
STATE OF INDIANA

DISTRESSED UNIT APPEAL BOARD



ONE NORTH CAPITOL AVENUE, SUITE 900
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46204
PHONE (317) 234-2273

Distressed Unit Appeal Board Meeting Memorandum

May 7, 2020

Call to Order: A meeting of the Distressed Unit Appeals Board (“DUAB” or “Board”) was held May 7, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. EDT via WebEx. Members of the Board attending the meeting included Justin McAdam, Chairman, Wes Bennett, Tracy Brown, Paul Joyce, Rebecca Kubacki, Senator Liz Brown, Representative Jeff Thompson and Representative Vernon Smith. Courtney Schaafsma, Executive Director, was also in attendance.

Chairman McAdam called the meeting to order and recognized compliance with the Open Door Law.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item three – Approval of Minutes for the March 12, 2020 Public Meeting. Rep. Smith requested edits be made. Chairman McAdam said that Rep. Smith can work with Ms. Schaafsma to amend the minutes. Ms. Schaafsma agreed and added that she will bring the amended minutes to the next meeting for approval.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item four – Contract Approval by Executive Director. Ms. Schaafsma presented the approval of two staffing requests, an assistant principal at the career center and a district-wide athletic director position. Rep. Smith asked if Title funds will be used to fund these positions and Dr. Paige McNulty, Gary Community School Corporation (“GCSC”) Emergency Manager, confirmed that they will be used for both positions. Rep. Smith asked clarifying questions on whether or not they would be Title I funds. Dr. McNulty clarified that this year all funds have been collapsed into Title I. Rep. Smith asked clarifying questions about the use of Title I funds. Dr. McNulty explained that all of their funds have been collapsed under Title I allowing them flexibility to use these funds for purposes outlined in Title I, II, III and IV. She confirmed that Title I funds are for instruction, but this year all funds have been combined for flexibility. Rep. Smith asked for clarification on what different title funds can be used for and how an athletic director falls into that category. Dr. McNulty explained that they are adding the athletic director position to help with social-emotional opportunities for students after school.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item five – GCSC Emergency Manager Update. Chairman McAdam recognized the work being done during the school shutdown due to COVID-19. Dr. McNulty recognized that it has been a team effort. She highlighted a few items of note: they applied to the State to increase GCSC’s STEM opportunities and an award of \$32,000 for STEM related activities was granted, CTE vocational programing is expanding, and they have been packaging and delivering over 6,000 meals a week. In coordination with one week’s meal delivery, students received three grade-level books to encourage reading at home along with their e-learning. She added that they have made the transition from packets to completely online learning. Through the platform used for this e-learning, they are able to track which students are logging on and follow up with those that aren’t. She added that summer school enrollment has begun as well as registration for the following school year. Dr. McNulty updated that the partnership with IUN has seen 56 people go through the initial orientation. She added that 25 teachers have been added for next school year and that special education services have continued throughout the shutdown. Chairman McAdam asked her to speak to what preparations they are making for next school year. Dr. McNulty explained that they have a committee working on a variety of scenarios

