

Board of Education Special Meeting Monday
March 25, 2019 7:00 PM High School Auxiliary Gym

Mike Bonacci: Present Mike Conrad: Present Jon Genoways: Present Kim Lukasiewicz: Present
Amanda Schrum: Present Kelli Shaner

ROUTINE BUSINESS

Call to Order
Note Nebraska Open Meeting Laws
Excused Absences
Roll Call

Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve Agenda as presented passed with a motion by Mike Conrad and a second by Mike Bonacci.

Mike Bonacci: Yea, Mike Conrad: Yea, Jon Genoways: Yea, Kim Lukasiewicz: Yea, Amanda Schrum: Yea, Kelli Shaner: Yea

REGULAR AGENDA

Superintendent Presentation: Dr. Johnson presented a Power Point regarding a plan to make the elementary building a three section building, which could require action to reset the option enrollment numbers for 2019-20, authorize hiring additional staff, initiate the process to modify the building, and direct administration to develop an interim schedule and space utilization plan for the building.

Public Participation: This is the portion of the meeting when visitors to the meeting may speak. Those wishing to speak to agenda items will give a show of hands. For the purpose of the meeting the board will allow up to 90 minutes for public participation. The 90 minutes will be divided by the number of individuals who have requested to speak by show of hands and/or each speaker will be limited to three minutes.

Josh Christensen, Fort Calhoun, Appreciates everything: Kindergarten enrollment-what happens if 10 district students move in? when did board decide in 2016 to 6th grade expansion to third classroom? costs of the Recreational Program? how does this affect high school capacity what are we going to do then; option looks like we are good right now: doesn't feel we have the capacity today so why increase it.

Pauline Petznick: State dollars being received may go away; infrastructure will need money; resident children should have more value than the option students

Josh Daly: Curious since you've been considering it since 2016: how to plan to pay for the addition? What is included? Equipment? Schematics-drawings? Where did schematics/drawings come from: need actual budget costs as typically a \$1.8 million project will be more: find a firm and put it out to general contractors to make sure we do not exceed the costs: understands the needs for option enrollment students: shared about his son and his move from OPS.

Monte Christensen: Graduated from Fort Calhoun; is building in the District: build if you want to go to school in the District; was a coach and has children in school; understands option has helped the budget but is the expansion necessary? Small percentage of growth the past 10 years; how does the census look for 3-5 year olds to see what would be the trend for Kindergarten for the future: what happens when families move in? He asked about the state numbers and stated fhe would like more information as there is not enough to make a good decision. Doesn't feel this should be based on only one year of Kindergarten numbers.

Liz Sevick: Not for or against: being cautious and doesn't want to lose the culture that's worked in the past as a lot of things done in the past may be harder to do: look at the statistical breaking point and finances to make sure it makes sense: make sure the decision isn't just about this year's circumstances; try for one year to see if the need is great for future classes. She is hoping all these things are considered.

John Christensen: What do you do if the State Aid for option students drops: could drop our income a lot, how to handle: talks with the city about ball diamonds: there is land to develop a 200-house development, and if this takes place could bring in 200-400 students: this expansion would not be sufficient and there would be no room for district students as the buildings would be full. Listen to the people in the neighborhood because they want a small school.

Dale Everswick: Spoke to board members and understands it is not an easy decision: in a unique capacity - he is a option bus driver and hates see to any of these students not here: few friends are not in favor: came 15 years ago town was different and school buildings were old and dated- so proud of the improvements and know they were done with a struggle: live 10 miles away from a vibrant town that is not moving north but in time Fort Calhoun will grow with the possibility of a new jr-sr high and more expansion: future generations of tax payers will be grateful that we use the resources we used. We should be using these resources we have and support the proposal.

Shaun Dennis: Has 2 students in system 3rd child who would not get in next year: should he pull out 2 to have his children at the same school: he feels that he is already part of the community and you shouldn't define your community by an arbitrary line: businesses depend on the money he spends in Fort Calhoun not to mention all the volunteer hours: option families aren't looking to swoop in and then skip out: parents and kids that want to be here.

Mike Jensen: Lives in the district and is here for the strong school: hard decision to make to turn a sibling away and if the education level remains the same for 63 as it does for 44 he has no problem with it: being in the district should not make a difference.

Dana Duros: Community one word he continues to hear: grew up here but can't afford to live in town: the school system is holding all this together and people are dying to get in: brings his children here and all benefit from the friendships: could cause a tunnel effect where we lose the community over a class size or building plan. That would be wrong.

Giovani Infante: Loves raising his kids in a small school/town: read past the budget and see the financials: community bonds and the students will keep the District vibrant: weighed things out and does have questions; it's a tough decision but the board needs to lay out the facts and educate the public.

