

Dickinson Public Schools
Unapproved School Board Workshop Minutes
November 13, 2017; After School Board Meeting
Board Room, Central Administration Office

The Dickinson Public School Board held a workshop on November 13, 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, Business Manager Kent Anderson, Director of Student Services Dorothy Martinson, Director of Instruction Melanie Kathrein, Dickinson High School Principal Ron Dockter, Dickinson High School Assistant Principal Jay Hepperle, Southwest Community High School Principal Kristy Goodall, Dickinson Middle School Principal Marcus Lewton, Dickinson Middle School Assistant Principal Shawn Leiss, Heart River Elementary Principal Susan Cook, Jefferson Elementary Principal Sara Streeter, Lincoln Elementary Principal Tammy Praus-Peterson, Prairie Rose Elementary Principal Sherry Libis, Roosevelt Elementary Principal Henry Mack, Mr. Chris Gibbs from DLR Group, School Board Secretary Twila Petersen, and Ms. Sydney Mook from The Dickinson Press.

Call to Order: Board President Ricks called the workshop to order at 5:57 p.m.

DLR Group – Superintendent Sullivan explained he wanted to update the Board on the progress regarding the high school. He reported Mr. Chris Gibbs from the DLR Group had met with the high school administration and the Cabinet yesterday. Additionally, Mr. Gibbs met with one of two business community groups and presented three possible pathways for the high school. Dr. Sullivan felt the conversation with all three groups was very good. He noted it was interesting the conversation with the business community group went a different direction. The business group asked many great questions regarding bonding capacity, enrollment, and moving forward. Mr. Dockter concurred the conversation at the business community meeting was very positive with a lot of questions. The feedback was very positive about something needing to be done.

Dr. Sullivan added there was strong sentiment towards the CTE Center. There appears to be very deep seated interest on how the District is going to address the needs for a CTE Center. President Ricks inquired if there was a sense the community group wanted to be partners or contribute. Mr. Dockter said the group did want to partner or contribute. Mrs. Kathrein added that the community group was not fearful of thinking outside the box in trying to find the right path. Dr. Sullivan explained DSU President Mitzel made a strong point when he commented that he felt they would strongly support and provide more rationale for state support for that connection of the pathway to life in the community; that it is required. President Ricks inquired if the three groups had a preference for different pathways. Dr. Sullivan responded that there was no desire to establish a preference at this time. The DLR Group avoided establishing a priority. DLR was asking questions to form comments with pros and cons. One question posed from the business community could potentially be a 4th pathway. There was deep conversation about the future for Dickinson High School and providing some alternatives and pathways to receive ideas. Mr. Dockter added there could be some blended things taking parts from each pathway to come up with alternative pathway 4. Mr. Seaks felt that it was clear that something needs to be decided and the numbers all tied in. He thought it was good the District was having these discussions and exploring the options. The decisions greatly affect the District.

President Ricks asked what would be the next step after the smaller group settings. Mr. Gibbs responded they were looking for threads and trends with consistently and inconsistently. Some of those threads and trends did surface and there are pieces that might evolve further. Mr. Gibbs explained the

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DLR Group (cont.)

only thing that will outweigh the challenges are the opportunities. He felt it was great that the discussion from the groups was focused on learning and creating the best environment and communities. He said he would look for consistencies and then evaluate. It could be all over the map depending on how varied the comments are. Right now the comments are varied. At some point, there will need to be a conversation at the Board level with prioritization taken back out to the community to build some momentum.

Mr. Hepperle felt there was no one option that the groups were not willing to pursue. There was a thread that any of the options could be a possibility and Mr. Gibbs encouraged everyone involved to keep the whole picture in mind and answer the questions; What do we want? What do we need? What is best for the students? Moreover, not focus on what is easiest to administrate. Mr. Seaks added that all options would work if the high school maintained the block schedule or if it would be the traditional course schedule. He said he looked forward to other conversations.

