

Unapproved School Board Meeting Minutes

Dickinson Public Schools
Special Meeting

April 28, 2014; 5:00 p.m.
Board Room, Central Office

The Dickinson Public School Board held a special meeting on April 28, 2014, at the Central Administration Office. Board members present were: President Kris Fehr, Vice President Jason Hanson, Dr. Morton Krieg, Mrs. Tanya Rude, and Ms. Leslie Ross. Administrators present were: Superintendent Douglas Sullivan, Assistant Superintendent Vince Reep, Mr. Ron Dockter, Mr. Shawn Leiss, Mrs. Dorothy Martinson, Dr. Becky Pitkin, Mr. Jay Hepperle, Dr. Marcus Lewton, Mrs. Melanie Kathrein, Mr. Calvin Dean, and Ms. Sherry Libis. Others present were: Mrs. Sarah Ricks, Mr. Guy Moos, Ms. Leann Mehrer, Mr. Brian Ham, Mr. Clarence Hauck, Mr. Scott Schmidt, Mr. Lyle Smith, Mrs. Twila Petersen and Ms. Nadya Faulx from the Dickinson Press.

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

Public Participation – There was a request for public participation from Mr. Guy Moos related to agenda item III. DLR Group Recommendation for Long Range Facility Planning. Mr. Moos addressed the board. He said he was excited to see the options the board was reviewing tonight and did not have any suggestions for a particular direction. He understood there were concerns with the middle school and also concerns with the high school. His own personal preference would be for a bond referendum for the high school instead of the middle school. President Fehr thanked Mr. Moos for his input.

DLR Group Recommendation for Long Range Facility Planning – At the April 14 school board meeting, Mr. Chris Gibbs from the DLR Group presented information to the board and provided recommendations for the school district's facility planning for the future. This special board meeting was an opportunity for the board members to discuss and possibly act on the recommendations.

President Fehr requested Assistant Superintendent Reep review with the board the enrollment numbers and projections. Mr. Reep explained the DLR Group presented at all three public workshops two models that were provided by the district administrators. Model I used the current students moving them ahead one grade with a projection for kindergarten students based on birth rates at St. Joseph's hospital. Model II used the current students and moving them ahead one grade with a 7% inward migration added to grades K-6 and a 4% inward migration added for grades 7-12. During the month of March the district picked up 38 new students. Next fall the enrollment in grade six will be similar to what the district has now. Mr. Reep explained there could be an increase of 336 elementary students (K-6) from May 2013 to fall of 2014, using Model II. Hagen Junior High will grow by 96 students from May 2013 to fall of 2014 for a projected enrollment of 509 students. It is projected there will be 866 students at DHS fall of 2014, this is an increase of 146 from May 2013. Mr. Reep noted that the enrollment at DHS last May was 720 students. That was the lowest enrollment at DHS in two decades. Elsewhere there are 320-350 kindergarten students projected for next fall. There were two sections of kindergarten added for next fall but with the numbers increasing more sections may be needed. The enrollment increase in the district from May 2013 to fall of 2014 will be approximately 578 students, 336 at the elementary level, 96 at Hagen Junior High and 46 at DHS. As the district moves forward, Mr. Reep said the enrollment will directly impact the junior high school. The elementary schools are basically full at this point in time. There is storage being built at Jefferson and Lincoln so that classrooms for specialist teachers can be located on the stage at both buildings.

DLR Group Recommendation for Long Range Facility Planning (cont.)

