

SAULT STE. MARIE AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SAULT STE. MARIE, MICHIGAN 49783
BOARD WORKSHOP, BOARD OF EDUCATION
Phone 906/635-6609

Minutes – Monday, May 12, 2023

246 **I. CALL TO ORDER**

A. ROLL CALL OF BOARD

Board Members Present: Caitlin L. Galer, Kenneth D. Dunton, Melissa S. Pingatore, Christine M. Curtis, Amelia M. Lindsay, William E. Odbert, Michelle M. Ribant
Absent: None

247. **B. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

It was moved by Member Galer, supported by Member Lindsay, to adopt the agenda.

Yeas: Lindsay, Odbert, Ribant, Galer, Curtis, Pingatore, Dunton
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

II. COMMUNICATIONS AND BOARD REPORTS

248. **A. PRESENTATION TO THE BOARD**

Kelsey Birkmier of Banach, Banach & Cassidy presented the following items received from community members, staff, students and stakeholders regarding a possible November 2023 Bond Proposal.

- An overall “B” grade (43%) was given to the district based mostly on quality staff, but reported lacking in opportunities for successful students, extras for Middle School students, and teacher resources.
- The main reason for those who wanted a new elementary school was because of the age and quality of the existing buildings.
- Most were in favor of the possible site location for a new elementary, but there was some push back on losing neighborhood schools.

- Concern for a well thought out drop-off and pickup process to alleviate traffic congestion, as well as synchronized start and end times.
- Concern for a new elementary to include enough space to house the ancillary staff such as for Art, Music, and STEM.
- Question on how long it would take to open a new school.
- Question as to why the Soo Township Complex/Malcolm High School was not included in the plan.
- Concern about having the old buildings torn down.
- Families with students in multiple buildings were in support of a more centralized campus area.
- Request for a diagram to learn how the traffic flow would alleviate traffic congestion.
- Support for a new building to have a secure entryway and for specific events.
- Concern about having 5th grade students move back down to the elementary building.
- Question if the new building took into consideration future enrollment.
- Concern for relocating the Sault Soccer Association fields and Cross Country runner access.
- Request for bathrooms in all K-2 classrooms.
- Request for separate playgrounds for lower and upper elementary grades.
- Request to fix the road in back of high school/middle school.
- Request to construct an athletic dome over the tennis/athletic courts.
- Multiple requests for a pool.
- Concern for more emphasis on athletics versus academics
- Concern for entrance to separate people who are entering for special events from other parts of the building.
- Concern for taking Washington and Lincoln Schools off line.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer indicated the survey was to gather input prior to seeking Board approval on a proposed bond project, but she wasn't sure the community understood that.

Ms. Birkmier reported the pool was a major concern and questioned the level of support without a pool.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer suggested people are not aware of the amount of money it takes to build, maintain, organize, and staff a pool for several years out.

Ms. Birkmier indicated responders felt the district was good, but the facilities were outdated.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer indicated fixing the infrastructure would support academics.

Ms. Birkmier reported the majority of individuals who were in support of the plan were connected to the lower elementary level. She suggested communicating well about transportation, the plan for drop off and pick up, and the start and end times of school.

Ms. Birkmier reported comment was made on the following for Sault High.

- Concern for a pool.
- Additional space for CTE Programs.
- Question about needing additional gym space.
- Separate lunch rooms.
- Updating technology.

Ms. Birkmier reported the margin was very tight with 55% of responders in support of a millage and 43% in opposition.

Upon inquiry, Ms. Birkmier estimated the average tax rate increase would be about \$20 per month for the full project.

John Galnares of Spence Brothers; Kevin Kane of The Kane Group; John Dancer of Cornerstone-Architects; and Cynthia Banach of Banach, Banach & Cassidy were virtually available to answer questions.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer indicated operational dollars are used for educational purposes and planning takes a long time. She suggested everyone would like a pool, but everyone does not want to pay for it.

Ms. Birkmier reported on a multi-phase project like other districts have done with the possibility of phasing in critical needs and infrastructure over an estimated 5 year period as a way to help the district and taxpayer save money.

President Curtis indicated a multi-phase project might be more efficient as opposed to repairing the existing buildings considering their age, conditions, and limitations.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer stated it might be best to move forward with a bond for a new elementary and then follow up with the other infrastructure upgrades.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer raised for discussion the possibility of building one elementary at the back of the Washington School as opposed to the main campus area by the high school.

Tom Nelson reported if the school was built at a new site, power and sewer would have to be brought in and there maybe some unknown soil conditions.

