

News Release

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### **High School Space Study Committee Unanimously Votes for New High School**

At its last regular meeting on Thursday, May 4, the High School Space Study Committee unanimously voted for construction of a second high school to address the growing student population at Harrisonburg High School. This vote was the culmination of nearly eight weeks of research and study of possible solutions.

“We took a hard look at all the options, including building an annex or an addition to the existing high school, but the committee felt strongly about the need for a new high school after weighing the pros and cons of each option,” said Committee Chairman Jim Orndoff, who led the group through the detailed examination.

The committee noted multiple advantages of building a new high school, including being a long-term solution that will provide double the opportunities for student leadership and participation in activities. Also, a new high school would enable both schools to compete in athletics and other programs with high schools of equivalent size that are closer in proximity. Without a second high school, Harrisonburg High will be classified as a 5A school according to the Virginia High School League, which requires students to travel longer distances to compete with schools of like size.

A new high school will also offer 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environments for teachers and students, as well as state of the art building technology such as high energy efficiencies that will save money. Additionally, a new building offers expandability if the student population continues to increase as expected.

In their evaluation, committee members noted that an annex or addition represented a short-term solution that added to the size of the current high school, which has drawbacks including more impersonal experiences among students, fewer opportunities for student participation in athletics, clubs and academics, and fewer opportunities for teachers in terms of leadership and coaching positions.

The committee recognized that while the initial costs for a new high school will be higher than the alternatives, the long-term benefits will show that this is the most cost efficient option. Projected costs of a new high school will be discussed at a future School Board meeting. The committee also noted there would be a community adjustment with two high schools.

The public is invited to learn more about the committee’s recommendation and options at the upcoming Open House on May 11, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Harrisonburg High School. The committee will formally deliver its recommendation to the School Board on May 16 at 7 p.m.

For more information, contact the Superintendent’s office at 540-434-9916.