

Hopkinton Schools Facilities Planning Study

Communication Plan-Draft

"Above All, Care"

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1. OVERVIEW

Introduction

Provide an introduction to the study.

This Communication Plan has been developed to ensure that the planning process appropriately engages the Hopkinton School community. The Communication Plan underlines key principles of this planning process to support informed, inclusive, and open discussion through a variety of forums and outreach methods. This document describes how the planning process will be organized to disseminate information, provide for timely input, and communicate the resulting framework for future facility decisions and actions.

The Communication Plan also articulates the approach that will be taken to interactions and information communicated the broader Hopkinton community. It describes methods that will be used to appropriately engage and inform the surrounding neighborhoods, businesses, elected officials and citizen groups. This document indicates the process that will be employed to distribute public information about the Facilities Planning Study.

Purpose

Expound on the purpose of the study.

2. GROUND RULES FOR ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Principles

The conduct of the planning process and the communication regarding the Hopkinton School Facilities Planning Study should fulfill the following principles:

- All input submitted to those responsible for leading and conducting the planning process will be valued and respected.
- The purposes of the study should be consistently included as part of every communication and product, so that the participants in the planning process can appropriately direct their input and time.
- Once confirmed, the underlying premises of the Facilities Planning Study should be clearly and consistently articulated.
- Interested participants should have ready access to an appropriate level of engagement in the process.
- The process should support informed discussion by providing timely facts and analysis.
- Everyone interested in the outcomes of the Facilities Planning Study should have ready access to appropriate and understandable documents that convey the results.
- Before projects are undertaken, information about the project should be distributed to the community in advance that references the project's role in fulfilling the Facilities Planning Study. If a project is undertaken that diverges from the approved Facilities Planning Study, then advance information should explain the rationale and relationship to other facilities priorities.

Reasonable Expectations

Every member of the Hopkinton School Community should be provided an opportunity to participate in the Facilities Planning Study process and provide input to the degree consistent with their responsibilities and interest.

- Participation opportunities - Information about the status of the planning process and methods to provide input should be readily available on-line and distributed to the community periodically through meeting announcements, e-mail dissemination, publication, and posted notices or handouts that coincide with the major steps and milestones.
- Informed opinions - Information should be made available in a timely manner and in accessible locations to inform participants' opinions at each stage of the planning process, to a measure and degree consistent with their interest and responsibilities.
- Time frames - Time frames or deadlines should be provided when the input is solicited for particular stages of the planning process.
- Input and response - Input that has been gathered at various steps in the planning process should be summarized along with feedback and responses to frequent issues or questions that have been raised.

- Results - Every member of the community should receive notification of the outcome of the Facilities Planning Study and have ready access to a document that summarizes the conclusions.
- However, the following are not reasonable to expect as part of the planning process:
- Detracting through delay – It is not reasonable for individuals to detract from the process through their own avoidable delays or lack of their timely review of information made available to them.
- Confidential information - It is not reasonable to expect dissemination of sensitive information that should be kept confidential in the interests of the School Department. (Instances where this could occur include financial information associated with properties, acquisitions or dispositions, for example).

Protocols

The following protocols will be respected regarding information and products associated with the Facilities Planning Study process:

- Public information – The release of all public information (news releases, announcements, and the like) will follow the same protocols for approval prior to distribution. All information directed for public release must be approved by the Superintendent's Office.
- Planning documents and products – All deliverable documents and products associated with the Facility Planning Study will be indicated as "Draft, for Review and Discussion" unless it has been approved by the Facility Committee.
- Attribution – The documents associated with the Facilities Planning Study will indicate as being prepared for the Facility Committee, and be attributed to those responsible for the document preparation.
- Consistent, accurate description of the process and purpose – All notices, invitations and documents associated with this process that are intended for general distribution within the community must have a consistent description of the planning process and purpose. Unless it is amended, the statement of purpose contained in "Section 1: Overview" of this Communication Plan will be used.

3. CONSTITUENCY COMMUNICATION GOALS

The communication within the Hopkinton School District community regarding the Facilities Planning Study should be conducted to fulfill the following goals.

Internal Community

- Parents and Students – Parents and Students should be provided opportunities and be encouraged to participate in the planning process through various activities and information sessions.
- Faculty and Staff – Faculty and Staff should all be given information regarding their opportunities to provide input throughout the process. They should be provided with periodic updates regarding progress, and be given opportunities to have briefings or announcements at faculty meetings.
- School District Administration – The various members of the Hopkinton School District Administration and staff should all be given information regarding opportunities to provide input, and be given opportunities to have briefings and updates.
- School Board – The School Board should be provided information regarding the purpose of the Facilities Planning Study and opportunities. They Board should be given periodic updates regarding progress, and briefings and copies of the Facilities Planning Study when it is completed.
- Facility Committee – This Committee should be provided a reasonable amount of information at meetings to allow meaningful, productive discussions and decisions associated with the agenda for each meeting. The committee members should have full access to the technical studies and reports that will be prepared during the course of the planning effort. The committee should be provided with summaries or reports to convey the input received during the various outreach and coordination efforts so that they have the benefit of that information.

