

Subject: Re: My remaining questions
From: Denise Swarthout <DSwarthout@dps61.org>
Date: 7/24/23, 14:01
To: Reed Sutman <reed@decaturnvote.com>

Mr. Sutman:

Dr. Clark has responded to your questions listed below. These same questions and responses have also been added to our [Dennis Future FAQ document](#) for our school community to view as well.

Questions Submitted by Reed Sutman

What was the process for acquiring a proposal from BFW? Was there a public bidding procedure? When did you make the request for a bid?

A proposal was requested from BFW via a telephone conversation between Kent Metzger, DPS61 Director of Buildings and Grounds, and Phillip Holthaus of BFW. There was no public bidding process because Architectural/Engineering services are specifically exempt from the bid process requirement. The request for a quote (not bid) took place by an exchange of phone calls and messages with Phillip Holthaus of BFW on, and after, February 22, 2023.

What was the process for acquiring a proposal from Klingner? Was there a public bidding procedure? When did you make the request for a bid?

A proposal was requested from Klingner via a telephone conversation between Dr. Michael Curry, DPS61 Chief Operating Officer; Kent Metzger, DPS61 Director of Buildings and Grounds; and Michael Fries, Klingner. There was no public bidding process because Architectural/Engineering services are specifically exempt from the bid process requirement. The request for a quote (not bid) took place after the phone call with Michael Fries of Klingner on May 31, 2023.

The District timeline says inspection was attempted to be schedule on March 22nd. Email records show a contract proposal on March 23rd and no communications prior. When and how were communications conducted prior to March 23rd, in an effort to secure a March 22nd inspection?

The first contact to schedule the inspection was actually February 22, 2023, made via telephone call.

The District timeline says inspection was attempted to be scheduled on May 17th. Email records show that Holthaus offered possible inspection that week & also the following week. Metzger replied on May 15th asking for a May 30/31 inspection. Why did the District claim May 17th was attempted & can any proof be provided to support that claim?

After a series of emails, the Director of Buildings & Grounds determined that the next available date which fit into both his and the inspector's schedules was 5/30/23 and/or 5/31/23.

On May 8th, Holthaus offered a May 9th inspection. Why wasn't May 9th accepted?

See answer to question above.

Why didn't anyone take action after the public comment on August 23rd 2022 about the stairs at Dennis separating from the building?

Dr. Clark was hired in February 2022 and does not recall the individual referenced speaking about this.

How was DPS able to get a second opinion (from Klingner) so quickly, if the first opinion (from BFW) took 3 and a half months to secure?

Once BFW performed its investigation and discovered the significance of their structural concerns, DPS reacted with appropriate caution and sought a second professional opinion to substantiate or dispute the BFW opinion.

Were other firms sought for the initial inspection?

No other firms were sought. BFW was recommended to DPS as a qualified firm with experience in these types of issues.

Denise Swarhout told Scarlett O'Hara on May 31st "We requested the analysis from a structural engineer this spring, but yesterday was the first availability on his schedule to come out and do the analysis." Why did she place sole blame for the scheduling on BFW, who had multiple cases of prior availability not acted upon by the District?

As stated, a mutual time was needed as both parties needed to be present. There was no blame.

Ten-year HLS surveys are due by December for both French & Dennis. When were those scheduled for?

Approval for HLS surveys is on an upcoming BOE agenda on August 8, 2023.

Al Scheider said "As far as other structural things, Kent [Metzger] had, twice this year, has gone through a whole list of all the schools and what they were doing." - Can you provide this list?

The list is referencing projects the B&G department was scheduled to complete this school year, including window and door replacements, playground installation, etc.

The 2013 HLS survey shows several cases of water damage to the Dennis building. Were these issues addressed since 2013? If yes, can you provide documentation?

There are no documents responsive to this request.

In August 2022, a student made public comment about gas leaks being unsafe at the Dennis building. Are there gas leaks at Dennis/Mosaic? Have they been inspected / fixed?

We have had gas leaks reported at both Dennis campuses, but there is no point of reference to acknowledge or deny any reported gas leak by a student in August 2022. Reports of gas leaks are ALWAYS investigated immediately upon receiving a report. Reports are generally unfounded and are odors often attributable to other issues. Any confirmed gas leak is immediately addressed.

