

Unapproved School Board Meeting Minutes

Dickinson Public Schools
Special Meeting

March 20, 2014; 5:00 p.m.
Board Room, Central Office

The Dickinson Public School Board held a special meeting on March 20, 2014, at the Central Administration Office. Board members present were: President Kris Fehr, Vice President Jason Hanson, Ms. Leslie Ross, and Mrs. Tanya Rude. Board member absent was Dr. Morton Krieg. Administrators present were: Superintendent Douglas Sullivan, Assistant Superintendent Vince Reep, Mr. Ron Dockter, Mr. Shawn Leiss, Mrs. Dorothy Martinson, Dr. Becky Pitkin, Mrs. Susan Cook, Mr. Jay Hepperle, Dr. Marcus Lewton, Mr. Henry Mack, Ms. Tamara Praus, and Mrs. Melanie Kathrein. Others present were: Mrs. Amanda DeMorrett, Ms. Leann Mehrer, Mrs. Twila Petersen, and Ms. Katherine Grandstrand from the Dickinson Press.

Call to Order - Board President Fehr called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Public Participation – There were no requests for public participation.

Additional Agenda Items – Due to this being a special board meeting there would be no additions to the agenda.

Consent Agenda - There was no consent agenda.

Business Topics

Open Enrollment Application –Open enrollment applications are completed by non-resident parents that wish their children to attend Dickinson Public Schools (DPS). An application for open enrollment was received for a child of Kandy Jazwa prior to the March 1 deadline effective for fall 2014. This student is not currently attending Dickinson Public Schools and does not have siblings attending DPS. The school board must render a decision on the application prior to the April 1 deadline. Superintendent Sullivan addressed the board and noted the application was brought before the school board at its March 10 meeting and was tabled until further research could be done. The student is a resident of the South Heart School District and currently attends Hope Christian Academy (HCA). During the public participation Miss Jazwa mentioned the desire to be with her friends and wanting to take the Health Careers classes as primary reasons for wanting to attend DHS. Both of these personal objectives can still be afforded through remaining in attendance at Hope Christian. There was also discussion of a financial challenge paying the tuition at Hope Christian. Hope Christian does provide a financial assistance program for its families. It was also mentioned that Hope Christian has been an extremely positive experience. Having Ms. Jazwa remain at Hope Christian provides the Dickinson Public Schools with a uniform and consistent process in addressing open enrollment requests. Superintendent Sullivan addressed the board reporting he recently met with an administrator from HCA. From that meeting it was shared that HCA has cooperative agreements with DPS. The HCA students are afforded an opportunity to participate in activities at DHS. HCA has expanded the students it serves to grades K-11 this fall and grades K-12 in 2015-2016. There are financial assistance programs offered to parents at HCA. HCA students can access the Health Careers I and Health Careers II classes. Students from HCA accessing classes at DHS are not guaranteed they will be in the same classroom. Superintendent Sullivan added that in order to be uniform and consistent in the open enrollment process his recommendation to the school board is to deny the open enrollment application for a child of Kandy Jazwa. Mrs. Rude noted at the last meeting the research was to answer the question of the legality of open enrollment. Superintendent Sullivan asked for clarification. Mrs. Rude responded a board member requested information from a legal standpoint regarding denying one application and accepting another application. Superintendent

Open Enrollment Application (cont.)

Sullivan responded that he felt he addressed that concern by his recommendation which is to be consistent and have a uniform process. He added that, as a school board, they could grant an exception but cautioned that could cause further complications. Ms. Ross explained she had asked the question at the last meeting suggesting administration look at the policy and procedures, attempt to meet the needs of the student, barring all rules in place, the board could override the stipulations. She noted the district has applied the policy, made sure the needs of the student are met by having a place to educate, there is a financial process, and there is an opportunity for the student to attend health career classes. Applying all those factors this student is getting what she needs to be successful. President Fehr and Vice-president Hanson concurred. Ms. Ross moved to deny the open enrollment request for a child of Kandy Jazwa from South Heart to Dickinson to be admitted to the Dickinson Public Schools under the open enrollment policy. Mr. Hanson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Meeting With the DLR Group Representative – Mr. Christopher Gibbs, principal of the DLR Group addressed the school board. The last in a series of public input forums is scheduled for tonight at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Gibbs requested an opportunity to share information with the school board. The information was presented using a PowerPoint presentation.

The participants at the last two open forums were mainly parents that have lived in the community more than 20 years. The overall perception of the educational performance of the Dickinson Public Schools (DPS) was given a grade of “B”. The educational opportunities were graded average to good. The quality of the school buildings for education was graded bad or average. Top priorities were middle school and the idea of growth, no matter where that growth is. The two most important facility issues that need to be addressed were space for a growing population, class size, and meeting state accreditation. Most participants felt the sixth grade would be best served in a middle school comprised of grades 6-8. At the most recent forum participants were asked what they would be willing to support financially on a monthly basis on a tax impact for the school district. Most participants responded they were willing to spend \$22 per month which would convert to \$50 million. Grade configuration was also discussed at the February open forum. The most popular configuration was grades K-5, grades 6-8, grades 9-12. The rankings dealing with grades 6-8 scenario will lead to planning scenarios. When referring to managing growth the priorities were a new middle school first, a new high school second, and tied for third choice was remodeling the current high school or building a new elementary school.

