Executive Summary:
Potential Bond Referendum Process to Date & Recommendations for Next Steps

Presented to:
Scarsdale Public Schools Board of Education

By:
Dr. Thomas Hagerman

September 8, 2014

Introduction

One of the primary reasons that I came to Scarsdale Public Schools was because of its clear mission to help students to reach their full potential and to prepare them for future learning and life. It is not uncommon to find this motto in vision statements of school districts across the country. However, in my experience, this is not an accurate portrayal of what typically occurs, particularly in light of preparing students for an ever-changing, inter-connected, and global society. It is Scardale's commitment to 21st century learning, innovation, problem-solving and critical thinking that truly sets us apart.

And yet, there is a danger in becoming complacent and allowing ourselves to drift towards mediocrity. Most of the knowledge that I learned in school can easily be found on a smart phone today; but conceptual and enduring understandings come from learning within a social construct. It requires facilitation from effective instructors and collaboration with other, engaged peers. Moreover, the environment in which this learning takes place is critical. 21st century learning requires flexibility of space and furnishings, access to an array of resources and technologies, and the ability to make interdisciplinary and "real world" connections. To respond to the challenge of meeting our students' future needs, teaching and learning must change—and it is. To a large extent, however, our buildings have not.

Over the past two months, I have had the opportunity to review the facilities work to date, and I am pleased at the progress thus far. What is more impressive, however, is that the Board of Education and District understand their dual charges with this work: to address the programmatic needs that will keep Scarsdale at the forefront of educational excellence, and to provide facilities that are not only well-maintained, but also respond to changes to pedagogy and practice. It is my belief that the *what*, *where*, and *how* students

learn is inextricably intertwined, and I am very supportive of the work that is being proposed.

This report is intended to review the process, address open-ended questions and concerns, make specific recommendations on project proposals, and clarify next steps in order to move forward in this process.

Background

The timeline for a potential bond process has been reviewed extensively. The District-wide Facilities Steering Committee, composed of school administrators, teachers, board members, and community residents, has been a very important part of the process for evaluating facility needs, providing feedback, and recommending projects and improvements for consideration by the Board of Education.

Last fall, it was determined that two schools needed special consideration due to the potential scope of necessary repairs and renovations. The challenges posed by Greenacres and Scarsdale High School required individual, full-scale analysis and review. At that time, the Board of Education authorized the development of a Master Plan for the High School to be completed in the Summer 2014. In Spring 2014, the Board of Education authorized a feasibility study for Greenacres.

In late Spring/Early Summer of 2014, two new Board Members were elected, and the superintendent was hired, assuming official responsibility on July 1st. Part of the on-

boarding process for these individuals included familiarizing themselves with this work, and visiting individual school sites to examine all of the proposed projects/spaces.

Over the summer of 2014, the Board engaged in a "listening tour" with both formal and informal meetings. These were opportunities to share information and for the entire school community to ask questions and provide other feedback.

Last week, the Board received a copy of the Scarsdale High School Master Plan. As was discussed in the earlier presentation on this topic, the projects in this plan were placed in three phases, with the first phase prioritizing projects for the potential bond, and the other two phases stretching out over the next 15 years.

Evaluation of the Process

Since joining Scarsdale Public Schools July 1st, I have had an opportunity to review the full facilities plan, and the following are my reflections to date: After what some might call a rather bumpy start in 2012, a clear and transparent process seems to have taken place. Once a clear Board of Education directive was given, administrators, steering committee members, and the broader community were provided ample opportunity to comment, question, solicit additional information, and otherwise participate in the process.

The actual vetting process for each project appears to be quite thorough, with building, district-level, and community participation, operating under Board of Education oversight.

With the preliminary scope substantially established, these projects have garnered widespread support from each of the groups that have been involved in the planning process, including the new superintendent. Although some stakeholders may continue to have specific questions about individual project details, there is plenty of time to determine

exact construction scope as the process continues. This should not be a limiting factor in the Board of Education's ability to ascertain whether or not to move forward with a bond vote at this point.

