

Life Safety and Construction Grants

Mr. Good explained there would be two applications coming to the Board for approval later in October regarding Life Safety and Construction Grants. We have done these applications on a yearly basis and in the past have received about \$150,000 per year for the fire protection equipment in our schools. We have not been able to get the construction grant so far, but we will again apply for this grant for \$500,000 for new construction or repairs of schools with special programs to reduce class size or dealing with preschool programs. We will be moving forward with these grants and need Board approval before a deadline of November 8 this year.

Geographic Information System

Bill Good and Ray Weiser from Shive Hattery spent about one hour with the Board demonstrating the capabilities of the Geographic Information System (GIS). Board members saw data that could be graphed and how the map of our school district could help them with decisions regarding boundaries for schools. The system uses the Student Information System (SIS) data and the graphs the Board saw used data from last year. There were many examples and scenarios for the Board to use as they observed the current boundaries, changes that could be made, the migration in and out of the district, and graphs about individual buildings such as Lincoln and Eisenhower that were used as examples.

Ray presented his background and talked about the maps and data. The GIS is a tool that can help the Board visualize information and it can reveal trends. There is software and hardware that can be used by people who input the data and develop a process. It improves the process for looking at making boundary changes and is a communication tool. The DCSD built the data on SIS, and there are windows showing grade, age, sex, name, phone numbers, addresses, and school enrollments. The city played an important role in helping get the GIS program started and adapted to our district's needs. The Board saw a PowerPoint overview of the capabilities of GIS. It helped to map the boundaries for elementary, intermediate, and high schools in our District. They saw Arc maps and Arc views of these groups to get a better picture of migration and open enrollment trends from last year. They looked at ethnicity features and saw where students reside who attend Lincoln Fundamental, since that school has no boundaries. The GIS will allow us to take subsets and see groupings.

Ray showed how a boundary line could be moved and then the graphs would compute the impact the move had on numbers of students attending the buildings. As we shift one boundary line, there are changes reflected in other buildings also. There were questions about students moving and the updating capabilities of this system. Each student will have a file number and when the 12th graders graduate, they will come out of the system. Then the new kindergarten students have to be added in and relocations made.

The Board looked at migration patterns in and out of buildings. At this point, we couldn't show the students who left our district to open enroll out to other districts, only the in-district transfers were shown. Mr. Good said there are a lot of development levels to view when talking about boundaries. We have a very open system now and about 24% are attending schools outside their home attendance area. There was discussion about breaking down the information in groups for elementary, middle, and senior high schools. Director Roberson asked if there was a cost involved with students not attending their home school. Mr. Hunigan responded if the student qualified for open enrollment within the district, there would be the cost of bussing. Dr. Blanche added there was a cost for special needs students and the ESL students at this time. Also students attending the Kimberly Center programs might have an extra cost for bussing. President Low thought the charts showed that more elementary and high school students were attending outside their home school areas than the middle school students.

Director Zamora asked if we had to buy the services or how this worked. The information is based on one calendar year, and we purchased the software with Shive Hattery under contract to manipulate the information for us. Mr. Hunigan noted we can pull data from a certain day to use for a base. Ray said there is a maintenance question on whether you want to change this daily, monthly, or quarterly. Mr. Good said now they were waiting to see where the Board wanted to go with this system.

Director Clewell commented that unless the data was current, it could be misleading when it was used for boundary changes. Director Guard added it would be better if we could make assumptions on where students would be in five years and if we knew more about development trends. President Low talked about developments near Jackson Elementary and wondered where else developers will build homes that include families with school aged children. The Board needs to know this to make decisions on where to make additions or have new construction. Director Guard felt that we had to work with people who regularly do this kind of work. We need experienced people and those people are available as resources. Dr. Blanche brought up the concern that the No Child Left Behind legislation may also affect the building usage. We could eventually have a situation where each family in a school could make a choice to go somewhere else. We have four schools now that have a fluid boundary because of NCLB; and even though only 2% opted out of their home schools, that could change in the future. Director DeFauw asked if the GIS could track what students have moved to other attendance centers because of NCLB? Ray said if we have this information, they can track it with GIS. Mr. Hunigan said he could get that information to the Board if they were interested in knowing this. Director Roberson thought the system looked good if the data was accurate and timely. Mr. Good said he could provide more data for the Board in paper format so they can look at ways to manipulate numbers. The question becomes what do board members want to see in order to make their decisions?

President Low thought the GIS was advantageous for us to use to accomplish what would otherwise be a laborious endeavor. She would like the data updated yearly by taking out the seniors and adding the preschoolers and kindergarten students. Director Tupper wanted to have a table on migration in and out of the district. Where are the kids from Adams going and where are the kids that migrate in coming from? Mr. Good said he would provide this information for the board members for each school. Director Tupper also wondered if we could identify the reasons why people move around? Is it because of special education or convenience or what reason? Dr. Blanche responded that most of the requests are driven by choice and not by program offerings. Director Tupper also asked about having a density map where the number of students in the building are plugged in and we compute the minimal distances to reach that building. Ray said that was possible but we would need even better software. He also said they can go to the City and get the most recent development maps to add into the GIS.

Director Guard talked about the board retreat and setting some guidelines. Although the GIS is a great tool, he didn't see the Board asking the right questions to use this system. We need to talk about additional community involvement. If it is not important to the community to change the boundaries, how much emphasis should we put into this study? Before we make up a "to-do list", we should find out from the general population what they want to know. Director DeFauw felt the Board needed more dialog on this matter before continuing. Dr. Blanche thought the minimum we should do is to input the current year's data into the system now so we could use that to establish some trends. Then we will be ready to use the data if we need it. Director Clewell thought this was a good example and sometimes the data shows patterns that people didn't know existed. President Low felt there was consensus by the Board to direct the administration to input current numbers to update the system.