Board Member Krieg inquired which of the current buildings have the potential to have additions. Mr. Reep responded Prairie Rose Elementary has room for expansion with an estimated cost of \$2.4 million. If the board directed the administration to move forward to expand Prairie Rose Elementary he would hope it would open in December of 2015. The DLR Group suggested making Prairie Rose a 24 classroom school with four sections per grade. Dr. Krieg asked how many more students could be serviced at Prairie Rose. Mr. Reep responded approximately 150 more students. Dr. Krieg inquired if Heart River Elementary had the potential for expansion. Mr. Reep responded that Heart River could have that potential as part of the deferred maintenance, however most of the population is in the northern area. The cost for the HVAC at Heart River would be approximately \$2 million. Six classrooms at Prairie Rose could be added without additional costs to the tax payers. The funding could be from the rapid growth grant received from the state. Mr. Reep stated last fall the district received \$800,000 in funds from the rapid growth grant. He also noted there are other funds available. Mr. Hanson inquired if the Prairie Rose cafeteria was sufficient for additional students. Mr. Reep responded the cafeteria is the largest in the district. When the building was designed it was designed for expansion. Mrs. Rude inquired if other elementary schools could be expanded. Mrs. Fehr and Ms. Ross noted that when the additions were completed at Jefferson and Lincoln they knew that those buildings would be maxed to potential. Mrs. Rude inquired if the rapid growth grant had been accessed for other things in the district. Mr. Reep responded that it was deposited but not spent. The funds are unrestricted by the state but should not be used for salaries and benefits. Mr. Reep added that the board budgeted \$1 million in the black for this school year.

President Fehr inquired if the \$2.4 million expansion at Prairie Rose included everything, including furniture. Mr. Reep noted it did. Dr. Krieg understood that a bond referendum process would take about 3½ years and asked for Mr. Reep's suggestion. Mr. Reep responded he would recommend a bond election before October 9 so that it would go on the 2014 tax roll. If the bond referendum would pass the board could sell bonds for whatever the board decides. If it would go to a middle school then that would take about a year to get the plans ready. The district is looking at fall 2017 at the very earliest a middle school would be ready. Mrs. Fehr added it would take an additional year for a high school. Mr. Reep said research has been done and the structure of a high school is going different directions. He wouldn't recommend spending \$20-\$30 million at the high school to change the pod system, that wouldn't help the middle school.

President Fehr asked what the implications would be if a new middle school would be built in about three years, Hagen Junior High would be empty and Berg Elementary sixth graders would move to the middle school. Dr. Sullivan responded with Berg converting back to an elementary school it would provide classrooms and an opportunity to monitor, reevaluate, and assess the growth in the population.

Dr. Krieg asked how many students the current high school could serve. Mr. Reep responded the DLR Group felt the high school would be full at 1,100 students. With the block scheduling it may have the potential for more students due to teachers having prep time. It would take some creativity.

DLR Group Recommendation for Long Range Facility Planning (cont.)

Board Member Ross inquired if there was a special bond election in October how would the voter turnout be with the June and November elections already scheduled. Has there been a discussion with Stark County Auditor Haag. Superintendent Sullivan responded that Assistant Superintendent Reep and he had met with Auditor Haag last week. Ms. Haag felt there is a capability to have 12 different polling sites. The challenge would be finding the people to work the polling sites. Ms. Haag is checking with the company that creates the ballots for the machines and also with Minot to find out how they did the bond election voting.

Dr. Krieg asked if \$20-\$30 million was spent on the current high school to update it, how much would it cost to take the high school and make it into a middle school. Dr. Sullivan responded that Mr. Gibbs said it would be a significant amount because of the pod setup. There would be a lot of space at the high school that would be unusable for a middle school, such as two gymnasiums, weight room, auto shop, etc. There is a lot of square footage that would be challenging to make it meaningful. Dr. Krieg inquired if the area currently used by the Park and Recreation on the area south of the high school could be utilized for a new high school or middle school. Mr. Reep responded there had been a discussion regarding that in the past and it was not feasible due to the current traffic congestion already in that area. President Fehr inquired how much it would cost to build a new high school. Mr. Reep responded it would need to be on about 40 acres and would be over \$125-\$130 million. There was discussion regarding the maximum bonding capacity and assessed values.

