

**RAPID CITY AREA
SCHOOL DISTRICT 51/4**

300 Sixth Street
Rapid City, South Dakota 57701-2724



**Superintendent of Schools
(605) 394-4031**

November 18, 2010

South Dakota State Historical Society
Attn: Chris Nelson
900 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501-2217

RE: Dakota Middle School Case Report

Dear Mr. Nelson,

Enclosed and submitted for your consideration on behalf of the Rapid City Area School District 51-4 (the "District") you will find a letter dated November 18, 2010 from Alan Richard Dempster of Architecture, Incorporated addressed to Michael Kenton the District Director of Support Services.

This letter is in response to the South Dakota State Historical Society's request for additional information. We hope this response will further illustrate and explain the lengths to which the District has gone in attempts to accommodate all of the relevant factors in considering all feasible and prudent alternatives to questions and issues you have raised regarding the project at Dakota Middle School auditorium.

The District is submitting these materials to you in a further good-faith effort to illustrate, demonstrate, and explain the lengths to which the District has gone to accommodate historic questions and issues with regard to this proposed project. The District is certainly hopeful this further explanation and illustration will show you the lengths to which the District has gone to accommodate those needs and to attempt to provide a feasible, realistic, and prudent way to address historic considerations.

We look forward to your response.

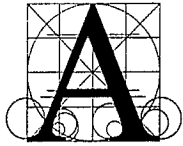
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timothy Mitchell', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Timothy Mitchell
Superintendent of Schools
Rapid City Area Schools 51-4

c: Marcia Elkiins, Growth Management, City of Rapid City
Michael Kenton, Director of Support Services, Rapid City Area Schools 51-4
Cris Palmer, Gunderson Palmer Nelson & Ashmore LLP
Alan Hanks, Mayor, City of Rapid City

Architecture



Incorporated

November 17, 2010

Mr. Michael Kenton
Director of Support Services
Rapid City School District
300 6th Street
Rapid City, South Dakota 57701

Re: Information for Dakota Middle School Case Report

Dear Mr. Kenton:

We are in receipt of a request for Information for the Dakota Middle School Case Report from the Office of History in Pierre. I have been in contact with Dr. Ron Reed who, as you know, has been our main point of contact throughout the time we have been involved in this project. Dr. Reed represents the PAC coalition, a group that has received funding through the City of Rapid City's 2012 Fund.

We offer the following responses to the questions being asked by Chris Nelson, Historic Preservation Specialist of the SD State Historical Society in Pierre:

Question 7.1: The groups that have had a part in defining the future use of the space include the Black Hills Community Theatre (theatre), A'capella Showcase (singing group), Black Hills Symphony (orchestra), Children's Choir (singing groups), Dance Theatre (dance), Dakota Arts Guild (drawing, painting), and the Shrine to Democracy Chorus (barbershop singing). In addition to the PAC coalition, input on the design was received from the Rapid City School Board, the School Board Facilities Committee, the Historic Preservation Commission, the HPC subcommittee appointed by the Mayor and the City Council. The Rapid City School District will have control of the theatre 50% of the time and since none of the middle schools have auditorium rooms, this theatre will be used by all of the middle schools for performances.

The specific meeting and dates are listed under Question 9.

Question 7.2: The entire plan and all of the theatre elements, including the arrangements of the performance space and the four-story theater support building as outlined in the set of documents describing the Dakota Middle School Theatre project, are a response to the needs and program requirements of the groups that are outlined above. Our design team held meetings with each group on an individual basis and also invited the members to review sessions as the design of the theatre and the adjacent spaces started to take shape during the winter and spring of 2010. The design team included five architects and support staff from Architecture Incorporated, structural engineers from Albertson Engineering, civil engineers from Renner Associates, mechanical and electrical engineers from Skyline Engineers, Teddy Boys, theatre arts designer from Jerit/Boys Inc. of Chicago and Derrick Knight of Knight Acoustics of Minneapolis. The program requirement for a performance space that has good lighting system, sound system, good acoustics and is comfortable for performers and audience, whether able bodied or not, was listed on every group's priority list. Rehearsal space and storage space was also a very important need that each group had. One request we could not accommodate because of the gymnasium located above the theatre, was for a fully rigged stage house.

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Question 7.3: Five years ago, the Performing Arts Coalition (The Black Hills Symphony Orchestra, The Black Hills Community Theatre, The Rapid City Children's Chorus, The Black Hills Dance Theatre, the A'Capella Showcase, and the Dakota Artists Guild) presented a request for a medium sized theatre to the Vision 2012 citizens advisory committee and then to the Rapid City Council, and it was unanimously approved as a funded project. The Council awarded the Performing Arts Coalition \$3.25 million toward a Performing Arts Center and any additional funds necessary would have to be raised by the Coalition. The advisory committee and City Council recognized and agreed that the current 1780 seat Civic Center Theatre was too large and expensive for many local community groups. The requirement to use union stagehands makes the rental costs prohibitive for groups playing to smaller audiences.

The three existing theatres in the schools are so heavily scheduled by school activities that they cannot accommodate the community groups on a regular schedule. Superintendent Dr. Peter Wharton and Mayor Shaw requested the Coalition to work with the school district to see if it would be possible to add a theatre to Central High School to serve the school and the Community. An exhaustive study was conducted and concluded that the schedules required three theatres to accommodate all the groups.

Dr. Wharton and Mayor Hanks asked if the Coalition and District would try again to see if a schedule could be worked out, but the school has so many music and drama activities that it was impossible, but it did result in persuading the District to add a new theatre to Central and retain the existing theatre to accommodate all of their program student needs.

The Dakota Middle School used the auditorium for classes during the day and the schedule shared with the Coalition demonstrated that there was limited availability to the community during the school year.

