

School Board Meeting Minutes

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #912

MILACA, MINNESOTA 56353

Monday, January 22, 2018 7:00 pm

Dahlager Theater

A special meeting of the Board of Education of Independent School District No. 912, Milaca, Minnesota was held at the Dahlager Theater on Monday, January 22, 2018 for the purpose of a facilities discussion and to determine how to proceed.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Jeff Larson.

Upon roll call the following members were present: Jere Day, Sarah Ploeger, Todd Quaintance, Bryan Rensenbrink, Aimee Struffert, Jeff Larson. Those absent: Brandon Baker. Superintendent Tim Truebenbach was also present. B. Baker arrived at 7:07 p.m.

Changes to Agenda:

IV. Items on Which Board Discussion and Action are Required

B. Approval of the Projects Selected for Review and Comment as Required by MN §123B.71 (addition)

Motion by B. Rensenbrink, second by J. Day, to approve the agenda with the above change. Motion carried.

Rob Brown, from Nexus Solutions, provided a brief overview of the facility concepts being considered:

- Tech Ed Remodel
 - o Option 1 – add cooler to the botany classroom, reconfigure and add taxidermy space, add storage in the Agricultural classroom, add a Fab Lab, and add a project bay sized to fit 5 sheds connected to the construction trades space
 - o Option 2 –Option 1 plus additional 1000 ft²
- Auditorium
 - o Option 1 – 600 seating capacity, scene/costume shop, dressing room, and essentials
 - o Option 2 –Option 1, with 800 seating capacity and additional 3000 ft²
- Field House/Gymnatorium
 - o Gymnatorium - remodeling existing high school gymnatorium to seat approximately 1300, and acoustics and lighting enhancements
 - o Field house 1 – 3 stations/basketball courts, community meeting room with kitchenette, locker rooms, and upper level walking track
 - o Field house 2 –Field house 1, with 4 stations/basketball courts, lobby, and concession stand
 - o Field house 3 –Field house 2, with walking track on ground level. This space can be used for more than basketball, such as volleyball and tennis.
 - o Field house & auditorium concept – Field House 3 with a 600 or 800-seat capacity. Lobby is double in size from field house 3.
- Ball Field – *needed if an auditorium or field house is built*
 - o New Complex Ball Field – 121st Ave. & Hwy 23. Access off 121st Ave. Three fields, one with lighting. Lighting added to varsity softball field on campus.
 - o Johnson Ball Fields – Three fields, one with lighting. Remodel existing barn for concessions and storage. Lighting added to varsity softball field on campus.

Public Hearing

The Board heard comments from the community regarding the proposed projects:

Phil Herwig: The cost of the projects had not been presented. A legitimate discussion cannot be held without knowing the costs. Also questioned the cost the district has incurred for the surveys and planning process. – *Tax impact information was distributed after this comment.*

Jeremy Mikla: Recently visited the Whitney Center at St. Cloud and provided the Board pictures of a three station field house with a ground level walking track. The track size is too small, turns are too tight, and lane width would not be feasible for athletic team conditioning or jogging.

Jason Horrigan: Concerned with the costs of the project and the ability to maintain current facility. Support is needed for staff to prevent the current building from falling into disrepair. The current building is not being well maintained: ceiling tiles falling out, garbage cans in hallways catching water from leaking ceiling pipes, and leaking faucets in the bathroom. Adding to the facilities will create more costs. The costs being provided are for building the structure; he has concerns about the added cost of furnishing and maintaining a new space.

Gail Kulick: Former Board Member. Historically there have not been regrets for big expensive projects. The school is the backbone of the community and if we do not keep investing in it, people will not want to live here. The 800-seat auditorium is a better option, since there are more than 800 people that come to the Veterans Day concert.

Judy Montag: The Milaca community has walking paths, bike trails, and parks that no one uses. If the community is not going to use the facilities, it should not be built. People are not going to move to Milaca because taxes keep increasing.

Ron Rinkle: Former Board Member. He is frustrated he has to drive 44 miles (round trip) to vote at Milaca City Hall. If the community has to drive 44 miles to vote, they will vote no. He supports part of the project, but the costs have to be taken into consideration. He supports reinstating an activities bus, which would give more students the opportunity to participate in after school activities.