The next subject Mr. Gibbs discussed was the deferred maintenance on the current facilities. The facility report card for all the district buildings was at the same level, with the exception of Prairie Rose Elementary (PRE). Because all the buildings (except PRE) are deteriorating at the same time, this does raise some red flags as the district deals with these issues over time. All buildings (except PRE) were graded low and relatively consistent. The deferred maintenance projects on the buildings come with a price tag; as an example deferred maintenance at Dickinson High School (DHS) is approximately \$22 million. There are a number of deficiencies at DHS, especially with the out buildings. Total deferred maintenance for eight of the schools is estimated at \$38 million using 2014 dollars. As the district looks at the future it needs to take into consideration cost acceleration may be as high as 10%-15%. Mr. Gibbs noted the district is doing a good job with buildings and grounds and maintenance upkeep.

Meeting With the DLR Group Representative (cont.)

Enrollment projections were provided based on two scenarios developed by the district administration. The growth is real and it is going to impact the district as it moves forward. Mr. Gibbs expanded the administration's projections out to 2020. In 2020 there will be somewhere between 326 and 388 students per grade in the elementary level or approximately 2,238 students. The current elementary building capacity is 2,217. The current high school building capacity is 1,100. By 2020 there will be approximately 1,188-1,328 students at DHS. Hagen Junior High will be over capacity for grades 7-8 by 2017.

Other topics Mr. Gibbs discussed was security, safety at drop off and pick up points, a transition center for new students for their first year in the district, and bonding capacity. The transition center would be a way for students to touch base on a more personalized basis to allow the student to fold into the system a little easier. District staff are spending a lot of time getting the student acclimated once they arrive in the community. Things are done differently here and the expectation level may be different. Currently the bonding capacity could be \$53 million. The community could approve doubling of that, or \$106 million. Right now the mindset is K-5, 6-8, 9-12 as the preferred grade configuration; it doesn't exclude the ideas of 2-3, 3-5, or a combination. The staff at the elementary buildings preferred four sections of a grade to better utilize the specialists in the building. Prairie Rose was designed to add additional sections of classrooms. Mr. Gibbs felt Prairie Rose would be added on to become four sections per grade.

Mr. Gibbs presented some options to address the safety issues with drop off and pick up points. Getting students to use the cross walks and maybe having something where red lines are for students and blue lines are for vehicles. Potentially there could be a new driving area at Jefferson and Roosevelt and trying to deal with the chaos at Hagen before and after school.

There were three planning scenario options provided by Mr. Gibbs. Option one proposed building a new middle school, dedicating funds towards the cost of the land purchase, funds for deferred maintenance in the elementary buildings, funds for safety and a transition center with no funds towards deferred maintenance at the high school. This option would be an additional \$32 per month to the taxpayer or \$74.6 million.

Option two in the planning scenario would convert the current high school into a middle school and build a new high school. There would be no funds available for deferred maintenance at the elementary schools, land purchase, safety, or a transition center. This would be approximately \$45 per month to the taxpayer or \$98.7 million.

The last option was to build a new elementary school. There would be funds dedicated for deferred maintenance at the high school, middle school, safety and transition center. This would cost the taxpayer an additional \$26 per month or \$58.6 million.

If a new facility is built location will need to be decided. Mr. Gibbs provided a map of the City with five different zone bubbles. The participants at tonight's open forum will be asked to prioritize where they think the facility should be built, in what zone, based on their community knowledge, where growth might be happening, where land might be available, or other. The value of the community schools and neighborhood schools will be provided. Ms. Ross commented that she felt valuable information was missing, such as where a vast majority of the people live and where there are students with that growth. Mr. Gibbs believed the intent was for the groups at the forum to have that

Meeting With the DLR Group Representative (cont.)

conversation and talk about that as a community. The value of carrying those conversations after they leave the forum is important; that way when there is a request for community support it is not new information.

Mr. Gibbs explained after tonight's forum he hopes to meet with the staff leadership and some additional groups, including students, to receive additional input. Mrs. Rude inquired if the district needs to do something different for the middle school. Mr. Gibbs responded yes. She also noted that it appears the high school has some deferred maintenance and needs some major upgrades. Mr. Gibbs concurred adding there are challenges. There is an enormous amount of need due to the condition of the buildings, the age of the buildings, and the growth. It is all hitting at once. The hard part is how to prioritize. Under the current scenarios and mechanisms it would be very, very difficult to meet all the needs. Dr. Sullivan noted it was important for the community to understand that there needs to be some type of partnership with the state on how this is all going to be funded, this doesn't just pertain to our school district, but to a lot of school districts. There was a discussion regarding the cost of building and maintenance in today's dollars versus 10-15 years from now. President Fehr asked for more information regarding the transition center. Mr. Gibbs explained the idea came out of a staff leadership group meeting. Students are showing up during all different times of the school year. They are placed in the buildings shortly after arriving. The teacher has no idea where the student is at academically and needs time to establish a base line for the student. Students need to be made aware of how things work here and that there is a level of expectation in the classroom. The staff do very well with the new students, they care about the students and encourage the students. It takes time, sometimes a few hours, sometimes a day or a week. The students may have just moved here and do not want to be here, or they may be nervous, or there are all sorts of emotions. Mr. Gibbs has heard of things like a transition center in high urban areas, it is more of a welcome center. The student may only know two words of English when they arrive.

President Fehr thanked Mr. Gibbs for the PowerPoint presentation and the information provided to the board members. This agenda item was informational only. No action was requested.

Other – President Fehr thanked Ms. Katherine Grandstrand, the representative from the Dickinson Press, for her support to the Dickinson Public Schools and wished her well in her future endeavors. Ms. Grandstrand will be moving to Aberdeen soon.

Adjournment – At 6:02 p.m. Mrs. Rude moved to adjourn. Mr. Hanson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

Kris Fehr, Board President

Vince Reep, Business Manager

Twila Petersen, Secretary