

November 16, 2020

The North Mahaska Board of Education met in regular session on November 16 at 6:00 p.m. in the elementary library New Sharon, Iowa. Those members present: Dirk Wilkin, Keith Foster, Arvin DeBoef, Margaret Ratcliff, and Michelle Sampson. Also present: Angela Livezey, Amber Goemaat, Renee Ferguson, Sarah McGriff.

Dirk Wilkin called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

A motion was made by DeBoef and seconded by Foster to approve the agenda with an amendment to change the bank discussion to an action item for a decision on a bank for the district. Motion carried.

A motion was made Ratliff by and seconded DeBoef by to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried.

COMMUNICATIONS

There was no written communication or public forum.

DESIGN CONSTRUCTION INTEGRATION GROUP – UPDATE

Ben Gannon presented an update on the ongoing construction project. He explained that the Area C roof decking is on and watertight with a membrane. They are still awaiting a metal roof, but the structure is watertight in the meantime. Brick will be laid soon. Area B steel is set on the connector link and ready to frame. Precast was also set today. The roof will be completed next.

Gannon also presented a budget update. The project began with a \$389,000 contingency. Current pending change orders amount to an estimated \$62,000. This combined with already approved change orders brings the total changes to around \$76,000. The project is currently in the most difficult point of construction, so Gannon assured that while this may seem like a large sum, the costs of changes to underground work and those having to do with the process of enclosing the building are the most costly that should be incurred.

Arvin DeBoef asked how soon the connecting link will be usable. Gannon informed the board that it should be ready around the end of December.

Dirk Wilkin asked how often DCI meets with Mrs. Livezey and her team. Gannon answered that they used to meet weekly, but have cut back to every other week while the large enclosure projects were occurring. Mrs. Livezey added that there is also a monthly owner meeting between DCI, the architect, and NM. They will begin meeting again weekly once the interior finishes begin.

OLD BUSINESS

COPYRIGHT LAWS POLICY

Students and staff will begin to see this policy when they log into their computers.

NEW BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF SBRC APPLICATION

Mrs. Livezey explained that the SBRC application is for ontime funding from the state for increased open enrollment out. A motion was made by Foster and seconded by DeBoef to approve the SBRC application in the amount of \$76,368. Motion carried.

REVIEW OF DISTRICT ASSET REPORT

The board reviewed the asset report over \$2,500 and had no questions.

SECOND READING OF BOARD POLICIES - 600 SERIES

A motion was made by DeBoef and seconded by Foster to approve the 600 series board policies. Motion carried.

FIRST READING OF UPDATED TITLE IX POLICY

Mrs. Livezey explained that this is a new policy based on new Title IX requirements. She noted that the policy must be updated online every year should there be a change of staff so that the appropriate staff member's contact information is included in the policy. No concerns were presented by the board.

APPROVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mrs. Livezey recommended approving everyone on the list pending their willingness to be a participant. The list includes the following suggested members: Jess Sanders, Jason and Leslie Van Wyk, Julie Van Utrecht, Lexi Van Utrecht, Carrie Houser, Amber Goemaat, Heather Shaw, Garrett Lamb, Sara Lamb, Carrie Kral, Mak Hicklin, Trace Goemaat, Nate Sampson, Mark and Bobbi Jo Harmon, Mark and Janine Moore, Jim Williams, Brett and Acacia Morris, Ben Carlson, Andrea Franje, Delayna Sneed, Merranda and Shawn DeGeest, Shawn and Amber Van Ryswyk, Rob and AMy Poe, Brandon Murphy, and Bryon and Christy Bellinger. The district increased the number of members in an effort to include a more broad inclusion of the community. A motion was made by Ratliff and seconded by Sampson to approve the School Improvement Advisory Committee pending the response of nominees and their willingness to participate. Motion carried.

APPROVE BANK AUTHORIZED SIGNERS - ANGELA LIVEZEY, DONNA SPOELSTRA, SARAH MCGRIFF

A motion was made by DeBoef and seconded by Sampson to approve Angela Livezey, Donna Spoelstra, and Sarah McGriff as authorized signers for the First State Bank accounts. Motion carried.

CONSIDER OPENING EARLY RETIREMENT

Mrs. Livezey gave a financial report (see Superintendent's report). She recommended opening early retirement based on the good financial standing of the district at this time. There have also been some key students move that may result in reduction of staff, and she noted that it would be better to reduce staff through attrition rather than layoff. In addition, COVID-19 has presented new stress to the school environment and there may be some employees who need to retire due to health reasons (both physical and mental). In addition, she noted that the district puts money into management to prepare for early retirement and it needs to continue to be used for this purpose.

A motion was made by Deboef and seconded by Ratliff to open early retirement for 2021. Motion carried.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

UPDATE ON WEIGHTED GRADING CONVERSATION

Mrs. Goemaat spoke with the committee regarding weighted grading, and the current thought is that some Indian Hills courses do not warrant a weighted grading system based on the level of rigor. Mrs. Goemaat is waiting to hear from other school districts regarding their process for weighted grading for Indian Hills courses. The AP courses that are offered do, however, meet a rigorous standard, but college credit is not guaranteed for these courses. Because students are not guaranteed college credit, the committee felt a benefit was needed for the AP courses. Weighted grading could be the added benefit for students who take AP courses. Currently, the committee does not have a proposal regarding weighted grading, but the discussion is in process.