External Community

- Community Members – Community Members consist of the residents and property owners who may be reasonably affected by changes or improvements anticipated in the Facilities Planning Study. An outreach effort should be undertaken to provide an overview of the process and ensure that there is accurate information available regarding the scope and purposes of the process. Opportunities should be provided for the community to provide input regarding issues or outcomes that may affect them. This should be initiated and conducted by the Superintendent and coordinated with the Facility Committee.
- Business Community – Businesses and organizations with a stake in the economic vitality of the community should be kept informed about the planning process through regular updates directly and through area Chamber of Commerce.

- Elected Officials – The municipal leadership in The Town of Hopkinton should be provided with briefings or other forms of information to indicate the scope of the planning process, the purposes, and the outcomes. Information should be exchanged about any mutually-beneficial improvements that might be related to the Facilities Planning Study. This should be coordinated through the Superintendents Office and municipal officials.
- Civic Groups – Information should be made available through the press or in response to requests regarding the scope, purpose and outcomes of the planning process. This should be coordinated through the Office of Public Information.

4. MECHANISMS FOR COMMUNICATION

There are multiple formal and informal methods in which the School Department currently communicates. This planning process should use the existing effective communication methods when possible, but will also need to provide additional mechanisms tailored to this process.

Meetings

- The Consultant Team will coordinate the agendas and sequence of numerous meetings that will be required to advance the Facilities Planning Study. The Consultant Team will provide or coordinate agendas, information or announcements in concert with the overall planning process.
- Facility Committee Meetings - The principal focus of the Facilities Planning Study will be the Facility Committee Meetings. Notes of each meeting will be taken and distributed to the participants in the Committee.
- Various Group Meetings – Group meeting will be coordinated the School District and facilitated by the Consultant Team, which will be responsible for providing notes or other useful means to communicate the relevant information and input to the Facilities Planning Study. (CONFIRM GROUPS)
- Public Forums: Community forums will be held to provide information, solicit input, and review the draft outcomes of the planning process. The agendas and formats of the forums will vary according to the topics and purposes of each meeting and will be coordinated with the Facility Committee.

Media

- Committee e-mail distribution network – A committee e-mail distribution will be employed to distribute information to the Facility Committee, accompanied by hard copy distribution when appropriate.
- Website - Periodic updates or information regarding the outcome of the process will be provided for posting on the School District's website.
- Facebook Page – Postings of appropriate announcements or links to information will be provided to the School District for its Facebook page.
- Website - Periodic updates or information regarding the outcome of the process will be provided for posting on the website.
- Digital File Sharing: The Facility Committee has established a shared file network for posting of information that may include large or detailed reports, data, images or other information. Access will be provided to the Facility Committee.
- Other Local Media: Periodic updates or information regarding the outcome of the process will be coordinated through the Hopkinton School District for release to local media to provide follow-up coverage and information.

Methods

Additional methods for communication that will be employed during the Facilities Planning Study include:

- Web-posted project updates – Project updates describing progress and the planning outcomes will be posted to the website.
- Briefing reports and updates (hard copy) - Project updates describing progress and the planning outcomes will be provided for distribution at appropriate meetings.
- Displays/posters – The results of the planning process will be graphically portrayed and described in poster formats for display.
- Report/summary – The final report will be formatted to include a summary of the principal findings and recommendations to facilitate rapid review and understanding.

5. POST-PLAN COMMUNICATIONS

An effective communication framework will need to be maintained once the Facilities Planning Study is completed. A strategy will need to be developed for promoting the plan's recommendations leading up to any possible Warrant Vote.

- Adequate Time – Start at least 2 to 3 months before the date of the vote. Allow adequate time to organize, design a campaign and disseminate information to the voters.
- Citizen Involvement – Organize a steering committee of volunteers to execute the communications strategy. Involve citizens in subcommittees that represent different community organizations and interests.
- Campaign Kickoff Meeting – Formally kick-off the communication campaign leading up to the vote. Establish goals, a schedule and tasks.
- Research Past Votes – Research past failures and successes and develop strategies to address these. Determine which issues will lead to a successful vote and areas of concern resulting in a failed warrant. Survey the community to gather real data to inform the process.
- Identify Stakeholders – Utilize public hearings to understand proponent and opponent groups. Reach out and communicate with them directly.
- Clearly Define Message – Consider the value proposition to various community stakeholders. Adhere to a clear and consistent message that reinforces the benefits of the project. Focus on 3-4 key facts and avoid complicated and overly detailed explanations. Include:
 - Need for the Project
 - Benefit to the Community
 - Alternatives considered
 - Tax Impact
 - Result if nothing is done
- Tools for Communicating – Develop a broad range of communication strategies for disseminating the information to include the following:
 - Posters and Flyers
 - Free media
 - Direct mail
 - Telephone banks
 - Neighborhood “walks and talks”
 - Public speaking
 - Press releases and letters to the Editor
 - Project Web Site
- Mobilizing Proponents – Communicate importance of voting to known advocates of the project. Send multiple reminders in advance of the vote.