Special Education Delivery System

Betty Long used a handout to talk with the Board about changes and improvements in the Special Education Delivery System. She explained federal and state legislation, administrative rules and regulations, the AEA and LEA procedures and guidelines, and site plans that define our delivery system. She showed examples on how we determine eligibility for students to receive exceptional education services and the placement process. She outlined what happened when parents don't agree with the programming or placement options. There are a number of ways used for guidance to determine the delivery system for children. Mrs. Long also talked about how the operation of services looked for mild range, moderate, or severe needs of students. She explained the staffing of buildings, employment numbers, and total numbers of students served. There was information on other services provided to students that was required. Mrs. Long noted that special education is no longer a "place to be." It is all about services and a 180-degree difference and total rethinking about special education. We try to keep the students in a neighborhood school as much as possible. The services will be non-categorical and students will be "individually entitled" without a classification attached which is emotionally labeled.

President Low talked about knowing what was best for the child and what the parents need to do to help. One label now can seem better than another label. Director Zamora asked if there were declines in special education numbers because certain minority groups were being eliminated. Mrs. Long said they were always concerned about numbers, but if a student was eligible, that student will get help. We have found now that many students are receiving other interventions prior to actually being placed in a special education setting. We have signed off with a clean bill of health from the OCR. Dr. Blanche added we are using solution focus in the classrooms, resources are spent on the process, and we try interventions before special education placement. Mrs. Long added there were district initiatives in every school and we are having teachers looking at the strengths of students. The NCLB federal legislation is tied up with special education; new language will reflect this and will have an impact on services provided. Mrs. Long answered questions about how we will work on participation in assessment for special education students. She talked about a one-percent ceiling and some of the problems involved. We are looking at learning choices and modifications for assessment. We are waiting to see what the State develops for guidelines. There are small groups that will be working on criteria and proficiency questions because many of these students can't read and the testing is traumatic for them. Director Guard felt we needed to be vocal on this issue with our legislators. Mrs. Long answered questions dealing with definitions on what school becomes qualified for Title funds. Title schools are those on the poverty thresholds and our district uses the free and reduced numbers to rank the buildings.

Finance Discussion

Claudia Wood went through the elements included in the Financial Report for August 31, 2003. This contains information our positive cash balance, investments, receivables, liabilities, and other items. The audit report will be ready for the Committee of the Whole meeting in December. There is still some audit work being done on grants at this time. The Board heard about contracted salaries, definitions of revenue items, expenditures, insurance claims, and other areas. Mrs. Tangen noted the numbers are down for insurance claims at this point because of the change in our third-party administrators and there is time needed to make all the transfers. Claudia talked about purchased services with grant work, investments with ISJIT and having two flexible CD's for excess funds. We are able to draw down from the CD's monthly instead of the traditional CD's that lock in the total amount for a specified time. This program is sponsored through the IASB and originally set up to help the smaller districts. We all are able to tap into a statewide pool of funds and that helps.

Marsha Tangen mentioned the budget document board members had received. It has a new format to improve the quality of the report and it provides more information to support our goals. If board members need more items on finance issues, they should just let her know. She will be happy to provide them with materials. This will help the Board with work relative to the budget for next year.

Urban Education Network

Richard Clewell explained the role of the Urban Education Network for the new board members. Our needs are significantly different from the small districts, and the eight large districts in Iowa come together in UEN to provide a voice for us in the legislature. We worked on setting our 2004 priorities in June and these were sent to UEN in August to be combined with the priorities from other districts. Director Clewell was the chairman of the Emerging Issues Committee, and they developed what were the uppermost issues that should be brought before the legislature. Director Clewell said this revised list of priorities will come before the UEN in November for approval during the IASB convention. He hoped board members would take time to go over these and familiarize themselves with the priorities. There was one item on which he needed to know the thinking of our Board. Did we want the wording to say "fair and equitable" allowable growth or a specific "4 percent" allowable growth rate? Director Zamora had to leave the meeting at 8:00 PM due to a work commitment. The rest of the Board expressed their opinion about the priorities and by consensus felt we needed to emphasize the 4 percent allowable growth because otherwise we would not get what we really needed.

The Board talked about technology and utility expense increases and the possibility of additional revenue we would need to help fund increases in IPERS. Director Guard thought that special education might also become an emerging issue because of NCLB. We still have trouble because of our spending authority limitations, and we need relief from this also. Director Clewell talked about UEN and also encouraged people to find an opportunity to talk with legislators during the general assembly next year. He quoted Margaret Meade who said, "Never think that a thoughtful group of committed people can't make a difference."

Policy Discussion

Director Clewell reviewed the list of policies and database presented to the Board. He went through the summary from the Policy Committee meeting in September and explained the plans for reviewing policies this year. Board members received an outline that summarized the discussion on the policies. The boundary policy could have changes made that might lead us forward before we take official action on the process of changing boundary lines. Director Clewell felt we needed to begin by looking at the policy and this might be the impetus for our boundary discussions. Dr. Blanche asked to be included on making revisions to the Junior Achievement policy since he is actively involved with this program.

Other Announcements

President Low reminded people of the Intergovernmental Meeting on Tuesday, October 7 at 4:00 PM. Dr. Blanche and Vice President Guard would attend this meeting at City Hall. Dr. Blanche also asked board members to seriously consider attending UEN meeting and the IASB convention in November. These meetings can have a positive affect on board members and gives them an opportunity to network with other board members throughout the state. It was announced that Dr. Blanche would be the UEN President next year.

8:20 PM

ADJOURNMENT

President Low declared the meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Linda Smith Kortemeyer, Board Secretary