depending on what guidance is issued. She added that she is working with other superintendents and that nothing has been solidified. Ms. Kubacki asked about how students without internet access are able to participate in e-learning and how many students fall in to this category. Dr. McNulty explained that if a student informs them that they do not have access then their school is providing them with paper packets but that those numbers have dwindled as students have found ways to access e-learning. She added that in some cases students have been provided a laptop. Chairman McAdam added that there was a targeted delivery of laptops to all high schoolers so they would be able to stay on track to graduate and Dr. McNulty confirmed that laptops were made available. Rep. Smith asked about where the laptops deployed came from and Dr. McNulty answered that they were the laptops within the school district. Rep. Smith asked how many of the students enrolled in the 8th grade summer CTE cohort enrollment numbers were GCSC students and Dr. McNulty indicated the majority of the students are current GCSC students. Rep. Smith asked how GCSC is making the greater community aware of the opportunities GCSC is offering. Dr. McNulty explained that they are calling, advertising on the website, will be having billboards, will be sending out mailers, and having students do outreach. Rep. Smith asked how many students they will accept and Dr. McNulty answered they will take any who want to come. Rep. Smith asked if they are hiring non-licensed teachers. Dr. McNulty said that they are directing interested parties with emergency certifications to the NWI program. Rep. Smith asked if they are allowing students from outside of Gary to enroll in summer school and Dr. McNulty answered no. Rep. Smith shared the concerns of a Gary parent about previous efforts of certain schools in moving toward e-learning and asked Dr. McNulty about leadership changes in regards to security. Dr. McNulty answered that there has been a personnel change and that she is actively interviewing to fill that position. Rep. Smith asked if a particular employee was given a \$30,000 raise and Dr. McNulty answered that she had not heard of that before. Rep. Smith asked about another individual being let go. Dr. McNulty explained that the position was eliminated and that they are evaluating their needs. Rep. Smith presented various concerns of the advisory board, including concerns associated with invoices that had been provided to the advisory board, the contract with the former Chief Financial Officer, and hiring practices associated with Gary residents. Rep. Smith asked about the budget process and if there is public input. Eric Parish answered that there was outside involvement including the public. Ms. Schaafsma agreed and listed a number of meetings at which the budget was open for discussion. Rep. Smith suggested allowing public input at DUAB meetings. Chairman McAdam added that they are considering different options with public comment.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item six – Consideration of a Contract between GCSC and Equitable Education Solutions for School Improvement Plan Development and Associated Services. Dr. McNulty presented the proposed contract with Equitable Education Solutions, a group that would help with school improvement planning as well as a robust dashboard to help plan intervention services and tailor mentoring. Chairman McAdam clarified that this is required by state law and Dr. McNulty agreed. Mr. Joyce asked about how many other vendors were contacted about this contract. Dr. McNulty answered that three vendors were assessed. Mr. Joyce asked about their price points and why Equitable Education Solutions was chosen. Dr. McNulty answered that their dashboard allowed more specific and individualized programs for students. Mr. Joyce made a motion to approve the contract. Ms. Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0. Rep. Smith asked if GCSC can break the contract if they are not satisfied and Dr. McNulty answered that there is.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item seven – Consideration of the Purchase of Computer Hardware and Associated Services for GCSC. Mr. Parish presented that the contract calls for a 1-to-1 ratio of Chromebooks to students. He explained that it was already in GCSC's budget for the 2020-2021 school year to procure devices this summer for the fall semester and that the school shutdown has encouraged them to speed this process up. He explained that this would give a Chromebook to every student to use in the classroom and for e-learning. He added that this proposal accounts for the device and connectivity. He explained that GCSC qualified for a grant through T-Mobile. Through this grant, they are able to procure the Chromebooks at a lower cost and 24 months of hotspot service through T-Mobile. Chairman McAdam asked when the laptops will be distributed. Mr. Parish said that they will certainly be used in the fall and being determined for the summer. Dr. McNulty added that there are 600 laptops from Roosevelt that will be used this summer. Rep. Smith clarified if each student or each household will get a Chromebook and Mr. Parish confirmed that each student will receive a device. Rep. Smith asked if

there is a plan to retrieve the devices from graduated student and Dr. McNulty answered that there is a plan. Rep. Smith asked about how much money there is in Title funds and Mr. Parish answered that this project will take \$2.4 million and that there is savings in this proposal from the original plan. Dr. McNulty added that the total Title budget for the year is \$9 million and that there is some carryover money from last year. Chairman McAdam asked about ongoing costs with this contract. Mr. Parish answered \$500,000 over 24 months. Chairman McAdam asked about ensuring online safety of students. Mr. Parish answered that there will be robust content filtering and training for students, families and teachers. Mr. Joyce asked about how loss and damage will be covered. Mr. Parish answered that they are self-insuring. He added that the insurance costs would almost outweigh the device. He said GCSC will purchase additional devices to account for any loss. Mr. Joyce asked if each child will be getting a hotspot and how that will be managed. Mr. Parish explained that each device will have a hotspot and that there will be limited use and training on how to ration data. Rep. Smith asked if the Chromebooks are current technology and Mr. Parish answered that they are current. Rep. Smith asked about discouraging use of the devices for games. Mr. Parish ensured that this would be encouraged and that there are extra steps that can be taken if this becomes a problem. Ms. Kubacki made a motion to approve the contract. Mr. Bennett seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item eight – Consideration of a Proposed Refunding of the 2010 Bonds for GCSC. Mr. Parish presented the proposal as the third iteration of refunding. Ms. Schaafsma added that they typically look at a percent savings and that 3% or more is good. She stated that the estimated savings of this refunding is 6.4%. Mr. Bennett made a motion to approve the contract. Mr. Joyce seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item nine – Consideration of the Issuance of Tax Anticipation Warrants for GCSC. Mr. Parish presented the proposal. Chairman McAdam added that this is an issue for local governments across the state right now. Mr. Parish added that this does not add to the debt of GCSC as this is short-term borrowing. Mr. Bennett made a motion to approve the issuance of the bond refunding. Mr. Joyce seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

Chairman McAdam introduced new business from Mr. Parish on HEA 1065. Mr. Parish explained that this is also known as the school improvement fund and that this program will start in July. He added that they are soliciting community feedback on how to prioritize this spending as well as issuing RFPs.

Rep. Smith asked about declining graduation rate and Mr. Parish acknowledged this and asked Dr. McNulty to expand. Dr. McNulty added that there has been an addition of a fifth year cohort for this summer and again in July to recover credits. Rep. Smith asked if the closure has led to savings. Dr. McNulty said that they have had energy saving but also have had unexpected costs.

Chairman McAdam adjourned the meeting.