

Kendall County Record

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‘This is just the beginning’

Yorkville School District looks ahead with EVOLUTION 115 facilities plan

By TONY SCOTT

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Tony Scott - tscott@shawmedia.com

Yorkville School District parents learned more about a facilities plan being drafted with the help of a Chicago consulting firm Wednesday evening, Jan. 9, during a presentation at Yorkville Middle School.

The district is currently working with an architectural firm, the DLR Group, on a long-range facilities usage plan called “EVOLUTION 115.”

According to district officials, EVOLUTION 115 “is a plan that assesses the district’s buildings, enrollment projections, and educational programming to determine how to use and improve the district’s schools to support the best practices in teaching and learning.”

During the presentation, parents and others in the audience were surveyed about issues such as the most important skills students need to be prepared for the future, what school district programs they were most excited about, and whether the current school district buildings need updating, modernizing or repairs.

DLR Group representatives Jason Lembke, Shona O’Dea, Keri VanSant, and Bonnie Sanborn went over the various aspects of the plan.

Superintendent Dr. Tim Shimp said schools’ enrollment continues to climb.

“In our community, as many of you know, we are continuously seeing more homes going in, our enrollment in each of our schools is going up – some larger than others and quicker than others – and our facilities continue to have certain pressure points,” Shimp said.

Shimp said the district is working with DLR and also with a demographer to determine future enrollment projections.

“This is just the beginning,” he said.

Shimp said the facilities plan might not necessarily result in changes to school buildings.

“We’re taking it from the angle of, what do you we want teaching and learning to look like in our schools and how do our facilities support that?” he said. “It doesn’t necessarily mean we have to build new schools, or knock down schools or remodel all the schools or any of the schools. It’s a conversation that we need to have about, how are kids gonna learn in the future, and how do our facilities support that. And, looking at that gap, what decisions do we want to make in the community to do that?”

Shimp said, however, that the district also needs to have a discussion about whether its a “one middle school community” or a “one high school community,” looking at the enrollment figures of both schools. Shimp noted that the high school’s enrollment is at 1,860 students and the middle school’s enrollment is “pushing 1,000” students.

“As our schools get bigger, typically you see less opportunities for kids,” he said. “So as a community we also need to talk about looking at all of our facilities and the footprint that they provide, what does that mean for our schools in the future and what does our community want?”

The next meeting on the EVOLUTION 115 plan is set for Feb. 12.