. Develop a magnet school environment
 - a. Make use of resources there
 - b. Island geography
 - c. Voluntary transfers
 - d. 3-5 grade
 - e. Siblings welcome
 2. Bozman and Nevitt to Tilghman Elementary School- essential but can be softened for students that have moved to private Pre-K
 3. Self funded publicity campaign
- We need to take advantage of grant services

V- Questions to get answers for:

1. What would class sizes look like at St. Michaels Elementary School?
2. Complexity of redistricting?
3. CACC Classrooms needed for expanding classrooms?
4. How much does closing the school really save?
5. What would happen to building if Tilghman Elementary School is closed? Who is responsible?

6. How will Middle/high School be affected if their hall of classrooms is used for elementary when they become middle/high school students?

VI- Final Recommendation:

Additional time is needed to make a final recommendation

By 11/17/17 information will be made available for the following:

- a. Financial Data relevant to decision making
- b. Student Data
- c. How will resources from Tilghman Elementary School be distributed?
 - i. Affect on St. Michaels Elementary School (what will St. Michaels Elementary School get?)

Meeting on 11/20/17 to evaluate: (Kevin and possibly Rob)

- a. Evaluate initial priorities and examine through financial lens
 - i. Examine the following:
 - a. Fiscal viability
 - b. Services to children
 - c. Equity across affected schools
 - d. Overall effect on community

VII- Adjournment

The facilitator, Rob Levit of Annapolis, MD, adjourned the meeting at 12:25pm.

Minutes submitted by: Angelina Khlok

Minutes approved by: Lynne Duncan