Dirk Wilkin asked if the grading scale was being looked at in conjunction with weighted grading. Mrs. Goemaat answered that grading scales are subjective and that while North Mahaska may have a more difficult grading scale than some other schools, it is based on how the teacher interprets the scale.

Wilkin noted that the SIAC committee does discuss this every year, especially in relation to how the North Mahaska grading scale compares to other schools when it comes to scholarships. Mrs. Goemaat said that she would prepare a presentation on this subject for the SIAC committee.

UPDATE ON PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES

The elementary had 100% participation in virtual parent teacher conferences for grades K-5. 6th grade classes had 94% and 89% participation. Teacher's had mostly positive feedback regarding virtual conferences. The kindergarten teachers did give feedback that they would have preferred in-person conferences as a way to get to know the parents and provide support as their students adapt to being school aged. Jr. High teachers had a similar response to virtual conferences, as conferences are a prime opportunity for parents to get an introduction to the new teachers that their students have in secondary school.

UPDATE ON GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Mrs. Goemaat explained that two years ago the social studies progressions were changed. The state requirements are that each student take Government and U.S. History and local requirements are that students take World history, American History, and Government. Previously, students would take the first part of U.S. history during their eighth grade year, World History during their freshman year, the second part of U.S. history during their sophomore year, an elective their junior year, and Government during their senior year. Now, Civics will be taken in eighth grade, U.S. History to 1865 will occur freshman year, U.S. history from 1865 will be taken sophomore year, the elective course will remain for junior year, and Government will be taken during senior year. Because of this change, this year's sophomores and juniors will have to take electives to meet their social studies requirement. Mrs. Goemaat stressed that all students will still meet graduation requirements.

SPORTING EVENTS AND SPECTATOR CAPACITY

Based on Governor Reynold's proclamation which was released during the board meeting, all Jr. High sports are suspended through December 10. High school events are limited to two spectators per student. Gyms will also need to be cleared between each event (i.e. back-to-back JV and varsity or boys and girls games). Coaches are not to have spouses or family members in attendance and no staff members are to attend unless they receive a spectator ticket from an athlete. Mrs. Livezey expressed concern regarding limited funds with fewer spectators allowed in the venue and the need to still pay the officials and cover other necessary event costs. These spectator limitations also mean that the elementary and junior high Christmas concert will need to be held virtually in some format. A plan regarding this will be released at a later date. The South Iowa Cedar League has also released a mandate that any spectator that refuses to wear a mask at an event will be banned from events for 14 days. This extends throughout the South Iowa Cedar League.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

TRAFFIC FLOW UPDATE

Today, Mahaska County Supervisors set a date of December 7 for the first hearing regarding changing 135th St to a one way street in front of the high school. The district is also reviewing the electronic system that Oskaloosa uses for student release at the end of the school day to assist with traffic flow.

UPDATED CERTIFIED ENROLLMENT

Mrs. Livezey gave an update that certified enrollment is down by 1.94 rather than the originally presented 3.94. The school is on a trend of an 8% enrollment increase over the last five years.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Mrs. Livezey presented the board with financial projections from Forecast5 and IASB. She stressed that funding is strongly related to enrollment and presented charts of budget enrollments from FY2016-FY21 and projections through FY26. The enrollment projections may vary by up to 30 students between data from Forecast5, IASB, and the NM School District. In further trend review, Mrs. Livezey pointed out that the district's FY surplus/deficit and fund balance have steadily increased from year to year. She stressed that the goal is not to continue to increase the fund balance, but rather to provide the highest quality education possible while still considering the budget fluctuations that can occur year to year based on enrollment. Mrs. Livezey also noted that the district promised our constituents when we presented the bond this year that there would not be an increase in tax rates. Based on the tax rate summary presented, tax rates are projected to decrease through 2025. Mrs. Livezey also reviewed the district's unspent budget, stressing that the amount should always remain positive in order to maintain spending authority, which aligns with projections. In addition, Mrs. Livezey showed data that the solvency ratio is well above the suggested 5-15%. She summarized that the board's key takeaways should be that enrollment drives budget, enrollment is unpredictable, the district is in good financial shape, and the district does not need to use early retirement as a way to save dollars at this time.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

COMMENTS

Mrs. Livezey gave an update that 19 schools in the Great Prairie AEA are still utilizing face to face instruction.

Arvin DeBoef noted that given the review of our financials and rising unspent balance, that he hopes focus will continue to be placed on curriculum development.

Margaret Ratliff mentioned that she had a conversation with a woman from another community today who mentioned how much she misses attending North Mahaska events and how much she appreciates the district.

Ratliff also asked how the lunch program is going. Mrs. Livezey updated that the students are given three choices for food and on occasion change their mind before they get through the line and then that option will run out faster than expected. The process for this is being reviewed. Feedback was received from parents and students regarding the menu as well and changes are being implemented.

Keith Foster asked where we are at on the resurfacing of the track. Mrs. Livezey noted that she would have to go back and check the completion date, but that she expected we were 3-4 years away from resurfacing.

Dirk Wilkin mentioned that he has been asked why the school is not being shut down due to COVID-19. When asked this, he cites the data and information on the district website and suggests checking that information whenever there are questions regarding this issue. Mrs. Livezey noted that this is also included in the Warhawk megaphone every other week.

THANK YOU

The board would like to thank the staff for their perseverance, positive attitude, and dedication during these difficult times.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by DeBoef and seconded by Ratliff to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 p.m. Motion carried.

Sarah McGriff
Board Secretary

Dirk Wilkin
Board President

