

Tuscaloosa City School Board
Demographic Study Committee Meeting
12/21/2006 3:00 p.m.

Present: Superintendent Joyce Levey, Dorothy Richardson, Assistant Superintendent, Board Member Virginia Powell, Board Member Dan Meisner, Attorney Rusty Gibson, City of Tuscaloosa Planning Director Bill Snowden, Tuscaloosa Neighborhoods Together President Laurie Johns, School Finance Officer Patrick Conner, Curriculum Director Margaret O'Neal, Facilities Director Jeff Johnson, Board Member Ninette Cannon, Ken King and Marvin Lucas

Joyce Levy: Rusty Gibson cannot stay long.

Rusty Gibson: Kelley Carey is working on 8-10 proposals to submit and he needs to know when Kelley Carey should submit these.

Dan Meisner: We need to look at our own time line.

Rusty Gibson: So, when he has the information, he should just go ahead and send it in?

Dan Meisner: Yes.

Virginia Powell: I have talked to the folks at the CBER (Center for Business and Economic Research). They have done demographic studies, in fact, didn't they do one for you Bill (Snowden)?

Bill Snowden: CBER did the 2000-2003 demographic study.

Pat Connor: They did a study for the entire state for population trends.

Dan Meisner: It showed school populations throughout the state.

Virginia Powell: We should get them involved; they live here.

Pat Connor: The basic premise of their study was that if you live in a rural area, the population is going to decrease; if you live in an urban area, the population is going to increase or stay the same.

Virginia Powell: Was it part of 2020?

Pat Connor: No, but it went through the 2020 program.

Rusty Gibson: I don't think Kelley Carey has this study, but he could use it an overlay its findings with his own. Kelley Carey is using a two-pronged approach: (1) realignments for 2007 and (2) 5 year growth plan for the school system.

Virginia Powell: Kelley Carey will be able to say exactly how many children are in a district.

Bill Snowden: I used to do consulting work and I regularly used this type of information so I am sure Kelley Carey did get this study - that would be normal procedure. I know he is updated on the growth (housing starts?) through the end of November.

Rusty Gibson: Bill, will you communicate directly with Kelley Carey on that? Kelley Carey will normally

look at transportation burden, and capacity and he only looks out five years because of the fluidity of the student population. Kelley Carey is interested in talking to Bill Snowden because Snowden knows where the subdivisions are approved and where the City is taking water and sewer.

Bill Snowden: This is great timing because just last Friday we took the preliminary draft of the City Wide Land Use Plan to the technical committee. On January 12 we are taking it to the elected officials. It is a planner's dream to work with a school board. In Auburn (where he used to work) the school board was 3-4 years behind the planning projections and they had to use portable buildings.

Rusty Gibson: Kelley Carey is thinking of giving his base options toward the end of January.

Joyce Levey: January 29th is a regular meeting and January 25 is open work session.

Virginia Powell: This is wonderful. I am so glad we are taking it to the public, but I'm wondering how...

Joyce Levey: The options will come to the Board members first and then it will go to the public.

Virginia Powell: Wouldn't it be neat if we say, "here's what we are looking at; what are your ideas?"

Dan Meisner: My idea is that we will present some number of alternative approaches. They may be "and/or" approaches so there will be a matrix of choices.

Joyce Levey: The point is to be open. The committee is to get broad ideas then we will get specifics from the community.

Virginia Powell: I have heard comments about the fact that we used inside facilitators at our last public meetings. It doesn't look good to have people facilitating from the inside.

Joyce Levey: We used parents, teachers and administrators.

Marvin Lucas: I would like to address this point. I was one of the facilitators at those meetings and I found that some teachers made responses to concerns. Perhaps it was just an ingrained reaction, but it was not good for the teachers to be making comment.

Laurie Johns: I attended the meeting at Northridge High School. In the room I was in there was no discussion. The facilitators asked the questions and asked for concise enough answers to be able to write them down and there was no encouragement of discussion or intercourse at all among the group. Also a school board member was in the room and that person replied to a concern I expressed to the extent of being argumentative. I don't think it is appropriate at all for the board members to be in the discussion groups.

