

The Grinnell-Newburg Board of Education met in Special Session on September 11, 2013, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 927 4th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Grinnell, Iowa 50112.

Members Present: Jeff Smith, Doug Cameron, Barbara Brown, Jeff Knobloch, Leo Lease, and Claire Moisan, Carol Wilhelm. Also in attendance at the table: Superintendent Todd Abrahamson, Business Manager Lisa Johnson, and Board Secretary Susan Kriegel

Members Absent: none

Administrators Present: Jeff Kirby

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

President Smith called the special meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Board Secretary Susan Kriegel called the roll. Seven members were in attendance.

2. Agenda - Task Force Facilities Planning

A. Process

Superintendent Abrahamson stated Rob Schwartz and David Stoakes will be presenting a recommendation to the school board. The district hired the education consulting firm of RSP & Associates, to work with the new established Facilities Task Force committee. Rob Schwartz held six meetings with the committee. An additional meeting was scheduled prior to the public forum. The group began meeting in May, the average meeting attendance was forty committee members. The members were very committed, understood the process, with the message the public was always invited to the committee meetings. The committee had the responsibility of developing a recommendation for a long-range facility plan. The plan included elementary school grade configuration, middle school grade configuration, elementary school consolidation, middle school facility improvement priorities, high school facility improvement priorities, utilization of the school owned property, a re-purposing strategy for any school building that no longer serves as an attendance center.

The power point presentation to the school board discussed the following points:

B. Charge

C. Discovery

- a. Academic
- b. Financial
- c. Location
- d. Costs

There was a discussion question, why the suggestion for a 6th - 8th grade middle school? The poll results from the committee indicated they felt the 5th grade belonged with the

elementary students. The 6th-8th design aligns well with textbooks, the Common Core, PLC, and the research done on adolescent brain and adolescent development.

Why did an all campus not include the 11th Ave. property. Discussion indicated expensive costs for the infrastructure of water, sewer, and roads. The existing 11th building does not have a sprinkler system. Currently 11th Ave. has 1000 cars travelling per day and 6th Ave. has 3000 cars travelling per day.

The committee discussion regarding the location of the elementary building changed three times.

Board discussed should there be two studies, with one study on schools kept in small buildings and the other the results of campus consolidation. Would the evidence show a financial savings and an academic increase? Parents like to send students to small schools. It was also stated are potential newcomers to the community attracted to small buildings? It feels like this process is being rushed, we need to find out what is best for the community.

It was stated; there needs to be an end to the process, and what happens to the students during this process. There is the potential for a looming financial crises, if something is not done, staff could be cut. This is a huge expensive experiment and we do not know the projected enrollment. Will consolidation help achievement? There needs to be a plan to divert a potential school crises.

The board was reminded that former Business Manger Anderson said the current school finances are solid but the district is at a tipping point.

Audience discussion felt there was a lack of due process at the recent public forums; there was not a chance to cross examine the experts, others felt those in attendance felt more comfortable with the discussions held at each table. After the choices are narrowed down, experts can be part of the discussion.

A&J Associates projected a sixteen million dollar cost for each building to receive a new HVAC system.

If this project is postponed, nothing will be gained. Additional choices with fine arts have already suffered due to current finances.

Schwarz indicated the costs have increased since the DLR Report was published.

D. Task force Recommendation

The committee had the information, now is the time to create a timeline, the district financials are sitting at a tipping point, it will not take long to tip.

It takes courage to step up to make the right decision. It would be difficult to work with the task force committee for six more months, they had all the necessary information.

There is not enough room at Fairview to have all the K-2nd grades at that site. Now is the time to create a timeline. The district needs to do a better job in getting the building project information out to the public. Should the five buildings be moved to three buildings or two buildings? It is a priority decision on how many buildings can the district retain versus reducing the costs. The board needs to talk to the community members to get them involved in the process. At the public forum, the word has to get out, need to hear from the parents with school age children. A comment on whether to have a public forum for each building site; prek - 5, 6-8, and 9-12? This is a beginning and there is a need to build solid public trust.

3. Adjournment

Motion by Cameron, seconded by Lease to adjourn. Motion carried 7-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Board Calendar:

Special Board Meeting	6:00 p.m., September 18, 2013
Annual & Organizational Meeting	6:00 p.m., September 25, 2013