

# **SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, May 31, 2007

Chair Pagel called the special meeting of the Dover-Eyota Board of Education, District #533, to order at 7:37 PM in the Dover-Eyota High School Media Center. Board members present: Don Andring, Judy Brandt, Dan Johnson, Ed Kaehler, Gene Loftus, Ron Pagel and Superintendent Bruce Klaehn. Absent: Gary Pedersen. Also in attendance were Sue Bedtka, Chris Berg, Kristi Blattner, Sue Cordes, Sheri Crowson, Carolyn Drude, Wayne Ellringer, Kristine Hanson, Dale Heintz, Bridget Ideker, Chris Johnson, Nancy Kieffer, Patti Lund, Greg Meyer, Deborah Rathman, Todd Rowekamp, Sara Smith, Trisha Studer, Jeanne Svobodny and Peggy Swenson.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

## Approve Agenda

A motion was made by Member Kaehler, seconded by Member Loftus and carried unanimously to approve the agenda.

## Facilities Assessment Committee Communication with the Board

Chair Pagel welcomed the Facility Assessment Committee members. The Board members and each individual attending introduced themselves.

Supt. Klaehn provided a summary of the Facilities Committee's work to date including determining the elementary building space needs, discussing a middle school arrangement, moving preschool programs to Eyota and the tax impact of a building referendum.

Facilities Assessment Committee members shared their thoughts with the Board:

- Students get limited physical education in comparison to area districts; in fact, we were second to the bottom.
- More classroom space is needed to accommodate the 4-5 section grades.
- Concerns were expressed about crowding in the elementary including the lunchroom, hallways, bathrooms, stairways, and special areas.
- Also mentioned was safety concerns in the parking lot drop-off area, lack of space for buses, and limited parking.
- The committee discussed the placement of 6<sup>th</sup> grade and wondered what the community wished (remain at the elementary or be placed in the high school).
- Being on the committee had been an educational experience for many as they learned about the needs, the impact of open enrollment, etc.
- Special computer and science areas are becoming more common and something the district needed to consider.
- The committee had reviewed several options and had realized that the plan had to be realistic, thus, they had scaled the proposed project down from \$10M.
- There was concern about the overall cost, the tax impact and the need to make a proposed bond issue as accurate as possible to avoid overruns as happened in the last project.
- It was felt that it was necessary to build now since building costs would no doubt continue to rise in the future.
- The committee needed direction from the Board. If a middle school concept were to be instituted it would affect the type of building plan that the committee would recommend. Many committee members were not educators and felt that the School Board would need to determine whether a middle school concept should be instituted.
- The public still did not understand the financial impact of open enrollment. If open enrollment was eliminated and we lost that funding, how would it affect taxes?
- There is a need to look into the future, not only to solve current space issues but to also formulate a long-term plan.
- The public needs to be educated about the needs and the possible solutions, including the consequences should a bond referendum fail.
- Concern was expressed whether this was a good time in our economy (war, sanitary sewer situation and a lot of things that will impact the taxes) to seek a building referendum.

- There was also a concern about going to general public and saying we need a gym and more parking as they don't seem as educational as classrooms.
- Concern had also been expressed about eliminating educational classes in Dover (i.e., moving preschool programs to the elementary).
- The community needs a good feeling about the project so that they are willing to accept the additional taxes. It was recommended that a good proposal with a lot of information be released so that people were willing to accept it.

Comments and questions from the Board Members:

- In response to a question from Member Kaehler (also on the Facilities Assessment Committee), the committee indicated that they did see a need for an expansion project and that the proposals would address the concerns.
- Member Johnson relayed that also at stake were strategies for the future and the impacts would be difficult to predict. He added, "Doing nothing is not an option as we need a functional facility and need to address the issues. We need to be fair to the students, families and taxpayers and have a facility that is well functioning. There were issues when the elementary was built that are now apparent and we now need to fix."
- Chair Pagel (also on the Facilities Committee) relayed his appreciation to the committee for their time and effort. He said, "There was a lot of 'out of the box' thinking...daring to dream. Maybe we can't afford everything, but at least we need to consider them. Hopefully, you have a better understanding of the educational system, how it functions and shortcomings in regard to our facilities."

