

Dickinson Public Schools
Unapproved School Board Workshop Minutes
January 18, 2018; 5:00 p.m.
Board Room, Central Administration Office

The Dickinson Public School Board held a workshop on January 18, 2018, at the Central Administration Office. Board members present were: President Brent Seaks, Vice President Kim Schwartz, Board Member Tanya Rude, 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, Dickinson High School Assistant Principal Guy Fridley, Southwest Community High School Principal Kristy Goodall, Dickinson Middle School Principal Marcus Lewton, Dickinson Middle School Assistant Principal Shawn Leiss, Dickinson Middle School Assistant Principal Cassie Francis, Heart River Elementary Principal Susan Cook, Lincoln Elementary Principal Tammy Peterson, Prairie Rose Elementary Principal Sherry Libis, Roosevelt Elementary Principal Henry Mack, School Board Secretary Twila Petersen, RSP & Associates CEO Robert S. Schwarz, JE Dunn Senior Project Manager Brian Stark, KX News Reporter Steve Kirch, Prairie Rose Elementary Instructor Nicole Weiler, Dickinson Middle School Instructor Brandi Jangula, Ms. Jessica Zastoupil, Ms. Alyson Lippert, Ms. Megan Spillman, Ms. Natasha Ash, Ms. Barbara Shockey, Ms. Angie Mackey, Mr. Mathew Rothschiller, Mr. Aeden Rothschiller, Ms. Heather Luchi, Ms. Rebecca Arends, and Ms. Ashley Gawryluk.

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.

Attendance Areas/RSP & Associates – Mr. Robert Schwarz, CEO of RSP & Associates, addressed the Board. He presented a PowerPoint with enrollment and demographic information regarding Dickinson Public Schools. When preparing the PowerPoint, Mr. Schwarz noted a large amount of time was spent on attendance areas and input received from the public. The Planning for the Future PowerPoint was broken down into Enrollment and Demographics, Development, Enrollment Projections, and Moving Forward.

Mr. Schwarz emphasized the enrollment trend which indicates inadequate space by the year 2021-2022 at the elementary and secondary schools. Elementary and secondary classrooms space is a concern Mr. Schwarz said needs to be addressed. He noted the number of outgoing seniors in comparison to the incoming kindergarten students and the correlation between the record-breaking births at the hospital and the kindergarten enrollment. Because the District is facing the potential to run out of space in the elementary schools, he recommended whatever the boundary looks like for those residing in that boundary, that the District should not waiver from those boundaries.

There were two options explained by Mr. Schwarz regarding redistricting with both of the options including the reopening of Berg Elementary. These options were available on large maps that he displayed. Mr. Schwarz explained data he had available regarding the larger student population areas in the District, areas where there are potentials for additional student growth through new development, and the student yield rates of different areas per 100 units. Regardless of which option, the options were created to have a balance in student enrollment at each elementary school taking into account the number of sections at each school.

Attendance Areas/RSP & Associates (cont.)

The District provided three public forums to provide opportunities to receive input from the public regarding potential redistricting boundaries. From those public inputs and also emails that had been received by the superintendent, Mr. Schwarz created a third option. The third option had not been presented to the administration nor the public prior to tonight's workshop. It would allow the students north of the interstate and west of highway 22 to be in the Prairie Rose Elementary attendance area.

To address the concerns of the future of the elementary schools, Mr. Schwarz discussed potential additions to Heart River Elementary or building another elementary school. Mr. Schwartz asked the Board to consider having long-lasting boundaries and to consider what may be best for the District.

President Seaks invited Mrs. Ash from the audience to address the Board. Mrs. Ash distributed copies of a handout with information she had gathered regarding the potential consequences of children in her Prairie Hills Subdivision neighborhood going to Jefferson Elementary instead of Prairie Rose Elementary. The information included the neighborhood school concept, students that walk or ride bike to Prairie Rose from her neighborhood, the distance to Jefferson Elementary, the distance to Prairie Rose Elementary, and traffic congestion. Mrs. Ash shared her appreciation of option 3. President Seaks thanked Mrs. Ash for the information.

President Seaks asked Mr. Schwarz what will happen in the District three years from now knowing the possibility of expanding Heart River Elementary and/or building a new elementary school. How does the District take into consideration the land north of the interstate? Mr. Schwarz responded that was a challenge every District faces and the Board would need to make the decision. He suggested making sure the schools are situated so that they are not overloaded with student population with the neighborhood concept. There are additional challenges with the forecast of continued enrollment.

President Seaks suggested an idea regarding redistricting that he wanted to explore. He proposed that only a child starting kindergarten this fall would be expected to attend school according to the new boundaries. If a family also had an older sibling attending elementary school, according to the old boundaries, the parent(s) would then have the option to have the children attend separate elementary schools or have both children attend school according to the new boundaries. Mr. Schwarz responded that the numbers at the schools would need to be looked at. There could be challenges with staffing the school without knowing the logistics. President Seaks explained the possibility of a STEM elementary school.