Berg Reopening – Dr. Sullivan explained a Berg Planning Committee has been formed and is composed primarily of individuals that have served in the building and a Board member. There has been two meetings so far. The committee has toured the building. The preliminary options will be discussed in the morning with Mr. Gibbs. Mrs. Kathrein explained one of the things the committee is doing is prioritizing. They are prioritizing the things a person would like to have and items that are needed in the building. One of the discussions asked if there was a necessity for a computer lab. The committee is comprised of a diverse group of people and it allows for conversation from all voices of different entities. She noted there has been good conversation.

Dr. Sullivan said one of the discussions was flexible learning space. It was the sentiment of the committee that the flexible learning spaces are probably not necessary in the lower grades. There was discussion regarding flexible learning spaces between the classrooms and there is a specific dedicated space on the second floor in the old office area. There will be a conversation tomorrow regarding securing the furniture and what that will look like utilizing furniture for flexible learning support.

Dr. Sullivan reported that there is a 50/50 chance that it will take more than one year to complete this project. Mrs. Peterson concurred that the project may not be accomplished by fall 2018. There will still be things that will need to be finalized. The building will require a lot of remodeling and updates. Mr. Leiss said he echoed those comments. There was a lot of thought and planning into the Dickinson Middle School. He felt Berg will serve the students for a long time and the District needs to invest in it to get it right.

School Board Governance – President Ricks explained this topic was in reference to the calendar proposed by the School Board. There was going to be a discussion at Cabinet. She asked for some feedback. There were no comments from the administrators. Dr. Sullivan responded that he felt the Cabinet was open to the concept of the calendar. One of the topics of discussion was community groups largely being covered now administratively and something that is already going on in the schools. Mrs. Rude inquired if there were any suggestions written down. Dr. Lewton referenced the data or the ACT data. He noted there are other forms of data that are building goals such as NWEA. These are administered throughout the school year. He noted the tricky thing when looking at data is

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School Board Governance (cont.)

you have to take in everything. Data can be misconstrued in many different ways and the public looks at it as well. Mrs. Kathrein explained the ESSA pie charts and accountability and providing some opportunities such as choice readiness and dashboards. President Ricks inquired if the Board members were aware of the dashboard concept. Mrs. Kathrein explained the first draft of the developing of a visual dashboard will come out in November of this year and they will add to it. It should be complete in February 2019. Mrs. Peterson also noted that they have talked about goals.

Mrs. Rude inquired if the concepts that were discussed could be input into an Excel spreadsheet so that the Board could review it. Dr. Sullivan responded that he was given the impression from Cabinet members that they were attempting to convey it may be helpful to have the document down in writing identifying things in the District and new concepts that would complement the work in the school district. However, most of the discussion during Cabinet was the community piece and noting how most of those things are being handled administratively. Mrs. Rude responded that referencing different data, pie charts, and dashboards; she would like to see it written down. She added they are trying to make some positive concepts in the District. Mr. Hepperle stated he has done some graduate studies with several classes of information a semester. He was curious what she would want to know. Mrs. Rude responded if they were discussing the dashboard concept, what is involved with it, how is it compiled. Some basic information. Mrs. Kathrein explained some of the items on the dashboard are being developed by the IT department at the state level. They have ESSA Implementation Committees helping them decide how the information is shared. To answer the question, what will it look like, Mrs. Kathrein said with the new state assessment, cut scores won't be determined and that will play into what that will look like on the dashboard. Mrs. Kathrein said she knows that teachers get nervous when the school board is looking at student achievement data and that the teachers hold themselves accountable. She gave an example of some things that high school graduates will need to have that will now show up in data. Not everything will show up on a standardized test. President Ricks did not feel it was a request for accountability. She also noted the Board wants to be supportive and not upset the teachers. Even if the scores may not be where the Board wants them to be, all the other information is going to be helpful.

