

Dickinson Public Schools

Unapproved School Board Workshop Minutes
October 9, 2018; After School Board Meeting
Board Room, Central Administration Office

The Dickinson Public School Board held a workshop on October 9, 2018, at the Central Administration Offices. Board members present: President Brent Seaks, Vice President Kim Schwartz, Board Member Michelle Orton, Board Member Jason Rodakowski, and Board Member David Wilkie. Others present were: Superintendent Shon Hocker, Assistant Superintendent Keith Harris, Director of Instruction Melanie Kathrein, Director of Student Services Dorothy Martinson, Business Manager Kent Anderson, Dickinson High School Principal Kevin Hoherz, Dickinson High School Assistant Principal Jay Hepperle, Dickinson High School Assistant Principal Tad Schye, Southwest Community High School Principal Kristy Goodall, Dickinson Middle School Principal Marcus Lewton, Dickinson Middle School Assistant Superintendent Shawn Leiss, The Dickinson Press Reporter Kayla Henson, JE Dunn Construction Project Senior Manager Brian Stark, JE Dunn Operations Coordinator Marc Mellmer, and School Board Secretary Twila Petersen.

Call to Order – Board President Seaks called the workshop to order at 6:10 p.m.

Dickinson High School (DHS) Expansion – Superintendent Hocker began the discussion referencing the growth anticipated in the District. He noted the enrollment in the District has increased by 33% over the past five years. The demographics projection done several years ago predicted the growth to be 5-8% per year. Dr. Hocker said that Assistant Superintendent Harris reported to the Board tonight at the Board meeting that there were over 500 new student faces this school year. There were also students that left the District for a net ending of 160 students.

Dr. Hocker explained Mr. Reep would tie the kindergarten enrollment with the birth rates and these numbers would come very close to the actuals. Last year there were many new births and it is on track again this year to have many births. Using Mr. Reep's estimate, 80% of the 700 births would equal approximately 550 kindergarteners in four or five years. That is a large number of kindergarteners and more than the District's current 366 kindergarteners. Dr. Hocker provided his best professional guess of a modest 4% increase in the District each year for the next five years.

Future opportunities noted by Dr. Hocker in the elementary schools were the possibility of the enrollment going from the current 1,890 students to 2,300+ in five years. Prairie Rose Elementary is currently a 4-section school serving approximately 450 students. Looking at the growth, realistically the District could grow 400 students in five years. The elementary schools are already over capacity. This would warrant the District to consider building a new elementary school in the near future. The enrollment is a properly distributed pyramid with most students in the lower grades.

There have been many meetings regarding the overcrowding at the high school. Superintendent Hocker explained if the number of 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th graders was rolled forward five years, including a 4% growth per year, that would indicate approximately 1,450 students in the high school. He noted the challenges when a school is serving more than 1,600 students. He added there are no high schools in North Dakota that serve 2,000 students. His suggestion would be when there are more than 1,500 students in the high school, to consider building another high school.

Dr. Hocker referenced the DHS focus group workshop held with numerous groups, a steering committee, and several user groups. One area of discussion in that workshop was programming and the constraints with the current DHS building.

Dickinson High School (DHS) Expansion (cont.)

Next week Tuesday, there will be a public tour of the high school followed by an open forum. This will be an opportunity for the community to see for themselves the high school facility and provide input. The current DHS facility has boilers that have been band aided numerous times to get them to work from one year to the next. To replace the boiler it would be approximately \$1 million. To band aid it to get by a couple more years would be approximately \$30,000-\$50,000. Ultimately, the boiler needs to be replaced. Superintendent Hocker noted other areas of concern, such as the leaky roofs and the bathrooms not being ADA compliant. Dr. Hocker reported Dickinson and Mandan are the only two large class A school districts that have not replaced their high school.

Superintendent Hocker distributed a frequently asked question sheet regarding a high school bond referendum with some potential responses. This will be a good starting point for that discussion.

Dr. Hocker explained the architect for the high school, Perkins+Will, recommended a construction management at risk. This would help provide direction for the District; it would shore up some numbers since the District is stretched in funds to meet the needs of the facility based on bonding capacity. If the community would allow the District to double its debt capacity, there could be a bond for \$110 million which could potentially build a high school for \$90-\$95 million and also fund a new elementary school.

Assistant Superintendent Harris and Superintendent Hocker had reached out to bond assistants for potential service in passing a bond. The success rate of the bond assistants and the timing was explained. Dr. Hocker noted that the bond referendums that successfully passed are not driven by the superintendent of schools nor the school Board but driven by the community.