I heard from a student that Stephen Decatur has water leaks in the ceiling and at windows. What do you know about that? Is it being addressed?

No student or staff has reported this to administration.

There was a May 31st zoom meeting with Holthaus, and emails suggest BLDD was part of that call too. What was the purpose of that call? Can you provide documentation about and recording of the meeting?

This is inaccurate. A Zoom meeting did not occur on this date.

Why didn't the district announce the June 19th staff meeting, such that press could attend?

It was a staff meeting, not a press conference to which media were invited.

Do you believe the district should have notified staff and families prior to BFW's inspection on May 30th? Why / Why not?

Staff and families were notified as quickly as we could confirm the situation at hand.

Why wasn't a "community forum" scheduled prior to presenting a recommendation to the board, like the district timeline promised?

The Community Forum is for our long-term plans. The community has been invited to board meetings to get updates on the short-term plans.

Dr. Jay Marino and Deanne Hillman were panelists for the June 19th staff meeting. What is their role in this whole process?

The District Leadership Team (DLT) is welcomed at all staff meetings.

What is the security plan to ensure that Garfield & Stephen Decatur students don't intermix?

Krista Hudson expressed concern about only having 11 classrooms. Why doesn't GLA have 13 classrooms,

& what is being done to address this concern?

Building administrators will work together to ensure each school's needs are met.

Krista Hudson expressed concern about only having 1 hour of gym time. What, if anything, is being done to address this concern?

Building administrators will work together to ensure each school's needs are met.

What is being done to get a new principal for Garfield?

Mrs. Dianne Brandt is the Principal.

I got a tip that boxes and tape for moving Garfield to SDMS are being taken out of the Garfield building/supplies budget. I was told this came from someone named Brad at the "warehouse" (someone with Buildings and Grounds?). Can you confirm if this is true/false and provide any further details?

Everything a school does that has a financial expense is linked to their individual building – this is defined by ISBE as [Site-Based Expenditures](#). This is how districts keep track of spending. This does not take anything away from education or money needed for the building as a whole.

What is being done to get a 2nd assistant principal for Dennis?

We are in discussions at this time. When a decision is made, we will let the staff know.

Since Dennis will be on one campus, is the District no longer intending to get a 2nd head principal?

No.

Deborah Sonder asked "What about art and music?" ... are these programs remaining unchanged?

Building administrators will ensure each school's needs are met.

Keith Creighton asked "If we have questions that occur later, what is the best way to submit or communicate those?"

Questions and answers are added frequently to the FAQ document, from a variety of sources.

Allison Brikoetter said "With zero math and limited science teachers at sdms" ... Are there "zero math" teachers at SDMS? And if yes, what's the plan to address the shortage?

Building administrators will ensure each school's needs are met.

Why weren't everybody's questions displayed to the entire chat?

Participants were asked to use the Q&A feature so that a log of questions could be downloaded after the session ended and added to the FAQ document for all staff and families to get the answers.

Who was the "Anonymous Attendee"?

This is unknown as the attendee remained anonymous.

Keith Creighton asked "What will be communicated to parents and when? Do we hold this information or share?" ... What was the answer to this question?

All of the information regarding Dennis is kept updated on the [Future of Dennis webpage](#) and FAQ document.

Anonymous attendee asked "Will dennis teachers be teaching just Dennis kids? Or are you going to use us to fill empty vacancies at sdms to knock down the number of teacher vacancies in the district to make numbers look better" ... Was there any intention to use Dennis teachers to fill SDMS vacancies? Is there any intent to use Garfield teachers to fill SDMS Vacancies?

Building administrators will ensure each school's needs are met.

Denise Swarthout
Chief Communications Officer
Decatur Public Schools



From: Reed Sutman <reed@decaturvote.com>
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2023 at 3:58 PM
To: Rochelle Clark <rclark@dps61.org>
Cc: Denise Swarthout <DSwarthout@dps61.org>
Subject: Re: My remaining questions

Thank you.

On 7/13/23 15:57, Rochelle Clark wrote:

Yes, it is a lot. I will do my best.

