

PUBLIC NOTICE

Hampton-Dumont Community School District

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS H-D BOARD OF EDUCATION UNAPPROVED MINUTES APRIL 29, 2020

Call to Order, Record of Members Present and Absent, Acknowledgment of a Quorum

The Hampton-Dumont Board of Education met in Special session on April 29, 2020, in the Hampton-Dumont Middle School Media Center. President Chad Hanson called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the social distancing guidelines of gatherings of no more than 10 people, the meeting was held virtually for the public via Zoom. Members of the public could join the meeting by video conference or by dialing in. Board members Chad Hanson, Erran Miller, Stephanie Powers, Jeff Rosenberg, Tom Birdsell, Mark Morrison and Steve Severs attended the meeting in person. Also present in person were Superintendent Todd Lettow, Principal Steve Madson, Curriculum Coordinator Jen Koenen and Secretary Amanda Heiden.

Motion was made to approve the agenda as presented. Motion by Rosenberg, seconded by Powers. All ayes.

Budget Reductions

Mr. Lettow began the conversation about budget reductions, why the district needs the budget reductions and the process the district must go through to reduce the budget. He stated that in March the board had a budget workshop, at which time he let the board know that the district had been overspending the budget. Lettow mentioned that four or five years ago the district had about 3.1 million dollars in reserves of cash, which he stated the district was overspending on purpose to use that cash on education, as it was intended to be used, to bring that total down.

In 2018-19, the district overspent by about \$430,000, and the district will be overspending by about \$540,000 for the 2019-20 school year. If the district does nothing for the 2020-21 year, it would overspend by about \$570,000. Mr. Lettow stated that now is the time to start looking at reducing that overspending by about half, and then half again the following year, which would total about \$300,000 each year.

Lettow discussed ways that the district was looking at reducing the budget, which included attrition, or not replacing staff that will be leaving the district, and then by reduction in force of staff.

Lettow mentioned that in order to reduce staff by reduction in force, the district must notify staff by April 30, as pursuant to Iowa Code. He stated that he had notified three employees of the district that

he would be recommending to the board to terminate their contracts for the following year. He explained the process for staff reduction in force to the board: first the Superintendent notifies the employee that they will be recommended for reduction to the board by April 30, to which the employee has five calendar days from the time of notification to submit a request for hearing in front of the board to the board secretary; then the recommendations to terminate contracts must be submitted by the Superintendent to the board by May 15; if the employee requests a hearing, the hearing must be held within 20 to 40 calendar days of the date in which the employee submitted the request for the hearing. After the hearing, the board makes a decision on the recommendation to terminate. If no hearing is requested, the board would make a decision on the recommendation to terminate without the hearing process. Since the district just began this process, Lettow was not able to talk specifically about those employees who were notified.

Lettow went over changes in the district to give the staff some assurances and a better idea of what would be happening the following year. He stated that he wanted to make sure that staff realized the budget reductions were not a result of COVID-19, and that it was necessary regardless of COVID-19. He stated that there is more fear of what will happen to the budget in the future because of COVID-19, but that generally when revenues go down because of these types of situations the Federal government steps in and provides stimulus dollars to help States replace the revenues the district was supposed to receive. He also mentioned that the State may also give the district the authority to spend money, but may not have the cash to back it up, which allows the district to tax for those funds. He stated that it is best that the district be diligent with its current budget knowing that there may be some impact from COVID-19, as well.

Lettow went over what the district has already done in regards to staffing to help reduce the budget. At North Side, the district is overspending in Preschool and Special Education. A Preschool/Special Education teacher was transferred to South Side to fill an open First Grade position, which will reduce Preschool from four sections to three. The district will not be filling the open North Side Assistant Secretary position, and instead will use the Child Nutrition Secretary to help cover in that area. At South Side, the district will not fill the open Fourth Grade position, and Fourth Grade will go from four sections to three. At the Middle School, the district is overspending in Special

Education, and will be reducing there, as well as reducing Interventionist positions by moving them to fill open grade level positions. The High School will see an increase in Special Education coming from the Middle School, and reductions at the High School could not be discussed at the time. The district will also not be refilling an open Bus Mechanic position, but will be looking for a bus driver. The district will be reducing the budget by about \$313,000 with the stated cuts through attrition and reduction in force.

Lettow also mentioned there are some one time cost savings the district will receive due to COVID-19, which include: the district will need less Summer Custodians; there will be no Summer School costs; the district will see less fuel and activity driver costs for Spring and Summer activities; the district will not be paying substitute costs for the last third of the year; and it will probably see a reduction for supplies for teachers, since supplies were not used up in the last third of the year. These cost savings would total about \$238,000, of which only \$168,000 could come out of the General Fund.

Lettow stated that he wanted the board to be aware of the rationale of the district budget reductions, and that reductions are something he would rather not do, but the district needs to be good stewards of taxpayers' dollars.

Hanson asked Lettow to speak about how declining enrollment has been a cause of budget reduction needs that the board knew was coming, as the district went through some bubbles. Lettow explained that the district has declined about 40 students in the last two years, which equates to about \$300,000 in student funding, increasing the need for budget reductions. Lettow also stated that right now the higher class sizes are in the upper grades, while the lower grades entering the district have smaller class sizes, so this is a trend the district will continue to see for some time.

Rosenberg asked Lettow if in his review of the budget with his administrative staff there was no other way to reduce the budget, as needed, than to reduce staff. Lettow stated that personnel makes up about 83% of the district's budget, so to look at the other 17% that is spent on maintaining the buildings, the district cannot make enough reductions in those areas to make up what the district needs.

Lettow also stated that if more staff leave the district between now and the start of next year, the district will look at attrition for those positions, as well, so the district is not hiring new staff that it might have to look at reducing the following year.

Hanson asked for a motion on the bud-

get reductions, Rosenberg motioned, but the board held discussion on whether or not it was prepared to make a decision at that moment. The board decided that it would acknowledge that the district needs to reduce the budget, but no decision was made, and Rosenberg rescinded his motion.

Changes to the 2019-20 Calendar

Lettow asked the board to consider shortening the 2019-20 school year by six days to end on May 22. He would like to look at using those six teacher contract days as planning for the next school year. Ideally, he would like to have the six days worked in August 2020, but he is unsure if the district would be allowed to move them to August, or if they would have to be used in May. Rosenberg suggested trying to do three days in May and three days in August.

It was also discussed when the seniors' last day of school and graduation should be.

Rosenberg motioned, seconded by Birdsell, to end the 2019-20 school year for students on May 22, 2020, and to have the seniors' last day of school be May 15, 2020.

Discussion was held on graduation and ways that graduation may take place based on the social distancing guidelines. Motion by Rosenberg, seconded by Morrison, to have graduation on May 24, 2020.

The board agreed to determine what to do with the six teacher contracts days at a later time.

Motion was made to approve Support Staff Contracts as discussed during the exempt meeting held on April 14, 2020 which included: custodial staff, transportation staff and district office support staff that had not previously been approved. Motion by Miller, seconded by Severs. All ayes.

Motion was made to approve the 60-month copier lease with Marco as presented. Motion by Powers, seconded by Severs. All ayes.

The items under discussion were discussed earlier in the agenda. The board discussed whether or not to move the regular meeting for May. The meeting was moved to May 14, 2020.

Motion was made to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m. Motion by Rosenberg, seconded by Miller. All ayes.

ATTEST:

Chad Hanson, President
Amanda Heiden, Secretary

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