

MINUTES
Combined Meeting of the Unit 5 and District 87
BOARDS OF EDUCATION
August 31, 2005

The Boards of Education of Community Unit School District No. 5, McLean and Woodford Counties, Illinois, and Bloomington Public Schools District 87 met for a combined meeting on August 31, 2005, at 6:30 p.m. at the Farm Bureau Building, 402 North Hershey Road, Bloomington, Illinois.

Call to Order District 87 Board President John Dirks called the meeting to order. He asked attendees to remain standing following the Pledge of Allegiance for a moment of silence for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Pledge of Allegiance The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Introductions President Dirks asked the Unit 5 and District 87 board members to introduce themselves and to indicate where they were in their terms.

Unit 5 Board Members present: Gail Ann Briggs, Meta Mickens-Baker, Martin O'Connor, John Puzauskas, Jay Reece, Steve Whittington, and Board President Scott Lay. Members absent: None.

District 87 Board Members present: Keith Davis, John Hanson, Cheryl Jackson, Janet Smith, and Board President John Dirks. Members absent: Uvaldo Herrera, Millicent Roth.

Superintendents present: Unit 5 Superintendent Dr. Alan Chapman and District 87 Superintendent Dr. Robert Nielsen.

Following introductions, Dirks thanked Sandy Smiley of the Farm Bureau for her assistance with the facility reservation. He also recognized State Representative Dan Brady who attended the meeting.

Dirks stated that the Boards believe the community is served by two outstanding school districts that have educators and staff among the best in the state, two of the finest superintendents around, and dedicated parents and taxpayers who recognize the importance of supporting their schools. He noted the upcoming intercity football event and stated that some in the community saw the relationship between the two districts as starting and ending with what happens on the football field or basketball court. Dirks felt the real relationship between the districts was not formed by athletic rivalry, as the districts' taxpayers demand more. He felt the two districts were already doing a great deal together and could do more together to operate more efficiently, economically, and effectively. Dirks noted the agenda topics and that there were no action items on the agenda. He hoped, through the Boards' discussion, that other areas of cooperation/collaboration would be explored.

**Administrative Reports
and Discussion –
Informational**

Enrollment Data

- *Historical*
- *Projected*

Superintendents Nielsen and Chapman shared historical, current and projected enrollment data for each district. (Attachments #1 and #2) Whittington asked whether District 87 was able to project what areas and school buildings would be impacted by its declining enrollment. Nielsen responded that the impact on specific buildings was known. He noted that Fall Housing data was utilized in projecting enrollments. Nielsen added that District 87's enrollment would not decline enough for it to have available classrooms.

Cooperative Ventures

- *Present*
- *Possibilities for the Future*

Unit 5 Board President Scott Lay stated that the Boards desired to discuss what they are doing together now and what they could do together in future to benefit both districts. Superintendent Chapman remarked that the staffs of both districts worked together to develop a list of current areas of cooperation. (Attachment #3) The superintendents reviewed the current areas of cooperation/collaboration.

President Lay noted that he, President Dirks, and Superintendents Chapman and Nielsen had the opportunity to meet on several occasions during the summer to discuss items of mutual interest. He opened the floor to board members to offer ideas and options for future cooperation/collaboration for the districts' administrative teams to explore. Lay offered the following discussion parameters for the Boards' consideration in offering ideas/options:

- Will the idea/option be of educational benefit to the students of both districts?
- Will the idea/option generate a cost savings for both districts?
- Will the idea/option create greater efficiencies, workflow processes, or educational delivery mechanisms for both districts?

Hanson suggested the exploration of cooperative purchase of utilities.

Dirks suggested exploring potential cost savings in the area of cellular phone services.

Reece suggested exploration of video conferencing for the combining of classes where course enrollments in each district might be insufficient to warrant offering them.

Whittington suggested exploration of an avenue for teachers in both districts to meet, formally/informally, to share practical, useful best practices.

