

Mr. Steve Robert McCurdy  
[REDACTED]  
South Jordan, UT 84095



January 22, 2019

Dear Mr. McCurdy:

On behalf of the Pocatello/Chubbuck School District 25 Board of Trustees, this letter is to acknowledge receipt of the public comments, including the petition on behalf of the Save Pocatello High School Committee, that you submitted to the Board on January 8, 2019. The comments and petition have been entered into the minutes of the meeting. You may access a copy of the minutes at [www.sd25.us](http://www.sd25.us).

The Board evaluated all public comment received to-date and is confident in both the process of selecting an architect and the decision to retain the services of Hummel Architects in moving forward with the project. The final architect selection was based on creativity and efficiency in addressing the five objectives outlined for the project:

- Increase student safety by connecting main building with auditorium and gym areas.
- Provide ADA accessibility to main and upper floors of PHS and new areas.
- Provide additional classrooms and Commons area to accommodate increased student enrollment.
- Create a clear main entrance and centrally located administrative offices.
- Help alleviate lunch room congestion and lack of space in basement cafeteria – current lunchroom capacity is about 250 learners.

In addition to offering extensive experience and expertise related to projects for K-12 schools, Hummel Architect's portfolio includes providing the architectural services for improvements to Boise High School. The Boise High School project presented challenges similar to the Pocatello High School project, including concerns raised in your comments and questions. We do not plan to reopen the bid for architectural services at this time. Furthermore, the District will submit the required paperwork and permit requests to the appropriate departments within the City of Pocatello based on the timeline established for the project.

Please see the attached responses as they address any additional concerns raised by the questions submitted with your comments.

Sincerely,

[signature]

Dr. Douglas Howell  
Superintendent

---

1. Is it true that before these current plans that the school district? developed a plan for a building to be built on the land between the old gym and the exiting main buildings?

No formal plans were developed.

2. Was the public ever made aware of those plans?

Our intent to make improvements to Pocatello High School has been discussed publicly since the fall of 2017, during the boundary discussions, in Board meetings, public forums, social media communications and media releases.

3. How much money was spent on that plan and why was it ultimately rejected?

No formal plans were developed and no money was spent. Based on information we learned from the City of Pocatello during the summer of 2018, we communicated those challenges to the architects planning to submit proposals.

4. Is it true the plan was rejected because it was determined that it was unfeasible to build in that location?

There are significant constraints and challenges to this project due to the location of city utilities. The current concepts address those challenges and we are working toward continuing the process of finalizing the design.

5. Concerning the current plans: do you believe that the community was adequately informed about the intent to remodel and build an addition to Pocatello High School?

Yes. The project has been in the purview of the public since the fall of 2017. During the process of selecting an architect, we held a public information campaign with media releases, social media communication and information posted to our website inviting public comment on the process of selecting an architect.

6. Is a total of 90 community comments considered adequate for development plan of this type?

Yes. In an effort to get the public involved early in the process, we opened up the process to the public for comment on Friday, September 7, 2018, the day after the publicly noticed Special Board Meeting (publicly noticed on August 31), at which time two architect firms presented their proposals to the Board of Trustees for consideration. The comment period relative to the selection of an architect ended on Friday, September 14, 2018. It's important to bear in mind that the Board of Trustees members also received a great deal of verbal feedback about the selection of the architect. The questions presented here assume that the majority of citizens are upset about this process or decision and that not an accurate representation of all feedback received. The majority of comments we have received both personally and in writing are positive about the design and express excitement about the project.

7. Was district spokesperson Carrie Fischer correct when she informed us that the open comment period was only seven days from Sept 7th to Sept 14<sup>th</sup>

Courtney Fisher. See response #6 above.

8. In addition, to the Idaho State Journal's article printed Sunday, Sept 13th, the day before the comment period ended, was there any other attempt to inform or make the public aware of your plans?

The media release regarding the public comment was communicated across social media channels and posted to our website on Friday, September 7. A media release was distributed on Monday, September 10. The Idaho State Journal covered the project on Thursday, September 13. It is outside of our control when the media chooses to cover the releases we submit. The board agenda packet, which included a timeline for public comment, was published and available to the public and sent to the media on August 31, 2018.