Open Issues & Concerns

Since the inception of this process, The Board of Education has been diligent in addressing questions and concerns as they have been raised. Numerous issues, ranging from costs to other project logistics, have been examined and systematically resolved. As the vetting process has continued, there is a handful of remaining issues that need further attention. In order to facilitate this next step, I have made recommendations for each of the proposed projects with outstanding questions. It should be noted that these recommendations follow the Board of Education's concern that efficiencies be maximized as part of this process. The current set of recommendations results in a savings of $782,000 over the last suggested budget.

The following is the list of projects with which there are some lingering questions, along with my recommendations for Board of Education's consideration, along with additional requested information, as applicable:

High School

- Construction of the kitchen delivery area and the connecting corridor from the Library to the Commons
  Recommendation: Scale back the kitchen delivery area and eliminate the connecting corridor. Savings = $550,000.

- Educational justification for Learning Commons
  See "Ten Questions" documents for the Learning Commons, which outlines the rationale for this space. These were completed for each project earlier in the spring and provided to the Board and Steering Committee. Attached as Appendix A.

- Design specifications of the Learning Commons
  Recommendation: Maintain proposed design plan.

Middle School

- Which option to choose for Music Room expansion: Option C, with connecting corridor or Option A, "bump out" room next to current Band room
  Recommendation: Approve Option A. Savings = $732,000.

- Renovation of additional music classrooms/storage
  Recommendation: Include renovation of one music room with storage area. Additional cost = $500,000.

Elementary School(s)

- To include exterior canopy or not at Heathcote
  Recommendation: Approve canopy.

District/Board

- Total cost
  Recommendation: Total revised bond amount would equal approximately $16,360,000. N.B.: These dollar amounts will need to be confirmed after formal revision of these plans by the District's architects.
- Timeline and logistics for running a bond election
  Recommendation: For the Board of Education to provide appropriate resources and support in order to achieve a Fall 2014 bond vote.

Additional Analysis

Throughout the course of meetings in the spring and summer, it has become clear that some additional information is needed. The first is the agreement on the aforementioned "Open Issues." The second falls under the category of potential staffing needs, both instructional and support, which may be needed to appropriately utilize and maintain new and repurposed spaces. This discussion has already begun and has been shared with the Board of Education in prior meetings. See Appendix B attached.

Having said that, the dialogue on this issue needs to continue and formal decision-making will need to occur. Like specific design details, there is time to have thoughtful discussions before any action is needed. This should not interfere with the ability to move this bond forward to voters. Part of these discussions will necessarily need to include the following issues:

- Final costs of Open Issues & Concerns
- Staffing adjustments, both instructional and support
- Other budget considerations: Are there trade-offs in staffing or other areas that can avoid net additions

It is important to note that conversations about staffing related to these projects should occur within a broader context of general staffing needs throughout the District. As instructional and other programs change, it is appropriate to examine shifting roles and responsibilities of current staff, along with the need for additional roles.

Conclusions & Recommendations

In public education, it is very typical that program, building, and infrastructure needs exceed available resources, particularly in consideration of the programming and staffing needs. And yet, this work is critical to maintain programs and services for our students and

to be effective stewards of community resources. The community has entrusted both their children and the Districts' facilities to our care. And, we are in a position at this juncture to attend to both issues in deliberate and thoughtful ways.

As we have discussed, when this opportunity to examine major capital projects first presented itself, the Board of Education clearly expressed its intention to carefully consider options while striving towards tax neutral solutions. As many know, there are only two feasible ways to fund capital construction for public schools: the annual budget as a tax levy or voter permission to issue debt. With increased sensitivity around annual school budgets, major construction or renovation is now typically done through the latter option. It makes tremendous sense to move forward with this work at this time as we are able to dramatically improve the learning environment across our District without significantly changing the existing tax burden on community members.

Moreover, specific to the High School, the Scarsdale Foundation has approached the District with a very generous offer to raise 2.6 million dollars to fund a new Design Lab and Fitness Center. Additionally, the Madoff Family has also offered to donate $300,000 in honor of their son, Tyler, to purchase state-of-the-art training equipment for the new Fitness Center. These gifts are a testament to the passion that our community and families

feel about our students and schools. They also present us with an unprecedented opportunity to leverage our limited dollars, and achieve a great deal more than we otherwise would.

