

Dickinson Public Schools
School Board Workshop
September 5, 2017; 5:00 p.m.
Board Room, Central Administration Office

Unapproved Meeting Minutes

The Dickinson Public School Board held a workshop on September 5, 2017, at the Central Administration Office. Board members present were: President Sarah Ricks, Vice President Brent Seaks, Board Member Tanya Rude, Board Member Kim Schwartz, and Board Member David Wilkie. Others present were: Superintendent Douglas Sullivan, Dickinson High School Principal Ron Dockter, Director of Instruction Melanie Kathrein, Dickinson Middle School Principal Marcus Lewton, Southwest Community High School Principal Kristy Goodall, Dickinson High School Assistant Principal Jay Hepperle, Dickinson Middle School Assistant Principal Shawn Leiss, Jefferson Elementary Principal Sara Streeter, Lincoln Elementary Principal Tammy Praus-Peterson, Teacher on Special Assignment Nicole Weiler, Roosevelt Elementary Principal Henry Mack, Director of Student Services Dorothy Martinson, and School Board Secretary Twila Petersen.

Call to Order: Board President Ricks called the workshop to order at 5:00 p.m.

Reopening Berg and Attendance Areas: Superintendent Sullivan explained the student enrollment numbers were up 254 students from the May enrollment. At the end of last school year, the assistant superintendent had projected an increase of 100 students for this fall. Dr. Sullivan noted the increased enrollment at the middle school and high school and emphasized the high school was quickly going to be over 1,000 students. Previously, the School Board had authorized the administration to move forward with a public open forum to discuss Dickinson High School. The forum will be facilitated by the DLR Group and is scheduled for Tuesday, October 10 at 7:00 p.m. at Dickinson High School.

Dr. Sullivan noted there are 357 kindergarten students enrolled. The projection from the assistant superintendent was 390. Projections for 2018-2019 for kindergarten students is 428, for 2019-2020 it is anticipated there will be 491 kindergarten students, and for 2020-2021 there could be 545 kindergarten students. The Dickinson Public School District is seeing a younger population with a median age of 37.9. The community is getting younger and the hospital continues to see an increasing number of live births. Dr. Sullivan recommended the Board consider reopening the Berg building fall of 2018 as a K-5 elementary school.

Board President Ricks thanked Superintendent Sullivan for the background information. She said the purpose of the workshop was to receive input regarding the reopening of Berg and also attendance areas. The timing of the workshop was based on the enrollment numbers that were not available until recently and they are higher than anticipated and the need to get attendance areas finalized by the spring. RSP and Associates indicated it would be a four-month process.

President Ricks noted there has been a discussion amongst the Board members at a previous workshop regarding reopening Berg as a magnet school or innovative school. Since then, they received information from Mrs. Martinson regarding opening Berg as a magnet or innovative school and the potential negative affects for those students receiving Title I services. President Ricks opened the floor for input on what the group viewed as important and their thoughts regarding developing attendance areas.

Reopening Berg and Attendance Areas (cont.)

Board Member Schwartz inquired what the District currently does with attendance areas. Dr. Sullivan responded the District had not adjusted the attendance areas for many years, with the exception of Prairie Rose Elementary. Mrs. Martinson agreed there have been no realignments for the past 17 years, with the exception of Prairie Rose Elementary and when Berg transitioned to a 6th grade center. There have been micro adjustments.

There was a discussion regarding the timeframe for completion of additions at an existing school. Building administrators explained the appeal of the neighborhood school concept. President Ricks shared the Board's concern with moving students around from place to place. Principal Streeter explained a plan at a school district where she lived and the changing of boundary lines. Oftentimes the students can adjust to the change better than parents. If it is explained to the parents the justification for changing the boundary lines and explaining the advantages to their child, parents are more receptive to the change. Dr. Lewton said that some students have had many transitions in their lives and moving from one school to another school has an affect that may not be measurable.

There was discussion regarding open enrolled students and rural students being placed at the Berg building first when it reopens. In the past when Berg served students in grades K-6, it was common practice to place many of the rural elementary students at Berg. When Berg switched from K-6 to a 6th grade center, there were many unhappy parents. Principal Praus-Peterson responded that it is what the community puts into the school and makes of the school that is the ultimate perception of the school. Each elementary school is unique in its own way and Mrs. Praus-Peterson cautioned in not highlighting one school as being more special and unique above and beyond others as this could be detrimental.

Consensus was a community open forum would be beneficial to receive input regarding attendance areas and to include the discussion of enrollment projections. Dr. Sullivan suggested an open forum in the latter part of October or in November. That way it will not distract from the conversation regarding Dickinson High School since that is the immediate focus.

Vice President Seaks asked if there would be a priority list and trigger point when the District had "X" amount of students where the District would then move to the next priority. Dr. Sullivan responded that when there are new land developments, the parents moving into a certain area will establish the location priorities. He gave an example of having a negative affect if there would be a trigger point to add onto Heart River Elementary when a large amount of parents moved into a new development area on the other side of Dickinson. Mrs. Streeter suggested reestablishing the boundary lines again in five years as new land developments are added to the community.

President Ricks summarized that it appeared the consensus was to keep the neighborhood schools idea intact. There was a discussion regarding placement of students to balance out the enrollment. Director of Student Services Martinson cautioned placing District students to balance out the students in the grades and then allowing open enrolled students to be placed in the school of their choice. The District students should have first priority. She favored the concept of the open enrolled students being placed at Berg and some of the rural areas also possibly being targeted for Berg. There was a discussion on what

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other school districts do when parents have a strong preference for a particular school. In those instances, Bismarck Public does not act on transfer requests until August and if a request is granted, it is granted for one year. This provides some flexibility should additional students move close to the school and need to be placed in the neighborhood school.

In summary, the group expressed a desire to keep neighborhood schools intact when creating attendance areas and the Board expressed a desire for the boundaries to be as durable as possible with minimal adjustments needing to be made.

Adjournment: At 6:00 p.m., President Ricks declared the workshop adjourned.

Sarah Ricks, Board President

Kent Anderson, Business Manager

Twila Petersen, Secretary