9. Was the 7th of Sept not the day before the monthly School Board meeting discussing this issue?

No. Monthly meetings for the Board of Trustees are held at 5:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month.

10. Does that not mean that if anyone wanted to comment before the School Board on the issue, they would have had to requested to do so 6 days before the public announcement went out in the journal?

See response to #8 above.

11. Is it true that of the 90 comments made that only 22 were in favor of the Hummel Design? The Architectural firm awarded the contract?

We received 105 responses to the survey. Not everyone who responded also commented.

12. we have been told that of the 68 comments that were made in favor of Myers /Anderson that they were not regarded in the same light because they were mostly friends and family of the architects. Do you consider their community voice less important than other citizens simply because they are friends and family?

The final architect selection was based on creativity and efficiency in addressing the five objectives outlined for the project:

- o Increase student safety by connecting main building with auditorium and gym areas.
- o Provide ADA accessibility to main and upper floors of PHS and new areas.
- o Provide additional classrooms and Commons area to accommodate increased student enrollment.
- o Create a clear main entrance and centrally located administrative offices.
- o Help alleviate lunch room congestion and lack of space in basement cafeteria – current lunchroom capacity is about 250 learners.

13. If you were not going to listen to the comments that your received in what way was the comment period even valid?

Public comment is always welcome. The Board considers all comments including verbal comment from various community members, which is then discussed as a Board. As elected officials, the Board of Trustees is tasked with making final decisions based on what they determine is best for our learners and overall goals for the school district.

14. We have been told categorically, that "the buildings will not look like exactly those depicted in the paper." Then what was the public actually commenting on?

The public was commenting on the selection of an architect. The design phase is still in the early stages and no final decisions have been made outside of the architect selection. The final design may differ from the concepts presented. That is normal in the course of a project of this scale. The final architect selection was based on creativity and efficiency in addressing the five objectives outlined for the project. See response to #12 above.

15. Is it true that Historic Commission has a say in whether these additions are built and that that they must be built according to the requirements stipulated on their website?

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) provides design guidelines for property owners in Pocatello's Downtown Historic District in order to approve projects for a certificate of appropriateness. PCSD 25 and the architect firm selected for the project will work with the City of Pocatello and the HPC when appropriate within the timeline established for the project. Ultimately, the City of Pocatello Council determines to approve or reject permit applications, and decisions are based in-part on recommendations from the HPC and other entities.

16. Do they not have ultimate say in whether a building in the Old Town Historic district be modified or even built.

See response to #15 above.

17. Why was the Historic Commission not involved in a preliminary way during the conceptual phase?

See response to #15 above.

18. Does it not make sense that they be consulted early in the process to see if conceptual plans can actually be built?

See response to #15 above.

19. How much are the designs costs up to this point?

Design costs are part of the architectural services fee and will represent a percentage of the overall cost of the project.

20. How far in to the design process are we?

The project is early in the design phase. No proposals or final plans have been submitted. In order to solicit input from key stakeholders, a kick-off meeting for the project took place on Thursday, December 12 with members of the architect firm, the Board of Trustees, and PCSD 25 administrators and teachers, including the principals of Pocatello, Highland and Century high schools. A follow-up meeting will be held Friday, January 18. Each meeting is publicly noticed. The public is welcome to attend and observe; however, no public comment may be made at meetings of this kind.

21. we have been told by several architects that the cost of building these additions could be more than 4.5 million, Possibly more like 15 to twenty million. what will that 4.5 million actually cover  
Once the design is finalized, the next step in the process is to put the project out for bid. At that time, we will be able to determine final costs.

22. Is it true that without the input of the Historic Preservation Committee and the Planning and Zoning Commission they are once again potentially designing a building that ultimately cannot be built?  
Please see response to question #15 above.

23. How is it that the Historic Preservation Commission had not heard of this project until December? Almost three months after your announcement?  
Please see response to question #15 above.