Phil Herwig: He questioned the cost of the study. He has been told students in shop classes have to pay additional costs. The district would be better served by providing students with the equipment they need for school, instead of the proposed projects. He questioned the redundancy of the district building some of these spaces when the needs can be met through technical colleges, The Phoenix banquet center, and the community center being built by the Milaca Evangelical Free Church. People move to communities looking for opportunity. Milaca is not conducive for businesses, based on tax rates and poverty levels. School district enrollment has not increased substantially over the years. The Board is asking for a \$20M project, when district budget is \$19M.

Mike Larson: Will the baseball fields be open to the public? If so, who is going to maintain and watch over them 24 hours a day? Who would pay for and maintain the equipment of a community fitness center? If the community center will open hours beyond district hours, who is going to employ that person?

Sheryl LaClare: Concerned with the condition of current facility such as the swimming pool, leaking roofs, and sound quality in the band rooms. She believes the proposed projects are great, but the district also needs to maintain current facility.

Andy Nelson: Teacher. Milaca is the only school in our conference without an auditorium. Every time there is a performance, another group is displaced and people get angry. Space is needed to provide opportunity for kids.

Phil Herwig: Member of the planning committee of the current complex. He has heard comments regarding inadequate maintenance of current facility and does not understand how the district wants to add \$20M more of buildings when the current one is not adequately maintained. The Board wants more money from taxpayers for new projects when they cannot maintain the current facility.

Chris Nord: Attended all Town Hall discussions. When he is out in the community he has heard more positive comments than negative. Maintenance costs and staffing costs need to be included in the thought process of building a new facility. He asked if this is a true community center could the cost be shared with the community. To prepare for the future and encourage families to move to Milaca more incentives have to be provided. Although tax is painful he would prefer to invest in the kids of the region.

Megan Hermanson: Birth to 5-year Teacher. Asked the Board to remember the younger families when considering community rooms, lounges, and lobbies. The concepts apply towards High School families and retaining those students, but remember that the ECFE program draws young students and the district should also work to retain them.

Andrew Nelson: He questioned arguments about the district not maintaining the current building. Problems come with large buildings and custodians work hard address those problems. When you are at the school daily you see that.

Dillon Hayes: Mille Lacs County has some of the highest taxes in the state. Adding these projects is an additional cost, which will be detrimental to attracting people into the community. The district mission statement deals with educating, empowering, and engaging students. The proposed improvements are aimed toward the community. The district should pursue projects aimed towards the students to fulfill their mission statement.

Josh Nelson: It appears the projects are well thought out with the use of experts and community involvement. His only advice is to think about the future to make sure the facility will meet all needs. He inquired about what the process looked once the public hearing was complete.

Ron Rinkle: He hopes the Board looks at the project conservatively and gets the most for the money. He does not support outlying ball fields because he believes that is a community project and should be taken up by the community.

Audrey French: English Teacher and Theater Advisor. Thanked the Board for their consideration of students by establishing an \$80 cap on activities, free admission making attending events effortless for families, and finding ways to give money back to families. Hopefully the community will put money back into the schools. When other schools come to Milaca for contests they have negative comments about the Dahlager theater and she has to prepare the kids on how to deal with these comments.

Chris Nord: He has heard in the community concern about the land purchases and how the land cannot or is not being utilized. If the addition was built, the baseball fields would be moved to the district owned property not being utilized. The district would be making use of resources already procured. The tax impact list includes improvements that have not been previously discussed. He supports a new structure in some capacity, but would like some focus on existing improvements before building a large new structure.

Audrey Buturian-Larson: 2017 graduate who attended Milaca since ECCE. She was involved in band, theater, choir, and sports. She performed in the gymnasium that was faulty and inadequate. She performed in the theater and remained calm while other schools commented negatively. When she was in sports she had late practice because of space issues. Even with these faults, the school thrives. How great could these activities be if the facilities were improved?

Chelsie Skorich: Teacher. She is not from Milaca, but has never felt unwelcome. When comparing and contrasting with other schools, remember kids are flexible. They want to be in band and theater and are willing to do what it takes even if it is not convenient. New facilities would benefit the community. The kids that are here now will be here in the future.

Bernie Bolt: His kids currently attend Community Christian School, but in the future will attend Milaca. He responded to the comment regarding the suggestion of redundancy of the trades program and technical colleges. He went into the workforce as a builder after high school and currently is a company owner. He has difficulty finding qualified employees. He believes it would be a great experience for students to have the opportunity to try the trade fields before graduating high school.

