

Dickinson Public Schools
Unapproved School Board Workshop Minutes
January 29, 2018; 5:00 p.m.
Library, Dickinson High School

The Dickinson Public School Board held a workshop on January 29, 2018, at the Dickinson High School. Board members present were: President Brent Seaks, Vice President Kim Schwartz, Board Member Tanya Rude, and Board Member David Wilkie. Others present were: Director of Instruction Melanie Kathrein, Business Manager Kent Anderson, Dickinson High School Principal Ron Dockter, Dickinson High School Assistant Principal Jay Hepperle, Dickinson High School Assistant Principal Guy Fridley, DLR Group Principal Chris Gibbs, JE Dunn Construction Operations Coordinator Marc Mellmer, JE Dunn Senior Project Manager Brian Stark, Dickinson Press Reporter Iain Woessner, School Board Secretary Twila Petersen, Dickinson High School Instructor Clarence Hauck, and Dickinson High School Instructor Scott Schmidt.

Call to Order - Board President Seaks called the workshop to order at 5:00 p.m. Topics discussed did not require any action by the Board. They may become agenda topics for future Board meetings.

DLR Group / Dickinson High School Planning – President Seaks explained he had invited Mr. Chris Gibbs with the DLR Group to provide an update regarding the Dickinson High School project. Mr. Gibbs provided a brief PowerPoint presentation. He noted there is a great deal of energy in meeting with the Dickinson High School faculty and administrators. The discussion with them was not looking for specific answers or solutions. Out of the discussion, the administration would like some tangible steps to take, looking for ideas and something to react to.

When the Dickinson High School (DHS) focus groups met last year, they looked at pathways for the future of DHS. Pathway 1 was building a new high school, pathway 2 was having two high schools, and pathway 3 was utilizing the existing structure.

Utilizing the current structure could require the high school to review different scenarios for scheduling classes. The high school staff emphasized their willingness to do what they can for the best interests of the students. This is much more than the building itself. It could include curriculum. Mr. Gibbs explained it is up to the School Board to decide that something needs be started, the planning time, the design time and the implementation time. Option 2 would require a minimum of 8.5 months of design time. An example would be to start this spring, design through the end of the year and implement this fall. If all goes well, move in date could be January 2020. Mr. Gibbs noted that summer is a difficult time to engage educators.

Mr. Gibbs explained from the conversation with the staff in October and the meetings today, there seems to be some urgency and maybe worry on behalf of the staff as they look at the potential future enrollment numbers at the high school. The current enrollment is 954. Rolling in the current 6th, 7th, and 8th graders and rolling out grades 10-12, there could easily be 1,134 students at the high school in three years. That is 200 more students than the current enrollment and there is no added space for these 200 students. There would need to be scheduling changes in the interim and the staff is concerned about the hallways getting even more crowded and the classrooms more crowded. At the same time, the staff are extraordinarily excited about what could come. Mr. Gibbs invited the Board to ask questions and discuss what it might want to do and how something might be implemented knowing that time is of an essence, keeping in mind the gap in time from May to September.

DLR Group / Dickinson High School Planning (cont.)

President Seaks noted the District is in the middle of hiring a high school principal and also a new superintendent. Whoever is coming in would be in the middle of implementation. President Seaks asked for input from Mr. Gibbs. Mr. Gibbs responded that the project has to be owned by the people working in the building. He said some boundaries are beginning to be set. Any decisions should be implemented sooner rather than later. The planning design is only part of the picture. Any huge decisions will unfold and be implemented over time and evolve. The building-level leadership and the district-level leadership are critical to some of the decisions but he did not think that would change the pathway. The new administrator and superintendent will absorb some of that when they come on board. There is plenty of opportunities for input and influence. The real ownership will take place by the staff. The District is going to evolve and move and make this happen and it is going to make Dickinson High School the best it can be and let it unfold over time.

Mrs. Rude inquired what direction the District was heading. Mr. Gibbs responded there is energy around the CTE Center or applied learning. The current campus could use some TLC to make it a better environment for learning. There is also some energy around collaboration that the current building does not allow to happen. There are more students that will be coming into the school and the staff are concerned. The staff know this and are willing to change. They know the process may be painful to get to that. Mrs. Rude explained she felt that there would need to be something done before two years as the current structure cannot handle the additional proposed students. Mr. Gibbs explained there are some ways to make the current structure more efficient. One thing brought up by the group at today's meeting was utilizing the classrooms during the planning hour. Mr. Dockter has told the faculty for years the faculty may need to give up their room during the preparation time so another teacher may come in and use the classroom for another class. Mr. Gibbs added there are some other scheduling alternatives to alleviate some of the overcrowding, whether that be alternative schedules in the evening or in the early mornings. There is also a potential relief with online courses. All of this is based on what is the best combination for the students and making it work. Mr. Gibbs said that it was posed to the staff today whether to remodel the existing building or adding more space and the staff were having a hard time deciding which would be more effective. The first reaction was to add more space because of more students coming. However, this is not just a building issue but a high school issue.