24. How is that the Save Pocatello High School Committee could get over 1700 comments in opposition to your plan and you could only get 90 comments total?

We are confident that the majority of our stakeholders recognize our need to move forward with improvements to Pocatello High School and are confident in our ability to produce a final outcome that will enhance the educational value of learners attending Pocatello High School. We do not dispute that the Save Pocatello High School Committee got 1700 signatures on the petition. People are very passionate in this community about Pocatello High School. We believe that the use of terminology like "Save Pocatello High School" to promote the committee's petition and Facebook page may have been misleading to the public and also a misrepresentation of what has taken place to date with the project, including the positive feedback received by board members, administrators, teachers, students and community members.

25. Does that not mean that you inadequately informed the community about your intentions?  
Please see responses to questions #2, #6 and #8.

26. Would it not be fair to say that the Public has not been adequately in-formed and when it has, it has often been after the fact. Most citizens do not attend School Board meetings. They have no way of hearing what is going unless they read the paper and the general public was not made aware of the plans in the Idaho State Journal until Sept 13th, 2018.

While "most citizens do not attend School Board meetings," citizen participation and attendance at board meetings remains the best way to stay informed about decisions that impact local education.

Pocatello/Chubbuck School District 25 is governed by the Board of Trustees. There are two monthly meetings, a work session on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, and a Board Meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday. Information regarding these meetings is sent to local media outlets and posted to our website and social media channels on the Friday before the meeting. The public is welcome to attend those meetings and we encourage public attendance as this is the best way to stay informed with current issues, projects and accomplishments of the school district. The minutes to each meeting is posted to our website at [www.sd25.us](http://www.sd25.us). We are confident in our use of all communication channels available to us to inform the public about issues that may be of concern. Please also see responses to questions #2, #6 and #8.

27. Is it true that this was after the monthly School Board meeting discussing the school addition and only a day before the comment period concerning the two architectural conceptual drawings ended?

No, the Special Meeting scheduled for architect presentations was held on Thursday, September 6, 2018, at which time two architect firms presented their proposals. Two additional firms that had planned to present withdrew due to scheduling commitments for other projects. Public comment was opened on Friday, September 7. A work session was held on Tuesday, September 11, at which this project was not on the agenda. The architect selection was on the agenda for the regular board meeting held on Tuesday, September 18; however, the vote was postponed because two board members were not present. A Special Meeting was called on Tuesday, September 25, at which time the Board of Trustees voted unanimously in the affirmative to award the contract for architectural services to Hummel Architects. Each of these meetings was publicly noticed.

28. In other words, any opposition to the plan was almost impossible. Is this correct?

No, that is not correct. See above response to question #27. In addition, the public is welcome to comment at any regular board meeting or work session. The Board accepts and considers written comments at any time.

29. Why was the public asked to comment on their preference for two concepts present by Hummel Architecture and Anderson Myers Architecture that likely can never be built?

No determination has been made that prevents PCSD 25 from moving forward with this project. We are in the process of finalizing the architectural designs and will continue to follow the timeline established for the project, going through each step at the appropriate time.

30. What do you see as the importance of getting those 90 comments in your decision making?

Public comment was both encouraged and welcomed. The final architect selection was based on creativity and efficiency in addressing the five objectives outlined for the project. See goals outlined above.

31. Is it true that the Hummel architecture has a private jet and flies Board members from various School Districts across the state to look at architecture they have built?

We are not aware of any such amenities, nor have they been offered to us at any time.

32. Is it true that Hummel Architecture is a sponsor of the State School Boards annual retreat?

Please refer this question to the Idaho School Boards Association, as it is not within our purview to answer.

33. How much money do they donate annually to sponsor that retreat?

Please refer this question to the Idaho School Boards Association, as it is not within our purview to answer.

36. Merrill Quayle, the Pocatello public works development engineer has stipulated that school district will have to move utility lines or be granted an exception to build over those lines is that correct?

Yes.

37. How much will it cost to move those lines?

Moving the utility lines is cost prohibitive and not a feasible approach at this time.

