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# STATE OF INDIANA

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**DISTRESSED UNIT APPEAL BOARD**



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## **Distressed Unit Appeal Board Meeting Memorandum**

**June 26, 2020**

**Call to Order:** A meeting of the Distressed Unit Appeals Board (“DUAB” or “Board”) was held June 26, 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, 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. Mr. Joyce made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

Chairman McAdam introduced Dr. Paige McNulty to give the Gary Community School Corporation (“GCSC”) Emergency Manager Update. Dr. McNulty updated the Board on GCSC’s technology expansion with Chromebooks and hotspots as well as summer school progress. She discussed the virtual graduation that took place and announced that there will be a drive through graduation July 14. She addressed enrollment campaign activity and plans being made for the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. Dr. McNulty added that sports programs has been started following IHSAA rules. Chairman McAdam asked what the virtual learning will look like and Dr. McNulty answered that it will look different than last spring. She explained that GCSC will be using CARES money to upgrade their smartboard technology to allow live streaming of lessons for high schoolers to tune in to classes in real time. She added that there will be teachers dedicated to e-learning for each grade level. Chairman McAdam asked if students participating in e-learning will be able to interact with teachers through that platform and Dr. McNulty confirmed that they will. Chairman McAdam asked if this technology will be used for all grade levels and Dr. McNulty answered that it will definitely be used for middle and high school classrooms. Ms. Kubacki asked how many surveys GCSC got back and Dr. McNulty answered several hundred. She added that about 30% of parents responded that they would be interested in keeping their students home in the fall. Chairman McAdam asked if they expect to have their full teaching workforce with them in person and Dr. McNulty confirmed that they do. Chairman McAdam asked if they anticipate consistent enrollment and Dr. McNulty confirmed that they do. Dr. McNulty informed the Board that GCSC received \$4.7 million in CARES Act funds and had shared that money as required with non-public schools and had designated other funds for various COVID-19 related needs. Chairman McAdam asked about supplying PPE for students and Dr. McNulty explained that they are putting together a kit containing two masks, hand sanitizer and a thermometer for each student.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item four – Consideration of Common School Fund Loan Suspension Request and School Improvement Fund Plans for Gary Community School Corporation. Ms. Schaafsma provided context. Amy Marsh gave an overview of how MGT plans to engage with HEA 1065. Mr. Joyce asked how they are ensuring contracts are accessible to local, minority-owned businesses. Ms. Marsh answered that although no contracts have been granted yet, those businesses will be given full consideration. Mr. Joyce followed up by

asking about the bids they have received and encouraging them to select local businesses. Ms. Marsh responded that they had released RFQ for playgrounds and received one response. Mr. Joyce asked how they plan to reach out to local businesses. Ms. Marsh welcomed recommendations on outreach and the bidding process. Mr. Joyce asked who will be selecting the bids. Chairman McAdam answered that the Board oversees the expenditures but not the contract selection directly. Ms. Kubacki and Chairman McAdam echoed Mr. Joyce's comments.

Due to technical difficulties, Rep. Smith was unable to ask questions during the Emergency Manager Update. Chairman McAdam allowed the questions to be asked once his audio was restored. Rep. Smith asked about the selection of the Gary student ambassadors for the enrollment campaign and Dr. McNulty answered that there was a selection panel. Rep. Smith pressed for her to look further into the selection process to ensure that the ambassadors truly attend GCSC. Rep. Smith asked clarifying questions about who would be speaking at the drive through graduation, specifically if the class president and valedictorian would be speaking. Dr. McNulty answered that their speeches had been recorded and not presented live in order to ensure social distancing. Rep. Smith asked for clarification on how Dr. McNulty plans to handle the difficulties of students and teachers not being able to effectively communicate with masks on. Dr. McNulty clarified that the guidance they have been given allows teachers and students to pull their masks down to speak when social distancing is enacted. She added that in certain instances clear masks can be utilized as well as holding classes outside to allow for more space. Rep. Smith asked if staffing needs will be increased with both in-person and online class options. Dr. McNulty responded that they will be utilizing smartboards and teachers who will not be returning in-person would be used as online learning teachers. Rep. Smith referenced a past problem of students enrolled in online learning not logging on for instruction and asked how that will be addressed. Dr. McNulty answered that this issue will be handled similarly to when students don't pay attention in the classroom. She added that they will reinforce the importance of education and build up the student-teacher relationships. Rep. Smith stressed the importance of engaging Gary's students and Dr. McNulty assured him that they are working to make the lessons engaging. Chairman McAdam asked if Mr. Joyce had any insights to offer. Mr. Joyce explained different methods of monitoring student engagement. Rep. Smith asked if there had been any evaluation of the online learning that took place in the spring. Dr. McNulty answered that they did include that in the survey that was sent out to parents in the summer. Rep. Smith asked how they plan to reach parents. Dr. McNulty listed a number of ways they get information out to parents. Senator Brown asked how they plan to prevent cheating since students are able to access assessments at their own pace. Dr. McNulty answered that students will be participating in classes in real-time. Mr. Bennett asked Dr. McNulty to explain how the athletic director hiring committee was formed. Dr. McNulty explained that she does not sit on the hiring committees so she asked the high school principal to head up the forming of the committee and they made a recommendation to her. Mr. Bennett clarified that there were not any parents on the committee and Dr. McNulty confirmed that there were not. Mr. Bennett asked where the 53% enrollment compares to previous years at this time. Eric Parish answered that they are running about 10% ahead of last year. Mr. Bennett asked about the composition of the reentry committee. Dr. McNulty answered that it is made up of administrators and the Gary Health Department. Mr. Bennett asked if students will have to learn how to utilize the online learning platforms and Dr. McNulty answered that many students have already been using them. She added that they are building modules with information on the platforms and how to use them for students and their families to work through. Mr. Bennet asked about the Chromebooks and Dr. McNulty answered that they were delivered that week. Rep. Smith asked for an update on enrolling Roosevelt students in GCSC. Dr. McNulty answered that they have enrolled many students and hired many of the teachers. Rep. Smith asked for a number and Dr. McNulty said she would get it to him. Rep. Smith restated the importance of retaining those students.