*Dr. Rochelle Clark, Superintendent
Decatur Public Schools #61
217-362-3010*

When you know better, you must do better.

From: Reed Sutman <reed@decaturvote.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 13, 2023 1:54 PM
To: Rochelle Clark <rclark@dps61.org>
Subject: My remaining questions

Dr. Clark,

Thank you for your time Tuesday. You said to send you an email with follow up questions. I have a lot of questions, and understand if you need some time to address all of them. I would appreciate an ETA and would be happy to receive answers in chunks if that's easier than all at once.

The questions are posted online at
<https://www.decaturvote.com/story/dennis-schools-structural-issues/questions-for-dr-clark/>

And here they are:

Scheduling inspections / Timeline

1. What was the process for acquiring a proposal from BFW? Was there a

- public bidding procedure? When did you make the request for a bid?
2. What was the process for acquiring a proposal from Klingner? Was there a public bidding procedure? When did you make the request for a bid?
 3. The District timeline says inspection was attempted to be schedule on March 22nd. Email records show a contract proposal on March 23rd and no communications prior. When and how were communications conducted prior to March 23rd, in an effort to secure a March 22nd inspection?
 4. The District timeline says inspection was attempted to be scheduled on May 17th. Email records show that Holthaus offered possible inspection that week & also the following week. Metzger replied on May 15th asking for a May 30/31 inspection. Why did the District claim May 17th was attempted & can any proof be provided to support that claim?
 5. On May 8th, Holthaus offered a May 9th inspection. Why wasn't May 9th accepted?
 6. On April 11th, Metzger suggested to Holthaus an inspection for April 19th. Holthaus replied on April 27th asking for other dates. Were there communications with BFW between April 11th & April 27th? Calls, Texts, etc
 7. On April 27th, Metzger suggests "an afternoon next week". The next email from Holthaus was May 8th, suggesting May 9th. Were there any other communications (calls/texts) between April 27th & May 8th?
 8. Why didn't anyone take action after the public comment on August 23rd 2022 about the stairs at Dennis separating from the building?
 9. On May 24th, Angela Brown emailed Holthaus "You will receive a PO once I get the requisition submitted to our purchasing department." Was this the PO for the March 23rd contract? Why did it take over two full months to get a PO? Can you provide the PO & contract?
 10. The District webpage says February 7th was the first known concern. Why didn't the District disclose concerns to the public sooner than May 31st? And who made the decision NOT to disclose prior to the inspection?
 11. On May 26th, Kent Metzger wrote to BFW Engineering's Phillip Holthaus "My maintenance foreman and mason are knowledgeable about some structural issues so they can meet too." Who are his maintenance foreman & mason, and how long have they been "knowledgeable about some structural issues"?
 12. How was DPS able to get a second opinion (from Klingner) so quickly, if the first opinion (from BFW) took 3 and a half months to secure?
 13. Were other firms sought for the initial inspection?
 14. Why didn't Kent Metzger get building drawings from BLDD architects for Phillip Holthaus, who asked for these drawings on March 23rd? (A May 15th email shows that Holthaus acquired the drawings himself)
 15. Denise Swarhout told Scarlett O'Hara on May 31st "We requested the analysis from a structural engineer this spring, but yesterday was the first availability on his schedule to come out and do the analysis." Why did she place sole blame for the scheduling on BFW, who had multiple cases of prior avialability not acted upon by the District?
 16. The District page released the preliminary report for Kaleidoscope (with the over-head view), but not for Mosaic. Is a similar Mosaic prelim report available?
 17. What was the cost of the Klingner inspection & can you provide documentation? (Contract + purchase order)

HLS & Other building issues

1. 10-year HLS surveys were due by December for both French & Dennis.

When were those scheduled for?