The elementary principals and Central Office administrators were invited to address the Board and provide their input. Prairie Rose Elementary Principal Sherry Libis liked the third option. Lincoln Elementary Principal Tammy Peterson noted that there will be students and families that will be impacted by redistricting. She had been a principal at Berg Elementary and explained Berg has a lot of potential and possibilities. Director of Student Services Dorothy Martinson liked the idea of developing boundaries in the neighborhoods around the schools and a sense of community with those schools.

Attendance Areas/RSP & Associates (cont.)

Knowing the magnitude and timeliness of the boundaries, President Seaks inquired when a decision should be made by the Board. Superintendent Sullivan recommended the Board make a decision regarding the elementary boundaries at its February Board meeting so that staff could be hired.

Captain Wilkie inquired if there had been any feedback from families who lived close to Lincoln Elementary but were placed at Roosevelt. He noted the difficulty of ascending water tower hill. Mr. Schwarz said he did not believe he had received any input from those families.

President Seaks suggested a staggered approach using option 3 and wondered what the numbers would be if kindergartners were to go to their assigned school and those in grades four and five be allowed to stay at their current schools and added the enrollment choice of Berg Elementary. He noted the multiple ramifications of controlled choice with transportation and Title I, etc. but wanted to explore any and all options before making a final decision. Mr. Schwarz concurred.

President Seaks asked for additional input from the audience regarding the presentation by Mr. Schwarz. Mrs. Angie Mackey addressed the Board. She explained she has three children. They attend the high school, the middle school, and Jefferson Elementary. In all three options, it indicates her son will go to a different elementary school. She asked the Board members to consider some soft boundaries. President Seaks thanked Mrs. Mackey for her input.

State Mandated Planning – North Dakota Century Code 15.1-07-26 requires school districts to invite the public to participate in a planning process addressing the effects that demographics might have on the district in the ensuing 3-5 years. Superintendent Sullivan addressed the Board and explained Mr. Schwarz’s presentation was part of that planning process. Dr. Sullivan provided information in a PowerPoint on current enrollment, projected enrollment through 2022, enrollment trends, instructional and administrative staffing, facility needs and utilization, academic and extracurricular programs, and District tax levies.

Dickinson High School currently offers 188 different courses and 43 extra-curricular opportunities. The current enrollment at Dickinson High School is 936 students with a projected trend of more students in the near future. There has been and continue to be planning sessions regarding the future of Dickinson High School.

Dickinson Middle School serves students in grades 6-8 and provides 25 extra-curricular opportunities. Heart River Elementary was designed for 12 classrooms and currently has 13 classrooms. Roosevelt Elementary is the oldest facility in the District and serves 12 classrooms. Jefferson Elementary had an addition in 2011 adding four additional classrooms. Lincoln also had an addition in 2011 adding seven additional classrooms. Both Lincoln and Jefferson are 3-section schools with three classrooms per grade level. Prairie Rose Elementary is a 4-section school with four classrooms per grade level.

State Mandated Planning (cont.)

Superintendent Sullivan provided slides with the enrollment trends for all grade levels. He noted the projections do not indicate the District was going to decrease in enrollment. The projections for kindergarten are based on live births at the local hospital and a ratio of those births is data projected into student enrollment for kindergarten.

Dr. Sullivan explained a slide with information for the tax levies for the past five years. Last year there was an increase of 15 mills. The largest portion of this increase was due to the middle school bonds on the tax roll. As the District moves forward, it may be necessary to request additional bonding capacity and additional bonds to address the continuing growth in the school district.

When Dr. Sullivan began at Dickinson Public, there were 12 kindergarten classrooms. Currently there are 18 classrooms. He presented a slide that showed the total number of available classrooms in the District at 96 in terms of capacity. Moving forward, if each incoming kindergarten class requires 18 classrooms, the total required classrooms needed in 2022 will be approximately 108. There is some urgency in the District looking to the facility needs.

President Seaks thanked Dr. Sullivan for the presentation and opened the floor up for input from the audience. He made several requests inviting members of the audience to provide input with no responses received.

Administrative Staffing – There was discussion regarding the instructional and administrative staffing needs that tie into the growth of the District. Dr. Sullivan said there would be a Budget Input and Development Committee Meeting in the near future where the requests for positions would be discussed.

High School Planning Process – Dickinson High School Principal Ron Dockter addressed the Board. On January 29 and 30th, Mr. Chris Gibbs with the DLR Group will be meeting with all departments at the high school to discuss in more detail the pathways for the high school. On January 24, there will be a planning meeting for the CT center with a number of businesses from Dickinson invited to attend and provide input. This will be an opportunity to learn more about the future in the workforce programs offered and partnerships with the community.

Adjournment – At 6:30 p.m., President Seaks declared the workshop adjourned. Following a short break, the Board held a Special School Board Meeting.

Brent Seaks, Board President

Kent Anderson, Business Manager

Twila Petersen, Secretary