Angie Kubicek: Understands it's a tough decision but there is missing information: wants to keep all her students together: what do teachers see as the challenges: asking the community to remember those who are option in attendance and make the best decision for the long run.

Eric Bendorf: Has had 3 kids graduate as option and this community is unique for its welcoming: understands about district residence, but after a year or two all were welcomed and included as part of the District: encourages the board to accept with reason and caution to expand and allow others to have the opportunity his family did.

Russ Schwartz: First optioned in 2012: "if you're not growing you're dying" and growing will allow us to keep our integrity: Fort Calhoun is amazing: agrees with some of the opposition points and the responsibilities the board has because you don't want to grow too fast to outgrow yourself: sends his kids to Fort Calhoun because it's a "private level education" without costing \$10,000: he is president of the Booster Club and option parents give as much as those who live in the community; he prays for

guidance of the board to make the right decision, take everyone's views into consideration, and answer all questions.

Steve Dethlefs: Gave congratulations on attendance and wants what is best for the district: serving 12 years with the board he knows how we got here-option students are part of that equation: no one is complaining where we are now: reality will be forced and phase growth is a measured approach; you can make it pay for itself and he sees no reason not to move forward with the plan.

Rachel Butterbaugh: Optioned in 5 years ago: "we change lives here": kids had a rough upbringing in other schools and "found love here": did eventually build in the District: option students want to be here. Thank you for everything the board does and good luck!

Josh Bernasek: Home schools 4 children and were unaware they were on the "wrong side of the district line": kids are in a lot of outside activities hoping eventually to get them into the schools: are heartbroken about not being in the district.

Natalie Cummings: PFE Secretary: option was not even a discussion: they have invested many hours in the schools: may have to pull students if siblings are not accepted: the district lines are a broken system: has confidence in the board to make the right decision: hopes families with siblings get in.

Anne Breitreutz: Moved into the district 22 years ago and has 3 kids in the schools: all these conversations seem to be about putting a dollar amount on the kids???

Public participation closed at 8:21.

John Genoways

- State Aid formula is a complex issue, will try to answer questions

- 6th grade "no vote"-he personally voted no to expanding to 6th grade-will talk to it more in closing

- High school is already at 63 regarding concerns class size limited to 63 and is more of a curriculum constraint than a space constraint, there is always dialogue about what we can offer, set only as a limit, numbers in grades have been higher in the past

- Plan done quickly: 2016-five of the board members were on the board, had passed the bond, community approved the bond, to make the beautiful building, once we had the high school footprint, we knew we had to do some things at the elementary, bond will not be paid off until 2039. This district needs option students to operate. Did have vision to use option as a means to get financially stable.

- Not voting for the 6th grade-Jon said was "wrong", he voted incorrectly now that he knows the data, now he understands the math better, and it sounds like we are good with option enrollment to fill the high school

- Historically they want to come in 6th grade and kindergarten for opt in

- Summer meeting-how can we get to a 3-section without someday needing option enrollment, do it in phases, will not get another bond approved, learned option enrollment is a wonderful alternative, gave us the ability to look at the footprint, as we get the money primarily for option enrollment we could phase in, plan done in 2016 did have contractor and they gave us hard numbers for the phases, 1st phase initially was \$1.1 million, currently \$1.8 million

- How do we pay for the addition? Get a clear understanding of what the costs will be. We have set aside money in savings and depreciation \$774,000. Money was set aside for a specific reason, but it can be borrowed against.

- Question about a trend-kindergarten 20 last year, 18 this year

- Development: phasing the elementary to give us a footprint; what if there are move ins--it is a risk, the numbers would be spread across three classes instead of 2; we do the best with what we have; we also have the best teachers in the state

- Building Development-the board is worried about if there are 200 more houses built in the district as it would be full with resident students; would have to ratchet down the option enrollment as we have

some ability to adjust the numbers; asking to build the elementary to the full footprint choosing to pay for it.

Amanda Schrum

- has been very vocal at school board meetings and has many questions she would like the board to talk about
- one of the biggest things is parents that live in district expressed concerns that their children aren't worth as much since they are not opt-in kids, how do we explain that to them?
- concerned about the discussed subdivision
- a parent said spending per kid out paces the amount received for option per the published budget

David Genoways

- quick rundown on how per pupil costs are calculated from budget figures
- information from the published budget was taken from the state website
- in this district historically we have always taken the unused budget authority for unforeseen expenses
- state budget process-state of Nebraska has in state statute how they control spending, two methods to control spending, set the maximum levy you can have 1.05 and budget authority that you cannot spend more than what you are allowed. Fort Calhoun historically \$1.8 of 10 million what it tells you is we don't have the ability to generate enough to spend our entire authority. The State legislature changed the way how they handle it. Almost every state district takes the unused budget authority into our number, it is for districts where they authority is way less than 1.05, they can raise it to spend, function of controlling spending for school districts. You can't take the total budget number and divide it by student number as there are other exclusions including for the last two years, the cost of the renovation. What you actually figure per student cannot be divided out from the large budget number. Those numbers can be supplied if wanted.