The Coalition continued to search for a site or existing building to remodel. Empty buildings that were found were not in the proper zoning, lacked adequate parking or other problems identified by the City for a theatre venue.

Mayor Hanks and Dr. Wharton met once again with the Coalition to discuss the plans for Dakota Middle School. The District was planning a new Middle School in Rapid Valley and the existing school would be converted to an alternative high school with no arts programming. The existing auditorium at Dakota would be available for the community. The Coalition was interested if the shortcomings could be overcome.

Shortcomings included a heating system in the auditorium that was so loud that it had to be turned off during performances so audiences could hear. The gym located above the auditorium had to be scheduled free so the noise from bouncing balls could not be heard. Air conditioning needed to be added, the room needed to be sprinkled to meet code. There was no access to the stage from outside, no dressing rooms or restrooms backstage and there were several ADA issues for audience members and stage participation.

Question 7.4: Our mechanical engineer, Skyline Engineering, designed the HVAC system to meet the sound criteria of the acoustical consultant by designing a displacement-type heating, ventilating and air conditioning system. The displacement system introduces air into a space through numerous floor diffusers (one per two seats) from a floor plenum that is charged with the supply air. This plenum space does not exist currently, so the existing floor needs to be removed, a plenum space constructed and then the theatre floor reconstructed. We took this opportunity to create a connection from the lobby space to the stage along each side of the performance space under the balcony. This connection, which solves ADA accessibility within the room, is level (flat) since the lobby and the stage are at the same elevation. The slope of the main body of the seating matches the slope of the existing. The exception is at a cross-over aisle that is level (flat) for ADA seating and service functions of theatre technicians to reach the lighting pipe grid directly above the cross-over aisle. All fire sprinkler system piping (for safety) and all conduits for the theatre lighting and sound systems and the return air ductwork will be invisibly placed within the decorative plaster girder enclosures that define the distinctive ceiling of this room.

Question 7.5: The description regarding placement of the sound control rooms, the lighting control rooms, the cry room and the sound/light vestibules is correct.

Question 7.6: The plan of the seating responds to several requirements: the movement of the audience from the entry points into the theatre room from the sound/light lock vestibules, the need for a cross-over aisle mid-house for ADA seating and technical access to pipe grids at the ceiling and the desire to create various size seating areas to better accommodate different size audiences. From the beginning, each group assumed that we would have new, larger and more comfortably placed chairs for their 21st century audiences although, as you may be aware, the actual chairs have not been chosen yet and are not part of the current plan.

Question 7.7: The lobby of the building and theater, the stage floor and the new walking surface adjacent to the perimeter wall of the theatre under the side balconies are all at the same elevation, are level and flat and provide accessibility and circulation to and from the stage, lobby and seating areas without having to leave the room. This connection complies with the accessibility requirements of audience and performers.

Question 7.8: Any of the existing seats that are removed from the room will be stored in a building within the School District. They are, and will remain the property of the School District until a time when the School Board decides otherwise. The plans call for 230 of the existing seats to remain in the theatre on the side balconies.

Question 8.1: We are not certain of what is meant by "leave the auditorium the way it is" but if it means leaving the room with the existing seats but without a fire sprinkler system, without the HVAC upgrades, without the sound systems and controls, without the lighting systems and controls, and without the other theatre accommodations called for in the current plans, and especially after Dakota Middle School moves in the fall of 2012, we do not see a potential user for the space.

Throughout the life of the project the only alternative identified for continued use of this auditorium is the PAC coalition whose history is outlined in 7.3.

Question 8.2.A&B: The School District plans to store the seats (see question 7.8) and the room could be photo documented before construction – in fact we already have hundreds of photographs taken during the preparation of construction documents. We have many photographs of the areas behind the plaster surfaces because we were investigating pathways available to make the services into the room entirely hidden. In addition, the School District, if requested, will document the existing conditions via drawings and photographs in accordance with Federal Standards.

Question 9: The design process began in December, 2009 and regularly scheduled meetings with user groups began the middle of January, 2010. Members of all the groups who are identified as the user groups were notified at least a week before any meeting, as were elected officials of the City and School District. These meetings happened regularly during the winter and spring. Once we had a concept and schematic plan that the user groups felt comfortable with, we reported to the Mayor and City Council members as well as the School Superintendent and School Board on several occasions. In addition, Dr. Reed gave presentations to Rotary and Cosmopolitan clubs, the drawings were posted on the School District web site and we had two presentations to the Historic Preservation Commission, the first of which was June 18, 2010. We also showed the current plans to the State Historical Society meeting at the same time the Dakota Middle School Historical Register nomination was acted upon by the Historical Society Board.

The dates of the meetings where input into the design were given were as follows: Jan. 20, 21 and 22 – PAC members, School Board; January 27 – School Board Committee; February 12 – PAC committee review; March 31 – School Board representatives; April 7, 8 and 9 – PAC committee, meeting with potential donor to project; April 14, 15 and 16 - PAC committee, School Superintendent and School Board members, Mayor and City Council members and members of HPC subcommittee; April 28, 29 – School Building Committee and School Board, May 25 – School Facility Committee; June 18 – HPC meeting; June 22 – School Facilities Committee; June 30 - School District; July 14 – School District teachers; August 5 – School Board; August 10 – School Facilities and School staff; August 18 – PAC review; August 24 – Facilities committee; September 8, 9, 10 – Superintendent and School Board Facilities Committee and PAC review; September 14, 15 – Rapid City School board; September 21- HPC subcommittee and PAC review. All of these meetings were public meetings and several were televised.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments regarding this response.

Sincerely,



Alan Richard Dempster, AIA LEED® AP