Dr. Krieg asked for Superintendent Sullivan's input regarding a direction for the board. Dr. Sullivan reflected on the community input at the three forums. Mr. Gibbs made it clear that 67-70% of the people felt the district should go towards a new middle school. He added that Hagen Junior High is the most challenged facility in the district due to age, capacity and the future outlook for large classes coming in. There will be a point in time if the district doesn't do something that Hagen will run out of space and the students will have to be moved to an alternate building or have alternate buildings brought on site. The recommendation of the administration is for the board to request a bond election on October 7 and also recommend the school board instruct the administration to expand Prairie Rose Elementary as soon as possible. Information regarding this proposal could be provided to the school board at its May meeting. Mr. Hanson inquired if the high school could be expanded. Mr. Reep responded there is space available but there are many deferred maintenance items at the high school. To redo the heating and cooling at DHS would be approximately \$10 million. The DLR Group mentioned the possibility of a career and technical education center. That could be a joint venture with other communities, the university, or other areas. The center would help with the high school student population. The high school can handle the current capacity and student schedules. At the middle school the building is almost full to capacity. If a new middle school is not built the district may have to consider having some classes begin as early as 6:00-11:30 a.m. with a second shift coming in after this or consider some other options. Mr. Reep said that if the Prairie Rose Elementary expansion was taken out of the bond referendum it could bring the amount down to \$65 million to build the new middle school. Dr. Sullivan noted that it was important for the board to remember Mr. Gibbs asked a tax impact question at one of the forums in terms of the bond referendum. The response was 64% supported \$50-\$70 million. That appears to be the comfort zone.

DLR Group Recommendation for Long Range Facility Planning (cont.)

Board Member Rude asked for financial background on what it means to have bonding capacity. Mr. Reep responded that North Dakota Century Code allows up to 5% of the district's assessed value to be used towards a bond. As per the county tax office, in 2013 the assessed value of the Dickinson Public School District properties was approximately \$1.1 billion. This is subject to current debt which would bring it down to \$52 million. There was discussion regarding having a second question on the ballot to allow the district to expand it to \$65 million. President Fehr pointed out that it is the law that sets the limit and the district cannot build above the limit. Assistant Superintendent Reep described a scenario with a home in Dickinson using the median price of \$187,600, the amount it may cost that tax payer is about \$319 per year for the bond referendum.

Mrs. Rude inquired if 5% was requested but it passed at 8% could the remainder be used to fix the HVAC at Heart River Elementary or other deferred maintenance items. She noted the deferred maintenance is approximately \$38 million. Ms. Ross responded if the district goes through the bond referendum process and it does not pass, the district has to wait another year to try again. What are the needs in the district that the community is willing to bear? There are needs in the district that need to be addressed now. Ms. Ross added the district needs to be good stewards of the tax payer money.

President Fehr called for a motion or discussion if the board members so desired. Mr. Hanson moved to direct the district administrators to proceed with a bond referendum to be utilized to build a new middle school with a bond election date of October 7. Dr. Krieg seconded the motion. President Fehr called for discussion and noted more information would be provided at the May school board meeting. Mr. Hanson inquired how the district would come up with a dollar amount. Mr. Reep responded an architect would be selected. The district would rely on the numbers provided by the DLR Group. The DLR Group had a cost per square foot. There would have to be a lot of detail received before going to a ballot. President Fehr asked for further discussion on the motion. There was none. A roll call vote was taken: Rude-aye, Krieg-aye, Ross-aye, Hanson-aye, Fehr-aye. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hanson moved to direct the district administration to proceed with the expansion construction at Prairie Rose Elementary. Dr. Krieg seconded the motion. President Fehr called for discussion on the motion and noted more information would be provided at the May school board meeting. President Fehr requested Mr. Reep and Dr. Sullivan keep the board informed of the enrollment in the district. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment – At 5:55 p.m. Ms. Ross moved to adjourn. Dr. Krieg seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Kris Fehr, Board President

Vince Reep, Business Manager

Twila Petersen, Secretary