As part of this process, many projects were proposed, considered, and prioritized. Those with the highest merit, need, and potential impact have been selected for inclusion in a bond. Those of lower priority were deferred in order to achieve the goal of tax neutrality. Although delayed, it is important to note that this additional work will need to be addressed at some point in the future.

As the *High School Master Plan* indicates, long-term planning is critical in order to maintain our buildings and grounds and to avoid a precarious and expensive "triage approach". What the High School Master Plan does not include is work at the other nine physical plants across the District, which will also be necessary. Notably, one such project is Greenacres, which will need considerable attention, if not a new facility.

The Board of Education is to be lauded for their proactive approach, both in terms of timing of a bond, and using funds to address both major academic and infrastructure issues. The information that has been reviewed in this presentation, along with all of the supporting background materials, will be presented in its entirety to the Board at its next meeting. After another formal review, the Board will be asked at the October 6th Board

Meeting to adopt a resolution to move forward with a bond in the amount not to exceed 18 million dollars. Along with this resolution, the Board will be asked to consider formally adopting resolutions accepting gifts from the Scarsdale Foundation and the Madoff Family.

In closing, for all the reasons described above, I fully support and endorse this plan and its timing. I am encouraged that we are putting students and their education at the forefront of our decision-making, and I look forward to working with the Board of Education, District staff, parents, and the community as we continue to provide our students with the highest quality, 21st century learning opportunities.

Appendix A: "Ten Questions Re: Learning Commons"

School: Scarsdale High School
Project: Learning Commons

Please answer the following ten questions as they relate to your project. If one or more questions do not relate to your project, please put "N/A" below the question.

1. Please provide a detailed description of the entire scope of the proposed project.

Schools across the country adopting a commitment to focusing on the development of skills needed for success in current and future life, many of them using Stanford's K-12 design-thinking for creative collaborative problem-solving:

- Information Literacy
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Citizenship
- Creativity/Innovation
- Integrated Problem-Solving
- Self-motivation to act
- Imagination and flexibility
- Empathy and eagerness to collaborate
- Observation and Questioning for Insight
- Resilience, Patience and Persistence
- Desire to pursue passion and to make a difference.

The Learning Commons would serve as the focal point of the school—a central gathering spot for students and faculty to gather, to work, and to dine. It would be located in the space currently occupied by the freshman cafeteria (which is actually the northern half of Gyms A/B) and the fitness center. The main area of the learning commons (currently the freshman cafeteria) would be designed to encourage students to work—individually and in groups—in an environment in which they can eat, reflecting the way many of us have lunch in the modern world. Rather than an open, vast sea of tables and chairs, the space will be interposed with physical and visual cues and configurations of furniture that will foster the formation of work groups of different sizes as well as a reasonable noise level.

The main area would have a mezzanine that would provide access to the third floor and would increase the usable space. The removal of barriers between the learning commons and the hallway would create a visual appeal that would draw students to the space. The former locker room on the north side of the learning commons would serve as a kitchen; the former locker room on the south side would be converted to offices for athletics and physical education. The bathrooms, many of which are not functional, would be renovated and would serve as student bathrooms.

At the end farthest from the hallway, in the current fitness center, an iLab or flexible learning space will welcome students in one or two classes at a time or in small independent groups to take advantage of instructional specifications such as moveable white boards and chairs and desks on casters as they engage in learning activities such as group projects incorporating design-thinking and collaboration.

We do not want our students to be left behind, especially when we have the opportunity to bring SHS into the 21st century. Indeed, teachers are ready to revise their teaching to reflect these challenges. In a survey in March 2014, 84% of teachers surveyed said that a moderate, large, or very large percentage of our students would benefit from having such spaces in the school.

2. Why is the project needed in your building? Please include logistical, enrollment, infrastructure, curricular, security, and other current concerns that it will address.