Amanda

- since new to the board believes they need to sit down in the summer and talk about what we need to do since it is a very fast plan, believes there would be more support
- nothing set to say the numbers will be bigger or smaller

Kelli Shaner

- only voting on what Dr. Johnson has proposed?
- Understands how important opt in is and wants to make the right decision
- has been discussed in several committee meetings
- we do know in Phase II we can pay for it out of our budget, in the stair-step approach through the next 4-5 years, sees that our district numbers have increased steadily
- as an educator she sees it important to keep the class numbers down especially K, 1st and 2nd to educate the kids
- questions are paying for Phase III. We haven't sat down and talked about it
- a bigger gym, drawing first time she's seen it, what about the existing gym, do we grow that do we have to move into another area
- understands Mr. Wagner will do a great job in moving the classrooms, scheduling, won't begin to understand the state aid formula
- 2011 floods decreased land values, state aid is heavy on property tax, will the floods affect our state aid
- other questions in Educational and Americanism Committee regarding technology. Do we have a plan going forward; not against going to three sections just have questions that may outweigh it

Mike Bonacci

- ran on being a steward of community's tax dollar, wanting to give the best education for all children,
- if we're not growing we're dying-10 years from now, smallest district with a small tax base, if we have a need use all of the resources we have available now to keep the school for a long, long time

Kim Lukasiewicz

- family grew up in this school district, husband graduated from Fort Calhoun and was impressed by the number of activities he was in, wanted to send her kids to the district, community was strong
- when opt-in parents spoke she felt their pain of them being ripped apart
- can we afford this, how will the music schedule look, the gymnasium, teachers being overwhelmed
- from what she is hearing there needs to be some transparency of what we are proposing
- she feels the strong community, welcoming, and can't say enough about this school

Mike Conrad

- only ran last year for his last term as all of his kids have graduated because he wanted to make sure some things were completed
- heard a lot of comments, thanks to everyone for coming tonight
- very few people come to the school board meetings, transparency is at the meetings
- everyone is so concerned about being active in the district and being a part of it
- not a fast plan, was well-thought out, visionary, able to negotiate with the contractor to put the footings in at the last update so we wouldn't have that expense
- comments about dollars, hates putting dollar amounts on kids, kids vs. emotions
- primary purpose is to educate kids
- hadn't made his mind up before tonight and has met with several parents
- received an unsigned letter sent to his house which he considered disrespectful and cowardly. There was no signature or return address. no courage to sign the letter, no return address and finds it insulting: it served as a negative, influential move
- our school's test scores: when we were financially strapped, part of the committee that did the levy override, told the story, our test scores are some of the best in the state of Nebraska, the sooner we can get a child in our district the better they can do
- not afraid of change, would love to see some additions, let's just kick that can one more year, several years ago we kicked that can to not absorb the one-room schoolhouse
- grew up in Omaha and wife is from here, moved here 29 years ago and is vested in the community; they love the community feeling, but it can also be hurtful
- watched many of the audience members grow up
- want to make sure we continue the mission of the Fort, once the kids are here they aren't option or in district they are Fort Calhoun

Jon Genoways

- presented numbers based on per student as he wanted to make a decision based on data
- go to an answer of why does a district use option
- apologized that we are labeling any child with a dollar amount
- he has lots of respect for Administration, teachers, and Dr Johnson, believes it takes courage to bring up difficult decisions and wants to thank Dr. Johnson for all the time he has spent
- means a lot when administration, teachers and superintendent suggest something
- history tells us that option enrollment for the state aid and TEOSSA numbers could pose a risk, it's important in the state aid formula that you are growing
- sounds like for the most part we are fine with students coming to our district until 6th grade
- academically proven if they come to us sooner their test scores are higher, socially it's right thing
- apologizes that it is seemingly fast; we've had a plan but weren't prepared to act on it
- a lot of concerns prior to this conversation about class size 24, 25; this plan moves class sizes to 21
- hopefully you've read the troubles Blair is going through, their kids are coming to schools like Fort Calhoun and Arlington
- plan is going to be tight, has faith in our staff but we have a year to think about what we're going to do, building plan is out there
- question in my head is what if we don't have the numbers out there? It's a risk, let them in at kindergarten instead of 6th as there is a financial, social, and academic benefit to let that happen