Upon inquiry from Member Curtis, Mr. Nelson confirmed double utilities could be brought in at the Washington School site.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer reported there would be a cost savings to adding a new building with two floors at the Washington School site because it already has the infrastructure in place and there wouldn't be a disruption in the learning environment while it was being built.

Member Galer sought confirmation on the location of a new building, Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer indicated there was concern on what was designated as wetland mitigation at the main campus.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer reported it was possible for the new building at the south end of the soccer fields. She indicated it would take about 18 to 24 months for a new school to be built.

Member Galer indicated she had heard concern for what the pick-up and drop off flow would be if the building was at the main campus.

Upon inquiry from Member Dunton, Mr. Nelson indicated the Washington School playground equipment would need to be relocated to the north side of the property.

Upon inquiry from Member Dunton, Kevin Kane indicated the new school could be built at a 90 degree angle from the current school, facing Dillon Street, and the playground equipment could be on the south end of the property.

John Dancer noted there would not be a lot of room for construction laydown while the current building is still operating.

John Galnares indicated there would be some additional savings using the Washington School site with the utilities already brought into the property and the land being flat. He stated it could work even without a large drop off site.

Mr. Kane suggested having soil testing done on the main campus by the high school if the Board wants to pursue that area as a possibility so it doesn't drive up cost later.

Upon inquiry from Member Lindsay, Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer reported the district pays mileage to teachers who drive between buildings for work.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer reported the district owns the property behind the foster home on 3 Mile, but there isn't enough area for people to work and park.

Member Galer indicated people seemed to like having an elementary building at a centralized campus because of the ease of dropping off children who are in multiple schools.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer reported the district constantly works on the logistics of busing and building start and end times for school.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer indicated the district would most likely only be able to provide bathrooms for the kindergarten classrooms as it would be an extra expense for 10 additional bathrooms for all first and second grade classrooms to have one.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer questioned the need to erect a dome over the tennis courts based on the preliminary plan.

Upon inquiry from Member Dunton about the availability of property for the elementary school, John Dancer indicated the Washington School and High School area sites were technically viable but a soil stabilization report or water mitigation may come into play with the property by the high school. He stated a geotechnical report could be conducted, but that requires drilling several holes and could take several weeks.

John Galnares estimated it would cost \$5,000 to pay for a soil stabilization report.

Member Dunton stated the public needs to know where a new elementary building would be built prior to the election.

Discussion ensued on a more direct location of where the proposed build could be near the high school.

President Curtis stated she would prefer the Washington School site as opposed to a 3 Mile Road site.

Discussion ensued on the Sault Soccer Association using the high school property for its soccer fields and the possibility of using the athletic field since it is a spring sport.

Member Dunton questioned the increased use of the football street/parking lot.

Member Dunton stated he would prefer a site evaluation done on the vacant property.

Upon inquiry from Member Lindsay, Mr. Galnares indicated either site would be cost effective to build on.

Discussion continued on what would be considered the best site and why.

Member Dunton inquired on possible issues with DEQ, wetlands, etc. Mr. Dancer suggested working on a wetland delineation. Mr. Kane said there had been one done on around the 1990s.

Mr. Dancer and Mr. Kane suggested walking the site of the main campus to see where the fields are and if there are any wetlands.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer stated the high school locker rooms are in dire shape and questioned when those could be addressed. She reported the district does not have a plan to build a pool.

Upon inquiry from Member Curtis, Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer confirmed work for the locker room could be done with minimal money from the capital fund budget.

Member Galer inquired on finding a compromise for a pool and suggested the possibility of a good faith property for one to be built on.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer reported the Recreational Authorities Act allows for what schools can do to build a pool. She noted Alpena's pool was built and operates from a recreational millage. Discussion ensued on possible funding options and additional resources (money, staffing, time, and services).

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer indicated the district's first obligation was to focus on academics and not take on the additional risk to the educational future by trying to own and operate a pool.

Member Dunton stated the Board's main objective was to educate the students and ensure fiduciary funds are spent the right way. He suggested \$15,000,000 for a pool could be spent on a lot of other things.

Discussion ensued on swimming lessons for students considering the district's proximity to the 3 of the largest lakes in the U.S.

Upon inquiry from Member Dunton, Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer stated she would contact LSSU under the Board's direction if they would possibly require students to take swimming lessons.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer presented possible room options for band and orchestra while taking the pool off line.

Member Pingatore indicated a lot of people she spoke with were excited to have more space for the arts.

Member Dunton suggested explaining the auxiliary space at the high school and learning more of what the people wanted.

President Curtis stated she liked the two phase plan.