Chairman McAdam turned the conversation back to HEA 1065. Rep. Smith asked for a summary since he was off the line for the presentation. Chairman McAdam provided a summary. Rep. Smith asked how much is being requested. Chairman McAdam explained that they need to consider recommending the suspension of loan payments as well as how to spend the funds. He clarified that there has not been approval on the suspension of the loans. Ms. Schaafsma and Mr. Parish added context. Ms. Schaafsma asked that the Board make a recommendation to suspend loan payments as well as make a recommendation to extend the term of the loans.

Mr. Joyce asked about requiring the accessibility of contracts to local, minority-owned business. Chairman McAdam answered that it could possibly be part of the expenditure plan although he would push back on adding extra steps since there are projects that could be taking place in the summer.

Mr. Bennet made a motion to suspend loan payments and recommended the loan terms be extended. Mr. Joyce seconded the motion. Mr. Joyce asked for clarification why A3004 was omitted and Ms. Schaafsma provided context. The motion passed (5-0).

Chairman McAdam directed conversation to the plan presented by MGT for those funds. Mr. Joyce restated the importance of utilizing Gary businesses before other options. Ms. Kubacki requested they first look at minority and women owned businesses. Chairman McAdam stated that the request could be added to the motion. Chairman McAdam asked if there was pushback on the plan and Ms. Marsh responded that there was not pushback on whether or not dollars should be spent. She added that the response to the playground was a Gary business. Chairman McAdam asked about how the plan will address the roof at Westside High School. Ms. Marsh explained that the areas with the greatest need will be addressed first starting in phase one. Chairman McAdam clarified that the whole roof will be replaced and Ms. Marsh confirmed that it will. Chairman McAdam asked about Westside's pool and Ms. Marsh explained that the pool will be addressed in phase three. Chairman McAdam asked if it will be ready for the 2021-22 school year and Ms. Marsh said that ideally it would be ready. Mr. Joyce asked if there could be any CARES funds that could be used for to fix the roof allowing for more social distancing. Mr. Parish responded that it is an interesting thought and he will look in to using those funds. Chairman McAdam referenced their conversations with the Mayor and asked how they plan to address vacant buildings. Mr. Parish said they will continue to be in contact with Mayor Prince and that building demolition was not high on community feedback but a focus of HEA 1065 and that divesting GCSC of them will remain a priority. Mr. Bennett clarified that the estimates are rough estimates and Mr. Parish confirmed. Chairman McAdam stated that they should expect flexibility on the timeline and projects selected.

Mr. Bennett made a motion that the Board accept the plan. Chairman McAdam offered an amendment that MGT look first at minority and women owned businesses in the Gary community and the State of Indiana. Mr. Bennet resubmitted his motion including the amendment. Ms. Kubacki seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0). Ms. Schaafsma offered her recommendations on how the Board should engage with the forthcoming expenditures. Chairman McAdam suggested they take comment today and bring back a policy in July. Mr. Joyce recommended staying close to the procedures currently employed by the Board and reassess later into the program. Mr. Parish agreed with Ms. Schaafsma's recommendations. Mr. Bennett supported Ms. Schaafsma, Mr. Joyce and Mr. Parish's recommendations. Ms. Schaafsma asked Ms. Marsh to speak about how the community will have transparency. Ms. Marsh said that the GCSC website will include progress updates and timeframes on projects. She added that these updates will be shared on social media. Mr. Parish said that every dollar will be accounted for. Chairman McAdam recommended this be brought back in July for approval.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item five – Consideration of Food Services Agreement for Gary Community School Corporation. Mr. Parish gave background information on the current contract and selection process. He added that there was one response to the RFP. Rep. Smith stated that community feedback is positive and supportive of this contract. Chairman McAdam asked about doing in-house food service and Mr. Parish explained that they had looked into it and it made sense to continue with a third-party provider. Chairman McAdam clarified that it is more like five one-year contracts and Mr. Parish confirmed. Ms. Kubacki asked if it is standard to have one-year contracts and Mr. Parish answered that both parties are comfortable with the contract. Ms. Schaafsma added clarification that it is a federal requirement to do the contract this way. Ms. Brown said that this does meet the federal requirements.

Ms. Kubacki made a motion to approve the contract. Mr. Joyce seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0). Chairman McAdam asked for any new business. Rep. Smith stated that GCSC had a provision to prioritize local minority and women owned businesses and added that MGT has not been abiding by it. He asked that the

provision be considered further. He also stated that he had recommended a wing be created in West Side to capture students from Roosevelt. Chairman McAdam agreed that GCSC needs to capture as many Roosevelt students as possible. He added that the team will work to better understand those policies, how they are being implemented, and look to see how they can be improved. Mr. Parish gave a brief update on GCSC's approval to use \$3.4 million in tax anticipation warrants to cover expenses during the delay of property tax collection. He also updated the Board on bond refunding. Chairman McAdam asked Dr. McNulty to speak about how the district is engaging with the topics surrounding George Floyd and the events inspired by him. Dr. McNulty summarized how she and her team have been engaging in meaningful conversations and taking steps as a result of recent events. Rep. Smith stated that he did not see MGT or faculty representation at the events that took place in Gary. He added that they need to revisit the plan to infuse African American history in curriculum and train faculty to do so.

Chairman McAdam adjourned the meeting.