Mickens-Baker suggested sharing of speakers and having them address teachers and the public of both districts.

In the area of emergency preparedness, Puzauskas suggested exchanging personnel if needed, and exploration of collaborative procedures and joint drills involving local services.

Dirks suggested exploration of the cooperative purchase of food for both districts.

In regard to student mobility between the two districts, Jackson suggested effort be put forth by both districts to ensure curriculum coverage at all levels, so that students do not miss something along the way.

Whittington suggested exploration of structured student visits to both districts to view life in other schools.

Reece suggested exploration of sharing library resources and athletic facilities for such sports as soccer, etc.

Lay suggested exploration of the feasibility of doing similar grounds/maintenance functions together.

Lay also suggested exploration of combining efforts to provide additional reading/instructional supports for the districts' at-risk students.

Another suggestion by Lay was the sharing of multi-cultural type programming to collaboratively address diversity.

Hanson suggested exploration of shared costs in the area of technology and computer hardware to serve both districts, particularly with Unit 5 coming on board with Skyward.

Achievement Gap Task Force

Superintendent Nielsen reported on District 87's Achievement Gap Task Force. He noted the district was proud of its students' achievement rate, had seen gains through staff development and commitment of resources, but felt more needed to be done to address an achievement gap between segments of its student population. He indicated State Farm had contacted him regarding the international consulting firm, McKinsey, who was interested in providing pro bono work in the twin cities and wanted to work with a school district or districts on an issue of interest to the district(s). Nielsen indicated McKinsey had already worked internationally with school districts on the issue of achievement gap. Following a series of meetings with McKinsey, meetings were held with community leaders who felt Unit 5 should also be at the table. District 87 then contacted Superintendent Chapman, and it was agreed that Unit 5 would participate in the Achievement Gap Task Force. He announced that Willie Brown, executive vice president of State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance, would chair the task force. Nielsen noted that McKinsey strongly recommended that a business leader chair the task force, with McKinsey as the group facilitator. Nielsen reported that a meeting would be held on October 11 at State Farm with Brown and representatives of both districts and McKinsey. He shared a timeline for the project and indicated a community-wide approach would be needed to address the issues. Superintendent Chapman remarked that Unit 5 was delighted to be a participant in the task force with District 87.

Impact Fees

Chapman explained the concept of impact fees (school land dedication fees). He indicated the fees were a way for municipalities to generate revenue directly from residential development, which brings in people and produces the need for community services, parks, schools, etc.

Chapman stated that the Town of Normal, in 1998, adopted a School Land Dedication Ordinance whereby residential developers are required to pay a fee or dedicate land to provide revenue specifically for schools. Currently, Normal's fund totals \$1.1 million, which is available to Unit 5 for the purchase of land for schools, construction of new schools, construction of additions onto schools, etc. to accommodate additional students. Chapman reported one developer dedicated 11 acres of land in North Ridge Subdivision for a school site instead of money. It was reported that the Town's fee was \$650 or land equivalent to that amount for an average residential property to be developed. In comparison to similar fees of other communities, Chapman felt Normal's fee was relatively low.

Chapman stated Unit 5 had attempted to work with local governments to encourage them to do more to help the district with its growth. He indicated the school system would like to see the City of Bloomington implement something similar to Normal's impact fee that would benefit both Unit 5 and District 87, as both serve parts of Bloomington. While District 87 does not have Unit 5's growth issues, he felt it had other needs for additional revenue. Chapman added that Unit 5 had encouraged Normal and Bloomington to discuss a strategy that would be good for both communities, help both school systems, and provide a level playing field for developers throughout the area. It was noted that a meeting with local officials and the two superintendents have already been scheduled to discuss impact fees. He emphasized that it was not the district's role to tell local governments what to do, but does need them to understand the district's needs.

During past budget meetings with its public on ways to reduce expenditures and generate more revenue, Chapman reported many citizens felt developers should contribute as they were bringing in more students and creating more needs.