Dan Meisner: The way I handled the meetings was that I moved from room to room just getting a sense of how things were going in each group. I saw that some rooms were engaging in so much discussion that they were not progressing down the list of questions and in other rooms they were way down the list when I came in because the facilitator wasn't allowing any discussion. There were other groups that fell somewhere in between.

There was then general discussion about how it would not be right at all for the board members not to

attend the public meetings, but that if they do opt to go into the discussion groups, they should not express any opinions.

Virginia Powell: It is a lot of work facilitating these meetings and then getting the notes typed up.

Joyce Levey: Yes, if we want to use Challenge 21 or some other group, we need to go ahead.

Virginia Powell: That would remove the note-taking burden from the Board.

Dan Meisner: It might be a good idea because an outside group is neutral.

Joyce Levey: But we need to get them lined up so that they will be on our time line.

Virginia Powell: It looks good to the public to see a neutral party doing the facilitating.

Bill Snowden: What is the facilitator going to do?

Joyce Levey: Kelley Carey is going to give us options and the facilitator will help the public discussion of them.

Virginia Powell: The more the public is involved in the choices, the more they will buy into them.

Joyce Levey: We are taking the information from the consultant and then the committee will work on it.

Rusty Gibson: But Bill Snowden and Kelley Carey will have to be there to explain the options to the public.

Jeff Johnson: They will have to have specific, narrow questions or else the discussion will go into a million directions.

Dan Meisner: We may need to compress the time frame to a later one, but January 25 opens to present alternatives. I just don't know if we're that far down the road.

Joyce Levey: We may just need to run longer because we're going to run into testing too

Dan Meisner: This is very impactful on the system for years to come and we don't need to rush this.

(Missed Rusty Gibson's comment)

Virginia Powell and Joyce Levey agreed that using outside facilitators will help reduce the burden.

Joyce Levey: I want to talk about how to get it out to the public in a letter.

Bill Snowden: I would like to have time to get with Kelley Carey to show him the city-wide land use plan.

Rusty Gibson: Kelley Carey wants to get with Bill Snowden before giving the options to the committee.

Dan Meisner: It is critical that Bill Snowden and Kelley Carey get together. We've got to build in the opportunity for discussion.

Rusty Gibson: (Referring to the time line) The meetings are too spread out. We should strike while the iron is hot.

Joyce Levey: (explains the scheduling)

Discussion on timing: February 1 is when Bill Snowden and Kelley Carey will present the options to this committee.

Virginia Powell: When Darryl Meyer was doing the University Area Comprehensive Plan, his website had a place for public comment; could we do that on our website with regard to these options?

Pat Connor: No problem.

Ninette Cannon: Would the comments be able to be viewed publically?

General Answer: No.

Bill Snowden: Where are these presentations going to be held?

Joyce Levey: In the high schools.

Bill Snowden: I have an idea. Mayor Maddox wants us to present the City Wide Land Use Plan in each of the seven districts. What if we also present the school plan options in those meetings?

There was general consensus that this was a good idea and there was then a discussion about how this could be handled. Would the Mayor decide to present the plan in the three school board meetings or would it be presented in all seven districts too? Would there be enough time for getting into details regarding specific areas in only three meetings, etc. There was general agreement that the seven district meetings would be good for allowing specific discussion on specific areas.

Dan Meisner: The consultants should present the options; not the school board because the board is the one that will be making the decision.

Rusty Gibson: It will go like this: The first meeting will have a lot of people there. The second meeting will have fewer and the third will have even fewer.

Virginia Powell: Unless they feel like they are part of the decision process.

Rusty Gibson: We have a starting point. Bill Snowden and Kelley Carey will get with the committee on February 1 and we'll go from there. I'm going to check with Kelley Carey for three dates during the week of April 3 for the public input meetings.

Dan Meisner: We don't need to set the date right now.

Bill Snowden: It is very important who facilitates. In the neighborhood planning meetings, the planner (KPS) facilitated.

Then there was a discussion of potential facilitators.

Joyce Levey: You tell me who you want to run it.

Disorganized discussion ensued and the meeting ended.