

The Courier-Journal

August 7, 2012

BCC Could Have Dorms in 2014

Project is feasible, study determines

By Jennifer Micale



Project Manager of Brailford & Dunlavey Craig Levin speaks during a housing feasibility study presented by the firm regarding the potential building of residence halls on Broome Community College's campus at a Tuesday afternoon meeting held in the Decker Building on the campus in the Town of Dickinson.

DICKINSON — Broome Community College could have its first dorms by the fall of 2014 — if there are no construction or financing delays.

“I’m an optimist,” said college President Kevin Drumm during the first of two meetings Tuesday on the prospect of dorms. He called the 2014 date the “ideal timeline.”

Twenty of the state’s 30 community colleges have or are building residence halls, Drumm told members of the college’s Board of Trustees and Broome Community College Foundation. But building dorms on a community college campus is a tricky affair, since the State University of New York system forbids them to build the halls themselves or use operating funds for support.

Community members will weigh in on the project during a question and answer session that begins at 7 p.m. tonight, Tuesday, in Decker room 201.

An analysis by the Washington, D.C.-based firm Brailsford & Dunlavy concluded that there’s the demand for 322 residential beds, which will appeal largely to students ages 18 to 24. About 61 percent of BCC’s student falls in that age range; nearly 70 percent of students are full-time, said Craig Levin, project manager with the firm.

Currently, about 40 percent of survey respondents rent housing, and the average student paid \$516 per month, including utilities, Levin said. About half expressed interest in on-campus housing, with a strong preference for single bedrooms, in-unit kitchens and on-site parking.

The projected costs for apartment-style units are \$3,300 per semester for a double occupancy room and \$3,500 for single occupancy, Levin said. The operating costs would equate to about \$3,000 per bed and the total project costs are estimated to be around \$65,000 per bed or \$180 per square foot.

“Fundamentally, it’s a feasible project,” said Brailsford & Dunlavy Senior Vice President Jeff Turner.

Of the 20 schools with dorms, only two own them directly — one due to a special exemption from SUNY issued 30 years ago and the other because the county paid for it, said Terry Gilbride, a Buffalo attorney who has worked as a financing consultant on several community college residence hall projects.

The rest had their faculty student association or college foundation form limited liability companies or separate 501c3 nonprofits, or occasionally both. This allows them to take advantage of tax-exempt financing and protecting their assets.

As the project moves forward, college leaders also need to decide who will run the project, and what kind of support will be given to the housing entity, Gilbride said. Getting financing may require guarantees from either the association or foundation. There are other procedural issues, too. A special resolution from the county legislature might be necessary.

The steering committee working on the issue will likely ask for a formal decision to move ahead with the project by the middle of next month. The project would take 13 to 14 months to construct, which would require the college to break ground in the spring for a fall 2014 opening.

A site hasn’t yet been determined, but Drumm said he was interested in building the dorms on the front of the campus along Front Street.

“We would know by February whether it will be done in 2014 or 2015,” Drumm said.