Superintendent Nielsen commended Unit 5 for its initiative in this area. He concurred that District 87 does not have Unit 5's growth issues, but does have buildings over 100 years old that need maintenance. Impact fees could provide an additional revenue stream for the district to address that need. He indicated District 87 was interested in exploring the matter.

Smith asked whether the proposed fee would impact such development as the tearing down of old property in Bloomington and the construction of a new property in its place. Chapman indicated local government would determine how the fee would be applied.

Davis asked whether there had been any proposals in regard to ratios for such a fee. Chapman stated Unit 5 had not made any proposals regarding ratios.

It was noted that Normal's impact fee was limited to new residential construction, and the school district's use of the fee was limited to capital needs.

Smith asked how the fee might be applied to affordable housing. Chapman stated he did not know, but indicated again that local government would determine how the fee would be applied.

Whittington felt a \$650 fee was low and wondered what type of pressure the districts could bring about via public concern from the municipalities to increase the fee. In a previous intergovernmental meeting, Whittington noted that Bloomington officials indicated they had not heard anything from their public about impact fees.

As a business owner, Hanson felt fees were already strangling the business community. He felt there was already a mechanism in place for adding school buildings and maintaining them; i.e. building bonds and higher tax levies. He shared statistics on current fees with the Boards and questioned whether impact fees were an equitable approach to funding the growth pains in Unit 5 and issues facing District 87. Hanson felt it would take about five years to generate enough revenue from impact fees to pay for an elementary school, based on information he had received. He suggested the exploration of another approach to the issue that would be equitable for all taxpayers. Chapman felt impact fees, to some extent, were transferred to property buyers and did not come entirely out of developers' pockets. As residential development was producing the need the district is trying to fund, he felt it fair to ask them to help support the need.

Davis felt implementation of an impact fee in Bloomington would encourage development out of the area to avoid the fee. Chapman pointed out that the Town of Normal has seen an increase in development each year since implementing an impact fee.

In regard to referendum, Reece felt there was lag time from the start of a referendum process to its passage (if it passes) and influx of additional revenue to build a school. In the interim, growth continues. He cited the issues of some areas without growth, other areas with significant growth, some parents' unhappiness about not being able to send their children to a nearby school as it is full, developers encouraging folks to buy in a certain subdivision because of a nearby school, and parents' desire for neighborhood schools. He did not feel an impact fee would deter development, as those in the new development would reap the benefit of a new school.

Lay remarked that Unit 5 was not interested in stifling growth or having new subdivisions pay entirely for new schools. He hoped what would come from Superintendents Chapman and Nielsen meeting with the city managers of Normal and Bloomington would be some degree of fee calibration. Lay emphasized Unit 5 was sincere in its effort to implement an impact fee that would be shared with District 87 and concurred that a fee that would be equitable across both school districts was desired. Hanson commented that even if the impact fee was \$1,000 per unit, he did not feel it would meet the immediate need for bricks and mortar. While perhaps not enough to pay for a new school, Lay felt even \$1.1 million dollars collected in impact fees would generate a 25 percent discount for the existing taxpayers of the school district toward the \$4 to \$5 million cost of a new

elementary school. Hanson suggested the Boards review, at some point, proposed models for revenue to be generated from impact fees vs. a tax rate increase.

Recognition of Key Personnel Present From Each District

Superintendents Chapman and Nielsen each recognized key personnel present from their districts.

Unit 5 Administrators present: Assistant Superintendent of Operations/Human Resources John Pye, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum/Instruction Jim Braksick, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer Tod Altenburg, Director of Elementary Education Cathy Greene, Director of Special Education-Instruction Cory Tello, Director of Technology/IMC Donna Lutkehaus, H.R./Community Relations Specialist Meghan Leiseberg.