2. What other facilities were due for a 10-year HLS survey this year?
3. Al Scheider said "As far as other structural things, Kent [Metzger] had, twice this year, has gone through a whole list of all the schools and what they were doing." - Can you provide this list?
4. The 2013 HLS survey shows several cases of water damage to the Dennis building. Were these issues addressed since 2013? If yes, can you provide documentation?
5. In August 2022, a student made public comment about gas leaks being unsafe at the dennis building. Are there gas leaks at Dennis/Mosaic? Have they been inspected / fixed?
6. The Klingner reports show that several previous repairs had been completed. When were those completed? Who completed them? Why did those repairs not prompt further inspection? Can you provide documentation related to those repairs? (My last FOIA request details those past repairs)
7. I heard from a student that Stephen Decatur has water leaks in the ceiling and at windows. What do you know about that? Is it being addressed?
8. What policy exists to ensure routine maintenance and inspection of buildings, such as tuckpointing, checking for rust, and sealing cracks with flexible sealant or paint? If no such policy exists, what plans, if any, are there to develop one?

Transparency

1. Mike Curry forwarded an email from mcurryedu@gmail.com to mcurry@dps61.org containing an attachment "KLINGNER & ASSOCIATES, P.C..pdf" on June 2 at 11:51 am w/ subject KLINGNER & ASSOCIATES, P.C. Why was Curry using a gmail & was any other district business conducted through that gmail or another personal account?
2. June 2, 9:32am, Curry sent subject 'PLEASE Print' to Sherry McIlravy smcilravy@kwsed.org, with attachment "20230531 [Kaleidoscope & Mosaic School Structural Evaluations SFA[70].pdf", and no body. What is Curry's connection with Sherry McIlravy & why did he have her print, instead of doing so himself at the Keil building?
3. There was a May 31st zoom meeting with Holthaus, and emails suggest BLDD was part of that call too. What was the purpose of that call? Can you provide documentation about and recording of the meeting?
4. Why didn't the district announce the June 19th staff meeting, such that press could attend?
5. Folks on facebook have criticized the District for subjecting children and staff to unsafe conditions for the time leading up to the May 30th inspection. Many folks seem upset that they weren't even aware until after the schools had been closed down. What will the district do in the future to ensure prompt and proactive transparency? Are there any policy proposals being discussed to ensure structural concerns like these will be brought to the public sooner in the future?
6. Do you believe the district should have notified staff and families prior to BFW's inspection on May 30th? Why / Why not?
7. Why wasn't a "community forum" scheduled prior to presenting a recommendation to the board, like the district timeline promised?
8. Dr. Jay Marino and Deanne Hillman were panelists for the June 19th staff meeting. What is their role in this whole process?

1. Why was Garfield denied a playground when requested in the past by the Alt Ed program?
2. What is the security plan to ensure that Garfield & Stephen Decatur students don't intermix?
3. Krista Hudson expressed concern about only having 11 classrooms. Why doesn't GLA have 13 classrooms & what is being done to address this concern?
4. Krista Hudson expressed concern about only having 1 hour of gym time. What, if anything, is being done to address this concern?
5. What is being done to get a new principal for Garfield?
6. I got a tip that boxes and tape for moving Garfield to SDMS are being taken out of the Garfield building/supplies budget. I was told this came from someone named Brad at the "warehouse" (someone with Buildings and Grounds?). Can you confirm if this is true/false and provide any further details?

Dennis Concerns

1. What is being done to get a 2nd assistant principal for Dennis?
2. Since Dennis will be on one campus, is the District no longer intending to get a 2nd head principal?

Questions from/about the June 19th Meeting

1. Deborah Sonder asked "What about art and music?" ... are these programs remaining unchanged?
2. Keith Creighton asked "If we have questions that occur later, what is the best way to submit or communicate those?"
3. Allison Brikoetter said "With zero math and limited science teachers at sdms" ... Are there "zero math" teachers at SDMS? And if yes, what's the plan to address the shortage?
4. Why weren't everybody's questions displayed to the entire chat?
5. Who was the "Anonymous Attendee"?
6. Keith Creighton asked "What will be communicated to parents and when? Do we hold this information or share?" ... What was the answer to this question?
7. Anonymous attendee asked "Will Dennis teachers be teaching just Dennis kids? Or are you going to use us to fill empty vacancies at sdms to knock down the number of teacher vacancies in the district to make numbers look better" ... Was there any intention to use Dennis teachers to fill SDMS vacancies? Is there any intent to use Garfield teachers to fill SDMS Vacancies?

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Reed Sutman
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