Kelly Jo Herwig: Concerned the projects will be creating additional tax burden that will be passed on to those living in rental properties. Most renters are single parents who cannot afford an increase in rent.

Trisha Kotsmith: Milaca graduate with two daughters attending Milaca. It is important to make the school a place where kids, parents, and community members feel welcome and where they want to come.

Andy Nelson: Teacher. There are places with higher taxes and there has been a shift in society where if we want kids to have things that are expected, the local community has to support it. The community has to provide since Milaca does not get as much money per pupil as other districts.

Board Discussion on Public Hearing Comments:

B. Baker: The maintenance concerns were addressed on the tax impact sheet. Door controls, roof replacement, windows and floor repairs are part of the discussion. A building maintenance plan has been developed based on current needs, future needs, and long term future needs. As a student he had spent time on the stage and knows the concerns of that space. He thanked the community for coming.

A. Struffert: There is a maintenance plan in place and the building looks good. The facility plan started before Superintendent Truebenbach came to Milaca. Former Superintendent Hanson was working on an ALC/RRN complex, but the public wanted a field house. She is not sure how to proceed, but knows the district needs something. The district needs to keep improving and creating opportunities for the students.

T. Quaintance: The community input has ranged from not doing projects, maintenance concerns, and proceeding with the projects. The Board will identify what they believe will meet the needs of the district. There have been some comments made that some of the concepts are not educational. These comments are offensive to the educators who will use those spaces everyday to educate the students.

S. Ploeger: At the Truth and Taxation meeting the Business Manager explained that Milaca's total debt is quite low. Milaca has half the school debt that the Foley district has, but they have a lot to offer and draw many Milaca students into their district.

B. Rensenbrink: Milaca is a community who has made the best with what they have. The Board also does that by working hard to make the best decisions with what funding is available. Think about what Milaca could do if we had more.

Items on Which Board Discussion and Action are Required

Mr. Brown led a process to narrow the options to one per category: Tech Education Expansion, Auditorium, Field House, Ball Field Complex.

Tech Ed Expansion

Option 1- Tech Ed Expansion - *add cooler to the botany classroom, reconfigure and add taxidermy space, add storage in the Agricultural classroom, add a Fab Lab, and add a project bay sized to fit 5 sheds connected to the construction trades space*

Option 2 – Additional space - *Option 1 plus additional 1000 ft²*

Board Comments on Tech Ed Expansion

J. Day: Milaca should provide basic introduction to the trade fields. He strongly supports the Tech Ed expansion. The district needs to take care of all students, not just those who pursue a four-year degree.

B. Baker: He was a student when Career and Technology funding was cut. Milaca needs to provide a foundation for students who are interested in the trades. The community survey results show the Tech Ed expansion is most strongly supported by the community. He intends to work strongly to make sure it is built right to support current and future programs.

B. Rensenbrink: At the forefront he did not think Tech Ed space was an issue. Career and Technology programs were still at Milaca when he graduated, but now many of the programs are not available for his son as he is contemplating what to do after high school.

A. Struffert: Her son is a diesel mechanic and there is a shortage of qualified people in the field. Milaca needs to blend education with career and technology education. She supports the bigger Tech Ed expansion option.

S. Ploeger: Mr. Patnode has been working on the Tech Ed collaboration with the Technical colleges and believes this plan is a step toward supporting that collaboration.

T. Quaintance: He supports these programs and the district needs to continue supporting these programs, but does not know if the larger sized expansion is needed. The survey shows support of Tech Ed expansion, but he is concerned the larger option is not necessary or mindful of the costs and tax impact.

B. Rensenbrink: The community helped develop the district's belief statements which in part states: "We believe in high quality education and innovative opportunities for all students." and "We believe in providing the technology and flexible learning spaces necessary for a 21st century education." The community survey shows the community supports technical education. He supports either of the Tech Ed expansion options, but considering future needs, the larger expansion may be a good option.

J. Larson: He has some of the same concerns expressed by T. Quaintance. Milaca has looked at ways to partner with community colleges and technical colleges, and getting close to making that partnership, therefore may need the larger expansion, but not confident it is known what to do with the larger space. He is supportive of it, but the larger concept was only recently brought to the Board for review.

T. Quaintance: If doing the larger expansion and the community supports the project the Board would have to add back the programs that have been reduced. If adding that much space, he assumes the Board will add sections to those programs.

