

Dickinson Public Schools

Unapproved Special School Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 22, 2020; 5:00 p.m.
Central Administration Offices via a Zoom Webinar

The Dickinson Public School Board held a Special School Board Meeting on April 22, 2020, via a Zoom webinar. Board members present were: President Brent Seaks, Vice President Kim Schwartz, Board Member Michelle Orton, Board Member David Wilkie, and Board Member Jason Rodakowski. Others present were: Superintendent Shon Hocker, Assistant Superintendent Keith Harris, Director of Student Services Sheri Twist, Director of Instruction Melanie Kathrein, Business Manager Kent Anderson, RSP & Associates CEO Robert Schwarz, Heart River Elementary Principal Susan Cook, Dickinson High School Principal Kevin Hoherz, Human Resources Manager Meghan Ziegs, Dickinson High School Physics and Chemistry Instructor CaraLee Heiser, Dickinson High School Paraprofessional Debra Wilson, Southwest Community High School Principal Kristy Goodall, Prairie Rose Elementary Principal Nicole Weiler, Dickinson Press Reporter Kayla Henson, Jefferson Elementary Principal Sara Streeter, Dickinson Middle School Assistant Principal Shawn Leiss, Dickinson High School Social Studies Instructor Trevor Conrad, Dickinson High School Science Instructor Pete Dobitz, Prairie Rose Elementary Assistant Principal Richard Smith, Berg Elementary Principal Tracy Lecoe, Early Childhood Center Building Administrator Julie Jahner, Community Relations Coordinator Sarah Trustem, JE Dunn Operations Manager Marc Mellmer, and School Board Secretary Twila Petersen.

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

Calling of the Roll - President Seaks conducted a Calling of the Roll. Present via the Zoom webinar were Board President Brent Seaks, Board Member Jason Rodakowski, Board Member Michelle Orton, Board Vice President Kim Schwartz, and Board Member David Wilkie.

Presentation by RSP & Associates – Mr. Rob Schwarz, RSP & Associates CEO, addressed the Board. He provided background information including the school districts in North Dakota they have assisted. His team researched data to prepare a report analyzing the Dickinson Public School District enrollment and boundary. This report is in the format of a PowerPoint and is posted on the website utilizing the BoardDocs link.

The RSP & Associates Enrollment and Boundary Analysis includes information on the Dickinson City limits, attendance areas, areas where homes could be developed, tracking of population, housing, workforce income, birth rates, student inward and outward migration, and District building capacity.

Mr. Schwarz stated Dickinson Public Schools has seen a growth of approximately 900 students in a five-year outlook. His data showed the correlation between births and five years later kindergarten students. Sometimes the correlation is 80% of the births becoming kindergarten students five years later. Most recently, 60% of the previous births became kindergarteners.

The data shows enrollment is projected to increase due to a larger amount of kindergarten students in relationship to seniors. In one year, it was as much as 200 more incoming kindergarteners than outgoing seniors. Student inward and outward migration data shows a

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Presentation by RSP & Associates (cont.)

decrease in the number of students leaving the District in comparison to three years ago. Many larger class sizes are working their way through the system.

Building capacity projections were shared by Mr. Schwarz. According to the collected data, the elementary buildings will meet or exceed student capacity by the 2022-2023 school year. The Dickinson Middle School will meet or exceed its building capacity by the 2024-2025 school year. Dickinson High School will meet or exceed its capacity by the 2021-2022 school year.

Mr. Schwarz suggested the District address the capacity and find remedies at the elementary level during the current school year, find remedies for the middle school capacity during the 2021-2022 school year, and the high school capacity should have been remedied during the 2018-2019 school year.

Based on the caveat of the COVID-19 and the setbacks attached to the bottoming out of the oil prices, President Seaks asked Mr. Schwartz if he would make recommendations for adjustments to the enrollment numbers. Mr. Schwarz responded if the jobs maintain then the enrollment will maintain. He reiterated there are larger incoming kindergarteners in comparison to outgoing senior students. Mr. Schwarz explained the next steps to address the capacity component would be to try to reflect past the numbers and keep in mind the quality of spaces for programs, the number of sections in the building, and the flexible space available.

Mr. Schwarz provided options for addressing the capacity at the elementary buildings. One option was a new kindergarten center. This new center could serve 800 kindergarteners. A new kindergarten center would not address the capacity at one or more elementary schools nor the middle school or high school. Another option is a grades 5-6 center. This would not address some of the elementary school capacity issues and not address the high school capacity. The third option was building a new K-5 elementary school. This would resolve all the elementary level capacity but would not address the capacity issues at the middle school and high school.

President Seaks noted the three options did not have a price tag attached to them. Board members recognized, due to the current pandemic and oil prices, the student enrollment numbers were unpredictable. There are no indications of what the enrollment will be this fall.

Board members discussed when to pursue the next steps. Dr. Hocker recommended the Board consider the most accurate information available before COVID-19. He added the District could move forward without committing many resources. A construction manager would be very beneficial in providing some cost estimates that can help the District move forward. Once an option is narrowed down, there may be an architect in town that has a rough design for a school that meets the needs to make a decision this fall when the enrollment numbers are known and a better picture from the COVID-19 challenges. President Seaks suggested inviting the public to receive information and understand the options and weigh in on their opinions. Due to the current circumstances, he added this could be done online as a virtual format. Dr. Hocker suggested having the costs before asking for patron recommendations.

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Presentation by RSP & Associates (cont.)

Mr. Schwarz recommended receiving input from the teachers and staff. Those stakeholders could offer different implications for educational experiences and their input is just as important as the community input. The teachers and staff may not want another transition or division of another building.

Superintendent Hocker thanked Mr. Schwarz for the information presented and recommendations shared.

PowerPoint Presentation – Available on the website utilizing the BoardDocs link is a State Mandated Planning PowerPoint. Superintendent Hocker addressed the Board. He stated legislation requires school districts to provide to the public and receive input from the public regarding four areas. This requirement is every two years. All information regarding the four areas is satisfied in the two PowerPoints posted on the website.

Superintendent Hocker briefly reviewed the slides with information on academic and extracurricular programs, instructional and administrative staffing, and facility utilization. Assistant Superintendent Harris explained the aging buildings in the District and the funds required to upkeep the buildings. He also shared upcoming major building projects. There is approximately \$120,000-\$150,000 put into the high school every year. There is approximately \$225,000 necessary for remodeling the Berg Elementary kitchen exhaust and HVAC to stay online next year. There are numerous major building projects for the future each costing over \$100,000. The estimated cost for the high school boiler is \$5,000,000.

Business Manager Anderson explained the mill levies the District has assessed over the past five years.

Public Participation – Board President Seaks made three requests for input from the public. There was no input.

Adjournment – President Seaks thanked all attending and participating in tonight’s meeting. He adjourned the meeting at 6:22 p.m.

Brent Seaks, Board President

Kent Anderson, Business Manager

Twila Petersen, Secretary