38. Why has the planning commission not been consulted to see what plan could be approved?

Both architecture firms approached the City of Pocatello during the conceptual phase to determine what would be possible based on the constraints of the project. We will continue to work within the requirements of the City to ensure the success of this project, following the timeline established.

39. Is not the current plan to build over the easement with a semi-permanent structure that could be dismantled a costly possibility if that ever becomes necessary?

This is the current plan. There is no way to enclose the high school without crossing the easement area.

40. How much will it cost if it has to be dismantled to access the power and utility lines?

The semi-permanent structure will be designed to minimize costs of repair in the event the utility lines ever fail. The actual amount cannot be determined at this time.

41. What happens if it has to be dismantled several years in a row due to some emergency? what will the cost be? Can our School District sustain such an emergency if that were to happen?

The lines have been functioning without repair now for more than 50 years and are made of concrete. It is very unlikely and not typical that storm water and waste water lines require frequent repairs. It is the City of Pocatello's responsibility to repair and maintain the lines and the District would work with the City in the event repairs need to be made as we would on any other school properties.

42. It seems that the vast majority of Pocatello Citizens still don't know about your plans do you agree or not agree?

We are confident we have taken the necessary steps and consistent with our policies and best communications practices to inform the public about the plans to improve Pocatello High School with this project.

43. What are you doing to better inform the public and this and other issues of public concern?

We are confident in our effective use of all communication channels currently available to us to inform the public about issues that may be of concern. Pocatello/Chubbuck School District 25 is governed by the Board of Trustees. There are two monthly meetings, a work session on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, and a Board Meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday. Each of these meetings, as well as any Special Meetings, is noticed publicly. The public is welcome to attend those meetings and we encourage public attendance as this is the best way to stay informed with current issues, projects and accomplishments within the school district. The minutes to each meeting are posted to our website at [www.sd25.us](http://www.sd25.us). We also employ our Infinite Campus district-wide communication, which features voicemail, text and email capabilities, as well as our website, social media channels and local media to communicate with our stakeholders. We engage in community relations to stay abreast of what's happening in the larger Pocatello/Chubbuck community and alert to issues that may impact our schools, including Rotary Club participation, Pocatello-Chubbuck Chamber of Commerce membership and participation with other civic organizations. We also have a joint quarterly meeting with elected officials and other representatives from the cities of Pocatello, Chubbuck and Bannock County. We discussed this project during the first two meetings, held in July and October 2018. We also hold a monthly meeting with our Key Communicators Network to discuss current topics. We serve 12,500 learners district-wide and do our best to keep the public informed about upcoming projects, current events, news, learner and faculty accomplishments, and other information important to the public. Please also see responses to questions #2, #6 and #8.

---

**Additional factors important to note:**

- Every learner in our district deserves to participate in equal learning opportunities and that includes being able to move safely from one building to another and have access to the same high quality learning spaces our other high schools feature.
- The District has \$5 million reserved in Capital Improvement Funds inclusive of Architect fees for the anticipated project.
- No bond is required for the project.
- The guiding philosophy for the project is Honor the Past. Embrace the Future.
  - Other guiding words: Accessibility, community, history, presence, preservation, image.
  - The beautiful architecture of Pocatello High School is highlighted in the transparent Commons space connecting the campus.
  - With our emphasis on complete campus safety, the improvements will include a highly visible main entry for the general public.
  - A new classroom wing will complement the existing architecture of the school for updated and improved science and math classrooms.

- The overall design will provide accessibility, classroom, security, and Commons space while preserving the historical significance of Pocatello High School.
  - Create a cohesive look across the Arthur Avenue facades.
  - The Commons ties the campus together in an exciting way. It will provide a connected, secure campus, accessibility and a place for our learners to collaborate, socialize and study – to enhance Poky’s school motto, “Where everyone is somebody.”
  - The existing architecture becomes a focal point in the new Commons, where the exterior walls of the old building become the interior walls in the new construction to highlight and respect the rich history of Pocatello High School.
- Updates to the project, as well as the architectural services presentations are available for review in full at <http://www.sd25.us/Content2/current-projects>