The District's Budget Input and Development Committee recommended the District seek requests for qualifications for a construction management at risk (CMAR). President Seaks and Dr. Hocker agreed at the budget meeting to have a discussion with the entire Board in this Board workshop. President Seaks clarified the CMAR would do detailed project costs. They are all encompassing. Having an estimate 20% off the mark could be detrimental since the District has constraints on its funding. The CMAR would provide the best numbers so that it may be taken to the voters for support. Mr. Harris added it is not fair to the voters to go with a guestimate. He also noted it would not be fair to go to the public and hide the fact that there is an elementary capacity challenge. The District wants to be as transparent as possible with the public and provide accurate numbers. Assistant Superintendent Harris said that it needs to be clear that none of this happens unless there is success with the bond referendum. Century Code limits the school districts ability to campaign for a yes vote on a referendum. The District needs assistance with the initiation of the campaign because without the bond, nothing can happen. That is why the District's budget committee recommended moving forward with a CMAR.

Dickinson High School Principal Hohertz inquired on a timeline to hire a CMAR. Superintendent Hocker responded the goal would be to have it approved by the Board on October 15 to move forward with the CMAR, start advertising for the request for qualifications for the CMAR on October 16, have interviews around November 15, and then potentially have a recommendation to the Board at its November 19 meeting. Dr. Hocker thought the bond referendum might be ready to take to the community for a vote before May 2019.

Dickinson High School (DHS) Expansion (cont.)

If the bond referendum would not pass, there will be challenges in the school(s). Dr. Hocker suggested an alternative plan that may be shared with the community. Potential options would be to share space with DSU. In the past, the school board has not been favorable to portable buildings. These may have to be reconsidered. Some of the elementary buildings have 29 students in the classroom. The buildings were not built to handle that many students in the classroom.

There was discussion regarding a second CMAR for the elementary school. Added to the discussion was if the project for the high school and the elementary school would be staggered. The pros and cons of having two concurrent projects going on and if there was any costs savings was included in the conversations.

Changes to the elementary boundaries and the areas of growth in the City were reviewed. Dr. Hocker felt the growth was not in the Heart River Elementary area but more north of the interstate.

Dickinson High School Assistant Principal Hepperle shared his concern with postponing the Dickinson High School expansion any further. There have been discussions regarding the high school for about five years. There are discussions by the high school level teachers inquiring when something will be done with the high school. The high school is an integral part of the community with many family and community connections. Mr. Hepperle recommended getting some of the teachers on board to buffer some of the concerns about the project dragging longer and the fear that something is not going to happen to address the overcrowding. Mr. Harris said that he knows those conversations are happening at the high school and there are similar conversations at the K-5 level as well.

Dr. Hocker shared some ideas regarding the number of voters it would take to pass the bond referendum. It will be important for the patrons to be well informed. The structure and condition scenario and capacity in all grade levels will help the patrons understand what an extra \$30 a month will provide to educate the students.

JE Dunn Construction Project Senior Manager Brian Stark and Operations Coordinator Marc Mellmer shared their insight on a CMAR. They explained the CMAR takes the electrical, mechanical, and equipment contractor bids and puts together the construction project. Some of the CMARs may not be interested in smaller projects. They also shared some ideas of recommended square footage per student in a building.

Individuals at the table shared their thoughts on what they thought was done correctly for the bond referendum to pass for the new middle school.

At 8:00 p.m., Board President Seaks declared a brief recess. At 8:06, the workshop reconvened.

Superintendent's Evaluation Tool – President Seaks explained the old evaluation tool would rate the superintendent as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory with little feedback. The Rocky Mountain evaluation tool was adopted by the Board within the last couple of years.

Superintendent’s Evaluation Tool (cont.)

Mr. Seaks said in his discussion with Dr. Hocker, it was evident that some information was not relevant to a brand new superintendent to the District versus expectations of a veteran superintendent. The new evaluation tool may be edited. President Seaks explained one of the frustrations with the new tool is there is a main heading with a rank for each of the subsections under that heading. As an example, if the question on the evaluation pertained to whether the superintendent has confidence of the Board and if one individual placed a “1”, which is the lowest ranking, then it would average it out and still be a satisfactory. He added what made the most sense was still having an effective tool and having a scoring rubric in each category. President Seaks noted that Superintendent Hocker has a ton of things on his plate and the bonding situation is a big priority. The bonding situation might fit under community relations and could be added under that category as a subcategory if the Board wanted to. The Board may want to add subcategories to other areas.

President Seaks said the first evaluation has a deadline of November 3. There are two done a year. Unlike other states, the evaluation is done at a public meeting. President Seaks asked the other Board members if they were comfortable with the format. Mr. Wilkie inquired how it compares and was it more efficient. He wondered what areas a Board member could respond on the evaluation after working with the superintendent for just a few months.

Once the evaluation is completed, President Seaks said he would sit down with Dr. Hocker and review the entire evaluation and the comments. It would be an opportunity for Dr. Hocker to communicate and share with President Seaks his thoughts.

Adjournment – At 8:25 p.m., President Seaks declared the workshop adjourned.

Brent Seaks, Board President

Kent Anderson, Business Manager

Twila Petersen, Secretary