This project addresses both practical needs and our educational aspirations. The practical need is one of having reached or exceeded capacity in the main cafeteria and library. The student population has increased 25% over the last 12 years, and these spaces no longer serve all our students adequately. A hybrid space will alleviate the pressure on the cafeteria and library to serve students as it will contain features of each of those spaces.

Increasingly, our students are asked to work together in and outside of class in instructional groups that vary in composition, size, and purpose. Moreover, many of our classes are now linked or teamed, such that two teachers teach the same 50 or

more students in two sections. Throughout the school year, the most effective instructional group for such a situation would be to convene all 50+ students in one room—for student rehearsals, group project work, performances, lectures, and assessments. The iLab space would provide enough space and features to do this much more effectively.

3. What are the implications of the project for emerging instructional methods and 21st century learning? Please describe some specific instructional plans for the space.

21st century learning supports the development of essential skills such as complex collaborative problem-solving, global awareness, and human-centered innovation. An iLab and a Learning Commons encourages group interactions, and fosters the innovative energy that comes from seeing what other people are working on and inspired by. Design thinking develops the habits of mind found in innovators. The design process requires considerable group listening, idea formation and definition, and flexible mini-walls and vertical spaces make this possible as a regular part of our instruction.

4. Please describe the features of the space that will provide flexibility as new instructional methods are introduced.

The main idea in the learning commons is to keep permanent fixtures to a minimum and to instead focus on furniture and furnishings that can be moved and reconfigured easily and therefore replaced as necessary.

These spaces will help get students out of traditional spaces where they are receivers of content and encourage active engagement in the learning process through complex, real-world problem solving, which will require flexible spaces and furniture.

For example, in the iLab, white boards on wheels will create smaller spaces. Flexible furniture can be configured in different ways to facilitate interactions among students and teachers. Power outlets will allow students to charge laptops anywhere in the room. Audio-visual equipment, such as a projector and screen, will allow students to make presentations.

5. Does the project provide new opportunities for collaborative and interdisciplinary instruction? Please describe.

The student commons will allow students to work during the day on collaborative, interdisciplinary projects. The iLab will allow this collaboration during a class period, as there will be technology, space for more than one section, flexible furniture and white boards throughout the space that can be moved and changed as the needs of the students change.

6. How does the project contribute to the sense of community and connectedness in the building?

Classes and students would be able to use this space throughout the day. Because of its increased visibility and accessibility from two floors, it would serve as a showcase of learning and a focal point for the school. The student commons will be part of several new spaces that will create a gravitational center to the school and will allow students to have a place to congregate during the day to work, eat, and socialize. The new spaces will facilitate a cultural shift towards more collaborative and innovative teaching and learning.

7. Does the project scope address specialized instructional programs such as the arts, physical education, special education services, etc. Please describe the specific instructional uses for the new space.

Special Education teachers have indicated that hands-on activities that would be afforded by these new spaces would be incredibly helpful for their students who often learn quite successfully through hands-on experiences.

Increasingly, technology will make "school" edgeless, timeless and limitless; education will occur in many places, at any time, in far more ways than today Teaching will involve more mentoring, individualized instruction and tutorial-style work. The nature of students' work will evolve to include:

- An earlier focus on critical thinking and on creative/original thinking
- A greater focus on solving non-standard, interdisciplinary, real-world problems
- More self-initiated and self-directed learning
- More work in collaborative groups
- Less whole group instruction
- Less presentation and information delivery
- More student-initiated learning
- More individual or group research and/or projects
- More student-student learning
- Students will develop personalized learning networks with peers in school
- More cross-disciplinary learning
- More "real world" and global connections
- More transparency to promote interaction of programs, individuals
- More opportunities for collaboration/communal interaction
- Technology in support of individualization, personalization,

By re-integrating corridors, classrooms, courtyards ("streets," buildings," "piazzas"), we will:

- Make learning transparent to view
- Invite students and teachers to connect, converse and collaborate

- Reclaim outdoor "classrooms" and congregation spaces in this process
- Bring light and life into the buildings
- Develop wi-fi-accessible spaces outside the standard classroom where students can work on assignments individually and in small groups and small groups of students and adults can collaborate
- Create room for two or three classes can meet together
- Provide special facilities where students and adults can develop and make products (through 3-D copiers, e.g. multiple use is feasible: lecture, performance, group work, films, e.g.)