B. Baker: Replied to T. Quaintance. Some of the expansion would house programs currently offered and bring them indoors. He does not envision the space being used solely for the shed project, but also to open space for other programs, such as small engines, allowing them to bring equipment inside. He believes concerns about existing programs filling the space are valid, but feels that by giving teachers access to additional space they will be able to offer more opportunities and will also use the space for current programs.

The Board voted to approve the Tech Ed expansion with the additional 1000 ft² of space.

Board recessed for a break at 8:48 p.m. and reconvened at 9:00 p.m.

J. Larson commented the goal of the evening is to determine the scope and top end cost of the project, which will be submitted to the Department of Education for Review and Comment. The Board will determine at a later date if the district will go to the community for a vote on the projects. A. Struffert clarified the district could build something smaller than what is approved in the Review and Comment, but cannot build something that exceeds what is submitted.

Auditorium

Gymnatorium/Auditorium Options

S. Ploeger: A gymnatorium is not conducive to concerts and is not the most cost effective option.

A. Struffert: In the gymnatorium design, half the audience will have to be turned in their seats to view the performance and the dressing rooms and storage areas are inadequate.

T. Quaintance: No matter what is done the acoustics in a gymnatorium feel like you are in a gym.

B. Baker: It is not conducive for concerts or theater performances.

B. Rensenbrink: A gymnatorium is still a gym.

T. Quaintance: He would like a 1200-seat facility. He attended the first event at the new Zimmerman facility that has a 500-seat capacity and the community was upset it was not bigger. If the district is going to build an auditorium they should look to the needs of the future. He is concerned a 800-seat capacity auditorium may not be large enough.

J. Day: Future visions are always too small. If enrollment increases to 3000, space will be cramped.

J. Larson: Monthly tax impact from a 600-seat to 800-seat auditorium is \$0.38/month on \$100K home. He believes the district should look toward the 800-seat option.

B. Rensenbrink: Supports the 800-seat option. He does not want to go back to the voters because it was built too small the first time.

J. Larson: Milaca has some of the best band, choir, and theater programs in the conference, but is the only school in the conference that does not have an auditorium. An 800-seat auditorium would be a great opportunity for student performances, for the Milaca Arts Center to host events, and for community education programs. This facility would create a balance within the community.

B. Rensenbrink: Milaca does great things with what we have. Imagine what Milaca could do with more.

B. Baker: Asked how many people attend the Veterans Day program. Mr. Patnode estimated 1000-1100 including the students. B. Baker stated 800-seats may not be enough. Asked how many people come for elementary concerts. Mr. Sumner responded the performances are always full and can seat 700 people. B. Baker stated the 600-seat auditorium is not adequate and he is more comfortable with a space that will adequately house the attendees.

T. Quaintance: Asked B. Baker if he is concerned an 800-seat auditorium is not adequate. B. Baker is somewhat concerned. T. Quaintance wished there was a 1000- seat option and is worried the scope of the project may not be adequate.

The Board unanimously voted for the 800-seat auditorium option.

Field House

B. Rensenbrink: Requested the elevated walking track dimensions. Mr. Brown responded it would be 3 lanes and each lane would be approximately 22" wide.

J. Day: According to the community survey results, the field house was the most widely opposed. He is not sure there is enough community support for this project. It is too much money. He supports it, but is not sure the community will.

B. Rensenbrink: Shares J. Day's concerns but is often asked by the community why Milaca does not have a field house. Milaca has gym space problems. Limited space equals limited opportunities. The mission statement states "Students should continue to have multiple opportunities to be actively involved." Milaca needs to provide opportunities.

J. Day: Fears if Milaca does not build a field house we will lose students to Foley and Princeton. Foley and Princeton make it convenient for open enrollment by providing transportation to/from the Milaca district.

S. Ploeger: Milaca's youth programs have grown. The current facility does not allow for varsity teams to practice at the same time. Teams and youth programs are competing for space.

B. Baker: He is most conflicted on the field house concepts. He is not certain he knows what he supports in this project.

J. Larson: When he moved to Milaca he did not know anything about the school. When his kids started attending ECFE he learned about the district and community. Some public commented the Board should not focus on the community, but believes the school is Milaca's community center. There are activities or events every night and weekend at the school.

