

BOONE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT FEASIBILITY STUDY

SUMMARY OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The Boone Central School District is attempting to determine the feasibility of their options regarding the Boone Central Middle School located in Petersburg, which includes rehabilitating the current middle school building, constructing a new building in Petersburg, or relocating to a new campus in Albion. To ensure the feasibility study adequately addresses the perspective of the public affected by this decision, a series of interviews were held with external stakeholders to identify their primary concerns.

One-on-one interviews with these community stakeholders were conducted from March 8th to 12th, 2019 to gain a better idea of key issues the school board could address within and beyond the scope of the feasibility study.

This community engagement benefits all affected parties associated with the school district by furthering a relationship that provides opportunities for public participation in creating a preferred course of action. The insight gained from these interviews will help the school district create a plan related to the feasibility study that will be prepared for the district.

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

The Boone Central School District consists of Boone Central High School (located in Albion), Boone Central Middle School (located in Petersburg), Boone Central Elementary School (located in Albion), and ABC Preschool (located in Albion). These Boone Central schools were created when the Albion and Petersburg school systems merged in 2001 in order to provide a greater offering of academic programs and extracurricular activities.

A total of 10 individual stakeholder interviews were conducted in person and over the phone. Those interviewed included Albion and Petersburg community members from all walks of life—local business owners, parents and grandparents of school district students, rural, and members of various community boards and committees.

ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

Notes from each interview were transcribed and a content analysis was performed. The responses to each question were studied and analyzed to identify recurring keywords and concepts. The following is an overview of the questions asked of each individual stakeholder and an analyzed response to each question.



JEO CONSULTING GROUP, INC.
11717 Burt Street, Suite 210
Omaha, NE 68154-1510
402-934-3680

1. What do you believe is the most pressing issue facing the school district from a management perspective?

Budgetary concerns and the logistics required to operate two separate campuses were the most frequently recurring answers from the external stakeholders.

2. Which issue do parents and other community members think is more important (1) Quality of Education or (2) Cost of Education?

Stakeholders emphasized the greater importance of quality of education but noted that many, particularly those in the agriculture community, are more concerned about the cost.

3. What type of concerns or comments do you hear about children commuting from Albion to attend school in Petersburg and vice-versa?

While several stakeholders stated that they do not hear these concerns, others primarily mentioned concerns about the time, safety, and cost of the current transportation arrangement.

4. What do you believe are the direct economic benefits for your community created by having a school in your town?

Nearly every response indicated that having a school in the community would bring population growth, as the school would attract families to move to the town, and benefit local businesses.

5. What direct benefit do you receive from the Boone Central School(s) being in your town (economic or social)?

The primary response from stakeholders involved the convenience and peace-of-mind of having their children or grandchildren attending school in the same town in which they live.

6. What possible divisive issues and concerns remain from the district schools' merger and any subsequent bond or other funding initiatives?

Increasing the financial burden on taxpayers, particularly following the last bond initiative, would not be well-received. There also seems to be a lack of trust in the school board's follow-through in what they say they will do, evidenced by the failure to change the school's mascot and colors following the merger and the continued use of the Petersburg building 14 years after the public was told it would be closed five years after the completion of the merger.

7. Are citizens aware of the real condition of the middle school?

Responses to this question were mixed. Some stakeholders felt that the community, especially those in Petersburg, are aware of the conditions of the school while others stated their belief that few people are aware of the actual conditions and their severity. Some stakeholders voiced concerns regarding the severity and breadth of the building's issues, while others emphasized that the facility has been well-maintained and is more than adequate to accommodate the education of the students.

8. Who are the community leaders or vocal citizens that tend to weigh-in on school district issues in Petersburg and Albion (either for or against an issue)?

Individuals were suggested by multiple external stakeholders; those names have been removed from the analysis for protection of privacy.

9. How do you learn about the happenings of the school district?

It appears that there are a variety of sources through which these external stakeholders receive news about the school district. Their means primarily include:

- Internet and social media
- Newspaper outlets
- Word of mouth

10. What is the biggest challenge we will face in addressing the best option for Boone Central's middle school?

Stakeholder responses illustrated the variety and complexity of issues involved with this study. Many mentioned the issue of cost and the difficulty of getting the taxpayers to vote in favor of another bond. Another prevalent response was questioning whether Albion has the capacity to take on any additional students in the existing school buildings or to find a site to build a middle school with existing issues with traffic and parking. Several stakeholders also addressed the intensity of personal feelings involved and the importance of educating and bringing together the public on a decision.