
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

June 18, 2020

Call to Order: A meeting of the Distressed Unit Appeals Board (“DUAB” or “Board”) was held June 18, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. EDT via WebEx. Members of the Board attending the meeting include Justin McAdam, Chairman, Wes Bennett, Tracy Brown, Paul Joyce, Rebecca Kubacki, Representative Vernon Smith, and Representative Jeff Thompson. 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 – Consideration of Emergency Management Services for Gary Community School Corporation (“GCSC”). Chairman McAdam provided background information on the process of evaluating MGT and thanked community members for their involvement. He advised that everyone keep in mind the conditions COVID-19 has brought with it, the feedback offered by community members, why DUAB’s involvement began, and the future needs of GCSC. Chairman McAdam made the recommendation to continue to engage with MGT based on the information in his previous statements and the stability the continuation would bring to the district. He explained that while MGT requested a three year contract extension he recommends a two year extension.

Mr. Joyce added that it would not be in GCSC’s best interest to do more or less than a two year contract. He brought up the need to plan for the return of a superintendent to GCSC and to turn GCSC over to the community. Mr. Bennett agreed that there should be a two year contract extension. He added that he is not in the business to run GCSC long term and that this will give for GCSC to get on its feet financially as well as academically.

Rep. Thompson agreed and thanked the Board for their work.

Rep. Smith spoke in support of the recommendation while voicing concerns about GCSC’s academics. He stated that MGT needs to listen more to the community and make better choices on educational leadership. He also voiced concerns about use of Title I funds and the need to personalize the recruitment of students. Chairman McAdam agreed that there is a need to build up MGT and DUAB’s community engagement. He added that he is working to increase the amount of data the Board receives on the performance of GCSC in a variety of areas and noted that currently much of the meeting time is focused on the financial side.

Rep. Smith asked if they will be provided a copy of the contract. Chairman McAdam explained that they are currently voting on whether or not to reengage and negotiate a contract that will be brought before the Board at a later meeting. Rep. Smith stated that he would like to see transparency included in the contract.

Ms. Brown stated that IDOE will only support a one year extension with MGT as they have already had a three year contract. Rep. Smith asked what concerns IDOE has. Ms. Brown responded that she represents Dr. McCormick and that while the financial aspect is important they are focused on academics and they would like to

see more improvement on the academic side before granting further extension. Rep. Smith asked what would be used as a barometer to measure academic improvement. Ms. Brown stated she would need to consult with her team before she could provide an answer. Chairman McAdam explained that data might not be available in time for a one year reconsideration.

Mr. Bennett made a motion extend the contract for MGT for two years. Mr. Joyce seconded the motion. Rep. Smith asked if they would be discussing a raise with MGT. Chairman McAdam stated that at this point an increase would not be appropriate given the current financial situation as well as their ability to maintain high performance with the current resources. Rep. Smith stated that going forward bonuses must be paid out for things delivered, not for just creating a plan. Chairman McAdam recognized his point, adding that the previous types of incentives that might have made sense early on in the process may not be fitting presently. Rep. Smith asked what the timeline of getting a copy of the contract will be. Chairman McAdam said his goal will be at least a week in advance to Board members. Rep. Smith asked if the contract will be renegotiated if there are concerns. Chairman McAdam said that he will listen to feedback and be responsive. The motion passed 4-1.

Chairman McAdam introduced new business – proposing the consideration of allowing public comment at all meetings. He asked that Ms. Schaafsma draft a policy that could be adopted. Rep. Smith spoke in support of this. He explained that GCSC does not have a local school board and this would be an important step in giving the community a way to provide input. Mr. Bennett supported the initiative. Chairman McAdam said that this will be brought before the Board at a later meeting.

Rep. Smith asked for updates on the status of the Roosevelt building and the license application for GCSC's radio station.

Mr. Bennett asked if IDOE could help with the construction of academic benchmarks. Ms. Brown confirmed that they will.

Chairman McAdam adjourned the meeting.