

Unapproved School Board Workshop Minutes

Dickinson Public Schools
Board Workshop

July 27, 2017; 3:00 p.m.
Board Room, Central Office

The Dickinson Public School Board held a workshop on July 27, 2017, at the Central Administration Office. Board members present were: President Sarah Ricks, Vice President Brent Seaks, Mrs. Tanya Rude, Mrs. Kim Schwartz, and Mr. David Wilkie. Administrators present were Superintendent Douglas Sullivan, Mrs. Dorothy Martinson, and Mrs. Melanie Kathrein. Others present: Dr. Daniel Farr, Mrs. Twila Petersen, and via webinar, Mr. Robert Schwarz from RSP and Associates.

Call to Order - Board President Ricks called the workshop to order at 3:00 p.m.

RSP and Associates – Mr. Robert Schwarz, Principal Planner for RSP and Associates, addressed the Board via a webinar. He presented a PowerPoint to the Board and summarized some talking points. His presentation included enrollment and demographics, capacity, and development. RSP and Associates projected an increase of 350 students. With the additional students, capacity could be a challenge in some of the existing buildings. The PowerPoint slides provided a District map, elementary attendance areas for 2016-2017, planning areas, and a detailed planning area map for Prairie Rose Elementary. The information for the projections took into consideration inward and outward migration. Several maps displayed the population and projected population for land that is under development and areas that have seen the most growth. Mr. Schwarz explained the buying power in the housing industry and also the challenges with the price of lumber increasing by as much as 100% than a year ago. Construction permits are down in the area. The student count map showed which areas had an increase or decrease in student population since 2012-2013. Currently, the District has under 3,400 students. By the years 2021-2022, RSP projected an increase to over 3,700 students. A table explained the buildings that would exceed student capacity.

Mr. Schwarz provided some key points for consideration of the District. Senate Bill 2186 was mentioned and it was encouraged to reevaluate the District's policy on transfers where the parents are choosing the school the child will attend.

President Ricks inquired if RSP had done an attendance area for the Berg building as a K-5 school. Mr. Schwarz responded he could not create something without input from the community on what they would support. It could be driven by a committee or create some options for consideration by the community. Board members shared their appreciation and thanks to Mr. Schwarz for the information provided in the PowerPoint and shared via the webinar.

Berg/Farr Consulting – Superintendent Sullivan introduced Dr. Daniel Farr, a retired administrator from Sidney, MT who has had a consulting business for the past 15-20 years. Dr. Farr addressed the Board and distributed an abbreviated resume. Dr. Farr explained he had looked at the District's strategic plan and noted it was similar to plans nationwide. He noted the professional learning communities were helping the District empower the teachers.

Dr. Farr explained a magnet-based school could focus on fine arts, international students, foreign language, or a variety of areas. Most magnet schools are tied to diversity with an innovative curriculum and development. Whenever there is a major shift, Dr. Farr felt that professional development will be essential. Elementary teachers tend to be trained a little bit in everything. Middle school and high school teachers tend to have more specialized training. Magnet schools with STEM or STEAM academic discipline instruction will have a more hands-on approach to instruction tied to

Berg/Farr Consulting (cont.)

the District goals, District curriculum, and state standards. Dr. Farr noted that magnet schools do not adopt specific entrance criteria.

Dr. Farr suggested two options; one option would be to have a focus group. Another option is to have a community cross over. Stakeholder input would tie in with the options.

President Ricks inquired if a one-year timetable was realistic. Dr. Farr responded that part of the answer to the question is where the District was at on its current model of instruction and is STEM any part of it. He noted students in grades K-3 are learning to read. Students in grades 4-5 are reading to learn.

Dr. Sullivan inquired if the District could have a concept developed in one year, potentially open the school in a more traditional model, and then take a year to transition. Dr. Farr responded that he had not visited with the curriculum director. There was a recommendation to transition with the parents and students over a five-year period. A non-traditional school will require revamping the curriculum and would require a great deal of work. Vice President Seaks noted this would be an opportunity to do something innovative. The projection for the time and amount of work is an educated guess. He inquired if the first objective of introducing the concept to parents could be done so that the boundary lines do not have to be changed. He said he perceives this opportunity would accommodate the growth and be innovative and different. Dr. Farr inquired if the Board was wanting to go in the direction of STEM and asked what innovative meant to the Board members. Mrs. Schwartz responded it would be a change in course from the traditional school. President Ricks responded the nation is moving to the idea of choice and with the open enrollment in the state and finances being tight it would be great to have an elementary school that was different that parents would want to choose to send their children; something that is attractive to parents. She added it could be a foreign language immersion or STEAM school. It is an opportunity for teachers to volunteer to be at the school and an opportunity for team teaching.

President Ricks shared that if the community was asked what they would like, they may not know what is available and the options. Dr. Farr responded that it could be shared with the community what is being done and the next step. The information could be put in front of the parents so they know what is available. Dr. Sullivan noted that 60% of the jobs that kids will be competing for are STEM related. A large percentage of those jobs have not even been created.

Vice President Seaks recommended using the profile of a graduate and work backwards. The skills could be identified and then make sure the schools articulate them. He inquired if the principal should be hired based on information that is available now. Dr. Farr suggested planning for a year and have the direction set so the person that is being recruited is in alignment with the direction of the school. There was discussion regarding the ideal time span to hire an elementary principal. Mrs. Kathrein inquired if the District could consider an initiative for change in two different levels at the same time. Dr. Farr responded if the District was working with the STEM concept, it could be done at two levels. He said he would like to visit with Dickinson State University and the Department of Education to gather more information. Mrs. Kathrein recommended the next conversation be with the elementary principals; valuing their professionalism is important. This should not be a top-down initiative but a bottom-up. President Ricks concurred it is a change in the elementary education and is not for the Board to decide but the elementary principals and teachers.

Berg/Farr Consulting (cont.)

Superintendent Sullivan explained there was a great deal of information shared at tonight's meeting. The information could be reviewed and he suggested another Budget Committee Meeting and Board Workshop be scheduled as a follow up. The Board members concurred. They thanked Dr. Farr for his time and the information he shared.

Adjournment – At 4:50 p.m., President Ricks declared the workshop adjourned.

Sarah Ricks, Board President

Kent Anderson, Business Manager

Twila Petersen, Secretary