Currently, even an oversized classroom is planned to host students in passive mode. As soon as students are asked to get up and move around, work in groups, make or build something, brainstorm or prototype, experiment or demonstrate, the size (and configuration) of the space is no longer adequate. Some examples: skits or scenes for performance in English, group projects in History, wave, measurement, and force lessons in Physics, collaborative problem-solving. Any project that requires students to make something either ends up in the hallway, on the floor, or results in such interrupted worktime and space that little progress is made and much time is wasted. Many students simply choose to do the "creative" aspects of their projects at home.

Equipment and materials are also insufficient for what we are trying to do. Any project resulting in artwork ends up on someone's living room floor or dining room table. Students who are making and innovating are doing it at home on their own, often without the support and direction the school could offer.
Some things that cannot be done as well as we could or not much at all: environmental science and ecological design, engineering and math applications, real-world problem solving, global communication and understanding.
Students except in a few cases have little or no exposure to spatial problem-solving, fine-motor manipulation of tools, the attention to detail required by making something that works, and the joy of working at something (reiteration) until it works (i.e., replacing fear of failure with a sense of progress and adventure) in the school setting.

An iLab…
- Provides space for interdisciplinary or disciplinary active group work across all disciplines.
- Allows separated, but transparent space for smaller, independent groups to confer, meet with outside mentors, quiet areas for global communications and teleconferencing, and areas for performance practice.
- Equips students with hi-speed wifi capability, available laptops, and in a quieter space, a big screen for teleconferencing and projection.

- Ensures the main iLab space is open, with plenty of movable mini-walls, for the organization of flexible vertical space and smaller workspaces. There needs to be plenty of hang-able white boards for design thinking steps such as defining a problem or brainstorming.
- Enables two or three classes to work simultaneously. If an interdisciplinary double section is using the space, there can still to be enough space for independent working groups of students and adults to retrieve their workboards and continue working on either class projects or independent study.

8. Does the project incorporate the use of technology as an integrated feature of the space?

Yes. Since it is assumed that the computers will be laptops or netbooks, they will make use of the wi-fi already in the school. The space would have a projector that could be connected to a computer, as well as peripheral devices as necessary (printers, etc.).

9. Will the project reflect environmental and sustainability improvements? Connections to the outdoors?

The larger plan includes emphasizing the courtyard space between the learning commons and proposed Makerspace.

10. If the project doesn't get the green light, how will the problems identified above be resolved?

Students and teachers will continue to improvise as best they can in the spaces we have. We could use annual facilities funds to convert individual classrooms to mini-iLabs, but space and budget limitations would eliminate the potential for use by more than one section of students or students on their own during the day.

Appendix B: Bond Staffing Implications

Staffing Implications Associated with Capital Improvement Plan

Project	Staffing Implications	Notes
Edgewood library renovation/office relocation	None	None
Heathcote multipurpose room	Likely none. Possible reduction in PE staff time.	None
Scarsdale Middle School music space	None	None
High School Learning Commons (central area and Center for Innovation)	No teaching staff, possible small amount of additional aide time	Aides already staff the HS lunchrooms, but it is likely that some time would be added for adequate supervision, especially in the Center for Innovation space. Additional custodial time will be needed for lunch space..
High School Fitness Center - one space	None	None. Existing after-school supervision is by a certified teacher with weight training knowledge
High School Fitness Center - two separate spaces	Additional supervisory time	Two separate spaces means a second supervisor will be necessary for after-school use
High School "Maker/Design Space"	Possible "Maker in Residence" with knowledge/ expertise in design and STEM concentrations	Could be added in conjunction with added STEM course offerings such as robotics, or industrial design offerings
High School Little Theatre	None	None
Quaker Ridge partial roof replacement	None	None
Technology Upgrades	None	None
Playing Field Upgrades	None	None