RSP & Associates – Dr. Sullivan asked if there were questions the Board wanted to ask Mr. Schwarz from RSP before he called him. Mrs. Streeter said she has heard from parents that when they look at the maps they know that it may not be one of the options and it is hard to choose. A variety of parents said they are not going to go to the forum because another parent will create an uproar after a decision is made and then it will be changed anyways. Mrs. Streeter wanted the group to be aware of that perception of some parents. Mrs. Martinson said one parent was disappointed in the turnout at the open forum. We know the phones are going to be ringing once a decision is reached because the parents will be upset. Mrs. Streeter said the article printed by the Dickinson Press was nicely done. Parents have been informed and invited to attend and they can't say they didn't know. Mr. Hepperle said when he attended the forums it appeared some parents were willing to identify but were being microscopic. Some were looking at the options as it pertained only to them. Some will be happy and others will be upset. The upset people will be the ones that will be calling. Mrs. Streeter explained the value of the neighborhood school and how important it was that someone living across the street from Jefferson was not having to go to Berg. Mrs. Kathrein said that she heard from parents that whatever school their

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RSP & Associates (cont.)

children were currently attending, they like that school. She felt that was very positive. Mrs. Martinson said she talked to a parent who was not from North Dakota and they talked about having a real sense of community and the many things the parent was involved in. The neighborhood schools does provide that sense of community.

Mrs. Kathrein said she heard questions from parents who have a 4th grader this year and what about their siblings. There were questions about District staff and their children. If the District were to add onto Heart River, how would that affect the attendance areas? Should that be an option?

President Ricks said there was one parent who lives outside of the District boundaries in the South Heart School District. They live closer to Jefferson than Berg. They are concerned that isn't really a neighborhood school when they can see one school from their house but now they are going into town to school and there is no busing for open enrolled students.

Mrs. Schwartz explained that with parental choice there could still be the neighborhood school concept. She asked if there could be an option for the students that are grandfathered in, that they would not have to move. Mrs. Martinson responded that when Prairie Rose Elementary opened up, there were many students that were placed in that school that did not live in that neighborhood. The area now by Prairie Rose has been developed and there are instances where the administration had to tell parents that have moved in the Prairie Rose area that they can't attend school there because the grade their child is enrolled is full. She explained unless it is reorganized, how is the District ever going to be able to get the parents living close to the schools the opportunity to attend their area school. She added that typically a District will have a process where a parent can make a transfer request. Those transfer requests are not reviewed until August after registration. She thought it would be important to get the parents where they need to be and then review requests for transfers. It is the District's responsibility to do what is best for all the students in the District. Even though some parents may not want this, it also is not best to have 30 students in a classroom. She noted it is complicated.

Mrs. Kathrein explained that equity in education by balancing class sizes is important at the elementary level. There are some class sizes that are 28 and then others that are at 20. Mr. Hepperle said he has had discussions with parents that have children the same age as his own. The question was, what am I as a parent willing to give up to get what I want. People were upset that highway 22 was a cut point. Mr. Hepperle asked, what about the student that has to walk two miles to school? He noted that is not what is best for the students. Mrs. Streeter felt that if parents choose to request a transfer, a good option would be to only let them request one transfer a year and have a cut off date for the request and not allow parents to be school hopping because it is not going well for them at this school. Mrs. Martinson felt that the request for transfers should not be reviewed before the building registrations. Otherwise there will be decisions made before all the parents that live in that area have had a chance to be placed in their area school. She also noted that some of the school districts that do allow transfer requests only approve them for one year. That way if there is an influx of students into a particular area it would ensure those students living in that area will be placed in their area school.

President Ricks inquired if there could be some sort of online opportunity for the visuals to be available. She was also concerned about the small turnout for the forum. That way, based on feedback,

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RSP & Associates (cont.)

it could be narrowed down to two options. Mrs. Kathrein responded that Mr. Schwarz had shared his concern prior to the first open forum with having the map available with the rationale attached to the map. He stressed the importance that people need to hear the message that is attached to the maps. Mr. Hepperle explained that parents should not be upset with the process if they were not in attendance at the forum to share their concerns. Parents need to invest in the time to understand the process.

Superintendent Sullivan attempted to contact Mr. Rob Schwarz from RSP & Associates by telephone but was unsuccessful.

Adjournment – At 6:55 p.m., President Ricks declared the workshop adjourned.

Sarah Ricks, Board President

Kent Anderson, Business Manager

Twila Petersen, Secretary