Dr. Johnson

- wants to close by expressing his feelings
- families have come back to Fort Calhoun Schools to raise their families and gives him great pride that we have alumni coming back to raise their families
- we are building schools, programs, hiring the best teachers
- would love to have a crystal ball to predict the future
- does not have a dog in the fight, his children are grown and raise
- his ideas are build kids up, not buildings, we educate kids, not reduce them to dollar amounts, the goal at the end of the day is that when he leaves the district and community continue to grow
- the board has a decision to make and has presented the board with what he thinks he needs to be done to build this district

Moved that the board of education accept Dr. Johnson's recommendation for the plan to make additions to the elementary building, which could require action to reset the option enrollment numbers for 2019-20 in kindergarten and 2nd grade, authorize hiring additional staff, initiate the process to modify the building, and direct administration to develop an interim schedule and space utilization plan for the building. Failed with a motion by Mike Conrad and a second by Mike Bonacci. Discussion: Shaner would like to change the motion or make an amendment. Would like to look at lowering kindergarten enrollment to 46. Amanda would like to lower enrollment to 23 per class and would like to give the board time. Would still like to look to build in 2020. Conrad understands Amanda's idea but wants to know who is going to tell the parent of the one option student is going to be denied. Every year the numbers are set. One of the biggest comments he keeps hearing is let's study it. This is not a new concept, not something that is newly discussed.

Mike Bonacci: Yea, Mike Conrad: Yea, Jon Genoways: Yea, Kim Lukasiewicz: Nay, Amanda Schrum: Nay, Kelli Shaner: Nay

Amended Motion: Moved that the board of education increase the Kindergarten class size to 46 from 42 for 2 sections in order to give us time this summer to discuss Phase II and Phase III failed with a motion by Shaner and seconded by Schrum.

Discussion: Genoways said other grades have siblings that Dr. Johnson's plan allows in, and the recommendation is looking toward the future. He personally likes that instead having them have to wait until 6th grade.

Nay, Mike Bonacci: Nay, Mike Conrad: Nay, Jon Genoways: Yea, Kim Lukasiewicz: Yea, Amanda Schrum: Yea, Kelli Shaner:

Lukasiewicz asked if the public needs additional information to make this decision.

Amanda-feels like if we move it to 46 and the 2nd grade to 57 it gives us time, feels the public wants more information, would not be the one in standing the way, short-term solution. Amended

Amended Motion: Moved that the board of education set kindergarten at 46 and 2nd grade at 57 (3 sections) failed with a motion by Schrum and seconded by Shaner.

Discussion: Jon is concerned we will add a staff without the revenue to pay for it. Schrum believes this was initially the plan. Conrad questioned the amendment.

Dr. Johnson suggested the action would be for 3 sections at the kindergarten, 3 sections at 2nd grade and then go to the building. Genoways said the motion is to pursue investigation of the building.

Lukasiewicz had questions about the music teacher and if it needs to be included in the motion.

Mike Bonacci: Nay, Mike Conrad: Nay, Jon Genoways: Nay, Kim Lukasiewicz: Yea, Amanda Schrum: Yea, Kelli Shaner: Yea

Amended Motion: Moved that the board of education set kindergarten at 63 (3 sections) and 2nd grade at 54 to allow a sibling in and table the rest of the building discussion until summer failed with a motion by Genoways and seconded by Conrad.

Discussion: Schrum said leaving that 2nd grade class so big is scary as it could get up to 30.

Genoways said we have the space to go to 3 sections in both kindergarten and 2nd grade. Shaner

wants to bring in 3 sections of second grade but leave Kindergarten at 46. Schrum asked for clarification on the 2nd grade numbers. Mike Bonacci: Yea, Mike Conrad: Yea, Jon Genoways: Yea, Kim Lukasiewicz: Nay, Amanda Schrum: Nay, Kelli Shaner: Nay

Amended Motion: Moved that the board of education set the limit for option enrollment for kindergarten at 63 with 3 sections and for 2nd grade at 63 with 3 sections and no further building discussion passed with a motion by Conrad and seconded by Bonacci.

Mike Bonacci: Yea, Mike Conrad: Yea, Jon Genoways: Yea, Kim Lukasiewicz: Yea, Amanda Schrum: Nay, Kelli Shaner: Nay

Discussion And Possible Action To Consider Option Enrollment Limitations: Included in original motion and no further action was taken.

Discussion And Possible Action To Authorize Additional Staff, Initiate The Process To Modify The Building, And Direct The Administration To Develop An Interim Schedule And Space Utilization Plan For The Building. Included in original motion and no further action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Special Meeting was adjourned at 9:54 PM.