

Meeting to Discuss Plans for New Thurston School and Impact on the Thurston Nature Center

**Friday June 7, 2024 at 4pm
at Thurston School**

(notes by Emily Eisbruch and Jim Vallem)

Attending:

- Jason Bing, AAPS
- Kevin Stansbury, [Gilbane Building Company](#), Owner Representative for the AAPS on the Bond project
- Beth Caldwell
- Jim Vallem
- Colin Brooks
- Mike Tucker
- Amy Cretan
- Harrison Tucker
- Emily Eisbruch
- Avi Eisbruch

Interesting Q and A before the meeting:

- Jason was asked the AAPS intentions for the demolished church area near the Clague Parking lot that the AAPS purchased a few years back.
- Jason commented that the demolished church space is intended to become “the new Logon Elementary School.”
- Jason said Logon School is considered too small for expected growth
- Question: what about traffic at Nixon and Bluett?
- Reply: This is being looked at

Background on new Thurston School Building: See page 34 here:

[https://go.boarddocs.com/mi/aaps/Board.nsf/files/CLLKQ551F9D8/\\$file/AAPS%20Capital%20Program%20Phase%20%20Plan%20r13.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mi/aaps/Board.nsf/files/CLLKQ551F9D8/$file/AAPS%20Capital%20Program%20Phase%20%20Plan%20r13.pdf)

Plans

- Summer 2025 - shovels in ground
- New Thurston building will open in Fall 2027
- The new building will be two stories
- It will have a wing that is one story, to include non-classroom areas such as the entrance, office area and gym (gym needs to be tall). This will be at the east end of the building.
- The classroom levels will be stacked one on top of the other
- Summer 2027 current Thurston building will be torn down. Current building area will become a field, and the parking lot will include a detention pond
- They are intending to landscape with a lot of native plants, and minimizing turf grass.

Mission

- To transform learning environment
- Thurston has outdated infrastructure, doesn't make sense for 21st century
- School is 65% of size it should be
- 25 more students are coming to Thurston next year

Locations of new Infrastructure

- The new building will be to the north of the existing school. It will cover most of the existing mowed area from near the vegetable gardens on the west to at least as far as the rain gardens to the east, and from "as close as possible" to the current school on the south and to near the treeline at the north edge of the mowed area.
- The parking lot will be north of the existing school, probably including the southern portion of the oak savanna.
- A vertical-shaft geothermal field will be under the parking lot.

Access

- Buses will access the new Thurston building from Yorktown (6 buses in morning and 6 buses in afternoon). This entrance will be gated. Buses will access the drive using a code-card. This entrance will also be for fire trucks and vendors. No cars allowed.
- Entry from Prairie Street will be for staff, parents and Fire Trucks. This utilizes the existing parking lot entrance and road that currently goes around the southeast corner of the current building.
- There will ALSO be a right of way for Fire Trucks only to enter the new building area from the end of Renfrew Street (through the prairie, about where the hydrant water line was put 4-5 years ago). This driveway will then turn south to follow the western edge of the new school, and then east between the old and new schools. This will also be a pedestrian access path.

Impact on TNC

- We put up a passionate argument to save as much of the nature center as possible from disturbance, particularly areas we thought could be avoided, such as the oak savanna, amphitheater (which is probably safe), and the goat area.
- Grassland near OHAC where goats were will be impacted. We requested minimizing the impact by having this access road turn as sharply as possible towards the existing paved walkway.
- Oak Savannah likely impacted by access roads and the parking lot, perhaps even the eastern edge of the new school. We requested minimizing the impact on the savanna, and trying to move any oak trees that are impacted.
- Hummingbird/butterfly/rain gardens are likely gone, as the new building will be there.
- Trees at the south side of Thurston Nature Center may be impacted (along a line that includes the start of the Conboy Trail). There will likely be shading of this edge due to the 2nd story of the new building.
- A new access road for fire trucks will go through the prairie.

- There will likely be funds to replant things that are lost. They are thinking this will be where the current school and parking lot are. We have been asked to engage with them later on about this work.

Question: why can't the new Thurston building go where the Thurston sports field is?

Reply: problem with soil

Next steps:

- Jason Bing will bring our concerns to the engineers and architects doing the designs, and return to the TNCC in about 3 weeks with more details, including more detailed maps.
- In about 6-8 weeks AAPS will set up a neighborhood meeting to discuss the project

At the end, there was a brief discussion of steps that could be taken on the path from Thurston to Clague to reduce flooding. There is a possibility of raising the path so it does not flood. We will need to talk about the flooding in a future meeting.

Meeting ended at 5pm as Jason had a hard stop
(There was not time to do a walk around outdoors)