Upon inquiry from Member Pingatore, Ms. Birkmier indicated she felt the community would still be in favor of a new elementary even if the pool was off line.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer indicated if the plan was conducted in a 2 part series, the millage would drop in 2029-2030 and then the secondary and other items could be addressed.

Member Dunton suggested the high school plan and location of the elementary be more precisely explained to the community than it was in the survey. Member Galer concurred that the people she spoke with did not understand the high school portion. Member Pingatore stated the kids she spoke with understood it, and were in agreement.

Mr. Dancer confirmed the treasury date was scheduled for June 5.

Upon inquiry from Mr. Dancer, Mr. Galnares indicated a soil analysis and boring would take about 6 to 8 weeks.

Mr. Kane explained the report involves obtaining pricing from a couple of different companies, getting an approval, and then scheduling the drilling.

Upon inquiry from Member Dunton, Mr. Kane indicated the district is required to bring the size of the building and cost to treasury.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer questioned if the location was needed for treasury.

Mr. Kane stated the location would be needed for the ballot language.

Member Dunton indicated there were several options for soccer fields and there hasn't been a pool for almost 7 years, but if parents want their kids to have swimming lessons in grades 3 or 4 as suggested, and an agreement can be reached, he is in favor of it.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer presented diagrams from Cornerstone on the layout of the two buildings and noted the current ones impede the space needed to function properly. She stated the cameras, door locks, and security system components would be harvested and utilized.

Upon comment from Member Dunton, Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer indicated not all of the information was shared with the public prior to the survey as to not taint how they felt in their response.

Discussion ensued on teacher resources and having special accessible classrooms for students.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer reported Jo Anne Lussier and she had been working on implementing a Culinary CTE Program.

Member Ribant commented on her appreciation for maintaining a conservative fund balance for future programming.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer sought comment from the Board on whether or not to proceed with going to treasury on the project.

Member Dunton stated he was in favor of moving on to treasury and hoped the site and wetlands delineation would be shared.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer indicated there needs to be competitive bidding for work that is over the threshold. Mr. Dancer asked for confirmation when the location of the new build is determined.

Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer inquired on the need for a RFP template and noted the need for a two week response to respond to select bids.

Ms. Birkmier expressed the need to share information with the community prior to the absent tee ballots going out.

Upon inquiry from Mr. Kane, Superintendent Scott-Kronemeyer indicated soil tests could be done through one consultant as long as the cost is under the bid threshold.

President Curtis called for questions.

Member Odbert expressed concern for understanding the DEQ's timeframe when needed for making decisions.

Mr. Kane indicated maps from the city could help determine where the utility lines run for better data.

Member Dunton indicated he was more comfortable with the plan than prior to the meeting.

Upon inquiry from Member Dunton, Superintendent Scott-Kronmeyer reported the two series project would be a one ballot proposal with a two bond sale and noted it would provide the most savings for the public.

Superintendent Scott-Kronmeyer thanked everyone who joined the meeting online. She asked for the Board to contact her with any questions.

249. **B. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

Lisa Young expressed disappointment with the Middle School doors being locked for the past 20 minutes and suggested that all meetings be broadcasted virtually except for possibly the student discipline hearings.

250. **III. BOARD GOVERNANCE AND BOARD POLICY ISSUES**

There was none.

251. **IV. FUTURE PLANNING**

President Curtis reviewed future events.

Member Dunton received confirmation that the May 22 special meeting was scheduled for 5:30 p.m. in the Middle School.

May 15 – Native American Awards Ceremony – Sault High – 1:30 p.m.

May 16 – CTE Awards – Strahl Theater – 7:00 p.m.

May 17 – Academic Awards – Strahl Theater – 7:00 p.m.

May 22 – Special Board Meeting – Sault Area Middle School – 5:30 p.m.

May 24 - Baccalaureate - 6:00 p.m.

May 25 - Malcolm Graduation - 7:00 p.m.

May 28 - Sault High Graduation - 2:00 p.m.

June 1 – Building and Grounds – Administration – 4:00 p.m.

June 7 – Finance – Administration – 5:00 p.m.
June 12 - Regular Board Meeting - Sault Area Middle School - 7:00 p.m.

252. **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board at 6:52 p.m., it was moved by Member Dunton, supported by Member Galer, that the meeting be adjourned.

Yeas: Lindsay, Odbert, Ribant, Galer, Curtis, Pingatore, Dunton

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

Christine M. Curtis, Board President

Melissa S. Pingatore, Board Secretary

Judy L. Sirk, Recording Secretary