Deb Rathman of the DLR group commended the Facilities Committee for the time and thoughtfulness they had brought to the meetings and for being open minded when viewing the various options. She provided the following conceptual proposed options:

**Option D – \$9M**

- house PK-6
- include an additional two-story pod with 12 classrooms, two music areas and a science/discovery area
- include new gym and lobby and additional kitchen/serving/receiving space
- art could expand into a second area
- include renovations to provide additional restrooms in the PK-K area
- include parking lot improvements

**Option E – \$7.45M**

- house PK-5 (grade 6 would be at the high school)
- include an additional two-story pod with 8 classrooms, two music areas and a science/discovery area
- include new gym and lobby and additional kitchen/serving/receiving space
- art could expand into a second area
- include renovations to provide additional restrooms in the PK-K area
- include parking lot improvements

**Option F - \$5.35M to \$5.57M**

- 3 options
  - F.1 -- new gym and lobby, additional kitchen area but less than Option D&E, one-story pod with 4 additional classrooms, renovation, parking improvements
  - F.2 -- new gym and lobby, additional kitchen area but less than Option D&E, 5 additional classrooms on front of building, renovations and parking lot improvements
  - F. 3 -- new gym and lobby, additional kitchen area but less than Option D&E, 5 additional classrooms and a breakout space on east side of building, renovations and parking lot improvements
- all would house PK-5 and assume that grade 6 would remain at the high school

**HS Option - \$1.7M to \$2M**

- an expansion to add a two-story, 6 classroom block on the west side to allow a middle school (grades 6-8) elsewhere in the building
- restructure west parking lot (an additional \$337,770)

Kristine Hanson and Carolyn Drude of Ehlers and Associates provided tax impact and associated financial information.

Ms. Hanson said that Minnesota had the most complicated property tax system. She explained the trends and various measures of property taxes, provided an analysis of a possible structure for debt service payments and levies for various bond issue amounts and how they would affect existing commitments and the proposed new debt.

Mrs. Drude explained that in January, Moody's Investor Services had reviewed Dover-Eyota and upgraded their underlying rating, which would attract more bond bidders. She indicated that this increased rating could be credited to the school board and administration.

Mrs. Drude talked about the history of bond rates, which are currently near the lowest seen in 40 years, and analyzed the tax impact of a proposed bond issue. She indicated that losing open enrollment students would mean loss of state aid, an increase in resident taxes, and an increased operating levy. Open enrollment students were helping the local tax base. We could not assume to replace the open enrollment revenue with an operating levy because there is a cap, as well as the requirement of voter approval.

A Board and committee discussion included the following:

- In response to a question from Member Kaehler about the use of a new science discovery area, it was indicated that 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers were not yet certain how they would use such a space because they would have to take their equipment to and from the area.
- Currently, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students switch classes, the teaching staff does a lot of collaboration and are doing some middle school concept activities.
- It could be more effective if 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade were combined into a middle school and would allow more teachers to be middle school teachers avoiding licensure concerns.
- The middle school concept was a transitional phase between elementary school and high school.
- The tax impact of any bond referendum was discussed by the School Board.
- It was the consensus of the Board that Option D would best solve the current space issues. The option included room for preschool and early childhood programs, meaning that those programs could leave Dover at some time in the future.
- It was felt that direct and solid information would need to be presented to the public.
- Current open enrollment could not be discontinued; however, limits could be placed on new open enrollment.

It was the consensus of the School Board that the Facilities Assessment Committee should reconvene, focus on a PK-6 plan in the \$9M range and bring a proposal back to the Board. It was felt that there should not be a rush to pass a building referendum since education of the public would be required

#### Technology Consideration

Supt. Klaehn described a staff computer plan and indicated that 44 teachers would prefer laptop over desktop computers. The advantages included the creation of a mobile learning environment, significant movement toward constructivist teaching and gains in computer use for academic purposes and more cooperative learning. Each laptop would cost \$527 more than a desktop.

A motion was made by Member Andring and seconded by Member Johnson to approve the purchase of laptops instead of desktops for teaching staff who request them.

A discussion ensued including requirements in order to obtain a laptop (reasonable expectations such as being required to attend some technology classes). A vote on the motion carried unanimously.

#### Adjournment

A motion was made by Member Kaehler, seconded by Member Brandt and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 11:35 PM.

Daniel A. Johnson, Clerk  
CB