T. Quaintance: Presented with the options, a four-station field house is a must. When discussing an elevated versus ground level walking track, he is concerned there may be conflicts if students or community members are walking on a ground level track during games. He thinks a separate walking/running track space may be necessary to avoid interfering with what is happening on the court. He is conflicted on which walking track option is better, elevated or ground level, and perhaps both may need to be considered.

B. Rensenbrink: Agrees a four-station field house is what is needed, but also noted an additional \$5M for a ground level track is a lot of money.

Board voted to eliminate one of the three options. Options considered:

- 3 station field house with an elevated walking track
- 4 station field house with an elevated walking track
- 4 station field house with a ground level walking track

The Board voted unanimously to eliminate the 3-station option with elevated walking track.

Discussion continued regarding the two 4-station field house options.

S. Ploeger: The \$5M difference is hard decision for a ground level walking track and it would be hard to utilize when the courts are being used.

B. Rensenbrink and J. Day: If the field house is a community and school based facilities an elevated track might be more welcoming.

S. Ploeger: An elevated track could be open to the community during the school day.

A. Struffert: An elevated track addresses the concerns of keeping a separation between the adults and students during the school day.

B. Baker: An elevated track option fits the needs of the district and community. He would vote for either option; however, the \$5M difference is a lot of money for a ground level walking track.

B. Rensenbrink: Feels the track options are a wish list item.

J. Larson: Asked if there could be an option with an 800-seat auditorium and a ground level track that would not remove the tennis courts. Mr. Brown responded it would be difficult.

Board voted on the four-station field house options. The four-station field house with a ground level walking track won the vote.

Baseball Field Complex – *if an auditorium/field house is approved, the baseball fields will need to be relocated. The varsity field will have lights. Lights would also be added to the varsity softball field located on campus.*

B. Baker: This project should be considered regardless of building an auditorium/field house or not. Prefers the option of the parcel closest to the school campus.

S. Ploeger: Access to the Johnson farm is near the gas line, which would require moving the culvert for the approach at an additional cost. B. Baker believes the culvert may need to be widened, but it would not be necessary to move it. However, there would be an additional cost to add turn lanes to Highway 23.

B. Rensenbrink: Prefers the closer option. Renovating the barn on the Johnson property is a neat idea, but there are other additional costs associated with using that property.

T. Quaintance: Utilizing the closer and smaller parcel of land allows the district to use the larger piece of property (Johnson farm property) in the future. The closer property allows for making a right hand turn, which is safer, and is located in close proximity to the proposed regional park

J. Larson: Agreed with T. Quaintance

A. Struffert: By using the closer property trees do not have to be eliminated.

J. Day: Prefers the closer option.

The Board voted unanimously for the New Baseball Complex located on the property closer to the school campus.

Motion by B. Baker, second by S. Ploeger, to approve the projects selected for Review and Comment as required by MN §123B.71.

B. Baker noted the referendum questions are not being discussed at the Public Hearing. The Public Hearing is to set the scope of the projects to be submitted for Review and Comment.

T. Quaintance asked if the maintenance projects would also be submitted to the Review and Comment. Mr. Brown replied the deferred maintenance projects would be included in the Review and Comment.

B. Baker made a friendly amendment to motion: to approve the selected projects and include the deferred maintenance projects: to improve the electronic door control and intrusion alarm integration, elementary camera system upgrade, high school camera replacement and adding 12 additional cameras at the cost of \$395,000; replacing 20-25 year old ballasted EPDM roofs with 30 year guaranteed Garland roofs at a cost of \$3,135,000; replace 1961 elementary classroom windows at a cost of \$255,000; and pool deferred maintenance needs (regrouting, tile base, main drain grates, LED lighting, replace interior doors, ADA lift) at a cost of \$65,000. S. Ploeger seconded the amended motion.

T. Quaintance asked if the pool maintenance projects are new projects. B. Sumner responded these are projects the swim parents brought to the Board's attention, as well as those recommended by an independent individual who reviewed the pool area.

There was discussion clarifying the timeline of the deadlines for Review and Comment.

The question was called for vote. Roll call vote. Those voted in favor: B. Baker, J. Day, S. Ploeger, B. Rensenbrink, A. Struffert, J. Larson. Those voted against: T. Quaintance. Motion carried.

Motion by B. Baker, second by S. Ploeger, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

B. Rensenbrink thanked the community for coming.

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Chairperson

February 20, 2018

Date



Clerk

February 20, 2018

Date