Mr. Gibbs pointed out that even if the building was remodeled, in another two years there will be another 200 extra students. That challenges any of the pathways and it is important to implement it correctly so that the community supports it.

President Seaks said he often hears about the traditional scheduling or the modified block scheduling with respect as part of the discussion of which path to go. Mr. Gibbs responded that is part of it as it is part of the educational system. If the building is designed correctly, it can meet the needs of different schedules. He explained the flexible scheduling at Bismarck's Legacy High School. Legacy has changed its scheduling numerous times. Mrs. Schwartz inquired if they would start with scheduling alternatives, would it change the end product of the building. Mr. Gibbs responded there are ways to test it by providing the building administration and staff the ability to envision how they could make it work in that space.

DLR Group / Dickinson High School Planning (cont.)

President Seaks referenced an article he read by the National School Boards Association that emphasized flexible spaces. He inquired if Districts were adopting the flexible spaces. Mr. Gibbs responded, looking at the building, there are 50-year walls, 10-year walls, and 1-year walls. A 1-year wall is a lot cheaper and can be moved by custodial staff. A wall that is 50-years is not going anywhere. Flexible spaces have a down side as far as acoustics; they do not have great barriers for sound. He added there have been many conversations regarding the 100-year shell and everything inside changing every five years. In that model, there are sections that are rotated every five years.

President Seaks explained the financial part of this is there is limited bonding capacity for the School District. There is the ability to put it to a vote for the additional bonding and having it connected to a project. If the bonding capacity is not approved, then the project would also not be approved. There could be a request for additional bonding capacity and the community may not like the project for the bonding. Mr. Seaks inquired regarding Mr. Gibbs' thoughts on the bonding capacity. Mr. Gibbs responded that it is a difficult decision and needs to be a locally driven decision. As a taxpayer, they may want to have it connected. The challenge is how to tell the story. Yes, the District is asking for the vote now and at some point it is going to have to have more money. The District is going to let the taxpayers keep their money until it is needed by the District.

Mr. Gibbs asked the Board what they thought the next step should be or when should the next step be determined. Mrs. Rude responded that question should be asked of the high school administrators and staff. President Seaks appreciated the staff's involvement on the project and asked for their input on what they would like to add. Dickinson High School Principal Dockter responded that he has been letting others talk and be more involved. He would like to think the staff is well positioned. The future is challenging, scary and yet a great opportunity. Mrs. Kathrein responded that in the conversations today and previously, the staff are excited and wondering about how much of the decision is their decision. Mr. Hepperle added that in 15 years, it will be his child that will be graduating. He said that knowing the headaches, the processing, the patience, and the sacrifices they would be giving up, they (the DHS staff) are willing to do those things in order to make the high school the best it can be. This is something the staff want to buy into and drive forward.

Mr. Hauck said as a taxpayer, he has heard talk about adding onto the north or south of the building. He did not know if that was the right answer but at the same time, it is easier to add on than to build from scratch. Is the high school ever going to see 2,000 students? President Seaks said the Board is trying to be mindful of the taxpayer's monies. He would hope the community would know the value of education and giving the students the best opportunity. Whatever the outcome, it will be a well thought out decision.

Mr. Gibbs said he was speaking on behalf of the high school staff, based on his notes from October and today. What he is seeing is a strong response asking when will the process get started. The Board will have to say they are making a step and this is what they are going to do and start working on it. This is what the high school staff would like to hear. He added the

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Board needs to consider what information they need from the staff and high school administration. What kind of funds is the Board willing to put into a program?

Mrs. Rude explained that she would like to know if the teachers are on board with a flexible schedule. If they are, which schedules. The Board is willing take and use funds to help the students and the teachers. Mr. Gibbs responded in reference to the schedule. His reaction and recommendation is that the staff would like to explore other options and develop a system to have a variety of schedules all at the same time because it is what is best for students. It is getting closer and closer to requiring the Board's permission to proceed and they are wanting permission to figure it out.

Mr. Hepperle explained the faculty and administrators have spent a whole year talking about schedules and getting input from everyone and evaluate the schedules. At the end of the process, they ended up at the same spot because there is no additional space. How big can they dream? It is hard to know where to go when you do not know how much is available. Mr. Gibbs added there is a huge need for the social space, a huge need for the applied learning, and a huge need for collaboration. Any one of those areas could take us to step one and then the other areas could happen. Mr. Gibbs explained these are really exciting times and some great conversation has been shared. The momentum has been built up and it needs to last through September. Mr. Gibbs suggested some prioritization of what those steps might be from the staff's standpoint.

President Seaks thanked everyone in attendance for their time and thanked Mr. Gibbs for traveling to Dickinson and meeting with the different groups and getting their input.

Adjournment – At 6:10 p.m., President Seaks declared the workshop adjourned.

Brent Seaks, Board President

Kent Anderson, Business Manager

Twila Petersen, Secretary