District 87 Administrators present: Superintendent Dr. Robert Nielsen, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Barry Reilly, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum/Instruction Sally Tucker, Chief Financial/Legal Officer David Wood, Sheridan School Principal Jim Cooper, Director of Technology Jim Peterson, Public Relations Facilitator Linda Aschenbrener.

Others present: Unit 5 Clerk of the Board Cindy Prescher, District 87 Board Secretary Marianne Clancy, State Representative Dan Brady, Mike Williams and John Elliott of the NAACP, Willie Halbert, Phyllis Coulter from The Pantagraph, Kevin Heinkes from WJBC, Unit Five Education Association President Vickie Mahrt, Otis Evans, Renee Ruttin-Brewer, Jean Robins, Mary Current, Rich Schroeder, Clinton Brown, Buddy McCree, Krissy Ort, Larry Shapiro, Sharon Becker, Linda Foster, Barbara Stuart, and others.

Public Comments

The following individuals addressed the Boards of Education:

- Willie Halbert, Bloomington, Illinois
 - Mrs. Halbert hoped the combined meeting would be an ongoing process. She was pleased about the McKinsey project, but suggested implementing something now to help at-risk students in Grades 1-3 in the area of reading. She offered community volunteers to assist with such a program. Mrs. Halbert also shared concerns about student placement in the Alternative Education School and the need to hire more minority educators in both districts.
- Mike Williams, Bloomington, Illinois
 - Mr. Williams complimented State Farm for suggesting the McKinsey Consulting Group. He was pleased that Mr. Willie Brown would be chairing the Achievement Gap Task Force. Williams also made positive comments regarding a collaborative program involving Kingsley Jr. High School and the McLean County Urban League. He suggested the program be shared with District 87.
- Otis Evans, Bloomington, Illinois
 - Mr. Evans stated he was chairman of the Bloomington/Normal Human Relations Commission. He noted that the Dr. Martin Luther King Luncheon would be held on January 14, 2006, and tickets would be available beginning October 1. Evans indicated the upcoming January event would mark the 30th anniversary of the luncheon and stated that the luncheon speaker would be Supreme Court Justice of Minnesota Alan Paige. Evans indicated nomination forms for Student of the Year from both districts would be distributed in the next few weeks. He encouraged both districts to nominate as many students as possible and to submit nomination forms as soon as possible. School contacts will also be made to encourage nominations.

- Buddy McCree, Normal, Illinois
 - Mr. McCree stated he was new to the area and was extremely pleased with how his grandchildren had been received and handled at Prairieland Elementary School.
- Barbara Stuart, Normal, Illinois
 - Mrs. Stuart felt there were committees in each district to address minority issues. She suggested a joint committee to address minority issues. Also, in forming the Achievement Gap Task Force, Stuart suggested having someone serve on the task force to represent the single parent, low-economic family.

Unit 5 Board President Lay thanked the audience for attending the meeting and those who made public comments. He also expressed appreciation to the board members and superintendents for their participation in the meeting.

President Lay commented that the two districts share mutual challenges, concerns, and successes. He hoped they would continue to capitalize on those successes and work together. Lay also felt there was a high level of expectation for public education in the community. Speaking on behalf of Unit 5's interest, he emphasized that the district hoped to continue to work collaboratively with District 87 to maximize the educational benefit for students in both districts, while maintaining the separate identities and cultures of each district. He closed by stating that Unit 5 looked forward to future dialogue and activity.

President Dirks thanked the superintendents and administrative teams of both districts for assisting with the combined meeting agenda and identifying areas of cooperation.

Superintendents Chapman and Nielsen each made positive comments regarding the cooperative efforts between the two school districts, their Boards of Education, and their high regard for each other.

Adjournment

Unit 5 Board President Lay adjourned the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

Scott Lay, Board of Education President
 Community Unit School District No. 5
 McLean and Woodford Counties, Illinois

ATTEST:

Steve Whittington, Board of Education Secretary

Approved: _____