
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

September 17, 2020

Call to Order: A meeting of the Distressed Unit Appeals Board (“DUAB” or “Board”) was held September 17, 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 – Approval of Minutes. Ms. Kubacki made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Joyce seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0).

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item four – Public Comment. Seeing that no community members signed up for public comment, the Board moved on to the next agenda item.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item five – Gary Community School Corporation (“GCSC”) Manager Update. Dr. Paige McNulty updated the Board on the referendum and GCSC properties for sale. She reminded the Board that CTE students are attending in-person classes as part of a hybrid model. Dr. McNulty updated the Board on enrollment, noting that enrollment is up from last year and continues to increase. She noted that GCSC continues to offer training for parents and students on the Google platform and other e-learning tools being used. Dr. McNulty provided updates on their partnership with IUN as well as grants awarded for e-learning technology and training. She added that teacher negotiations have begun.

Chairman McAdam asked what feedback on e-learning is so far and Dr. McNulty answered that it is challenging but the teachers have risen to the occasion. She noted that 80 percent of students are logging in every day and the 20 percent logging in intermittently are being checked in on. Chairman McAdam asked how they keep track of student attendance and Dr. McNulty said they can track real time if students are logging in and turning in assignments. Mr. Bennett asked what support there is for parents who are struggling with the needed technology and Dr. McNulty answered that there is an IT help desk 24/7. She added that they are developing an informational video based on frequently asked questions.

Dr. McNulty presented the updated purchasing and hiring policies that give preference to local and minority-owned businesses. Rep. Smith asked how teacher struggling with e-learning are being supported and Dr. McNulty answered that there is professional development built into the schedule each week. Ms. Kimberley Bradley, GCSC Chief Academic Officer, added that each school has a designated Google champion that is available to assist struggling teachers. Rep. Smith asked if they have considered team teaching and Dr. McNulty answered that they are already implementing this system. Rep. Smith asked about parents that have not picked up Chromebooks yet and Dr. McNulty answered that there were a few who opted out and are using their own device. Rep. Smith

asked about enrolment and attendance number and Dr. McNulty clarified how they capture those numbers. Rep. Smith asked about purchasing and Dr. McNulty explained that the purchasing must be from approved vendors. Rep. Smith asked about teacher observations and Dr. McNulty answered that they are being done virtually as they have access to pop into classes at any time. Rep. Smith asked about monitoring testing and Ms. Bradley explained what programs they have to control students' screens as well as information sent home with students explaining the importance of academic honesty. Chairman McAdam asked if tests can be taken fully virtual and Ms. Bradley confirmed. Chairman McAdam asked about the schedule of demolition of closed buildings. Both Dr. McNulty and Eric Parish gave background on the need to take the buildings down and the process moving forward. Rep. Smith asked which building is planned for demolition in the fall and Mr. Parish clarified that Lew Wallace is anticipated to be the first building slated for demolition, although that will not be until 2021 and could change. Rep. Smith asked what the plan for the land is post-demolition and Mr. Parish answered that they would prefer to divest themselves of the property and that their intent is to leave that space better for the community. Rep. Smith asked if about potential uses of land and Mr. Parish gave background on interest in the past.

Mr. Rob Tanner presented the transportation RFP and stated that they hope for reduced cost and increased efficiency. He added that they do have optional renewal with the current contract depending on what proposals are submitted. Rep. Smith asked how they are handling their current contract in light of e-learning. Mr. Tanner answered that they are being used in a reduced capacity for food distribution. He added that their contract is based on use. Dr. McNulty added that they are being used for transportation of CTE students. Rep. Smith asked if there was a commitment to the company for a certain amount of use and Mr. Tanner answered that there was not a commitment. Mr. Parish confirmed this and noted that he believed GCSC is currently using transportation services more than most districts. Rep. Smith asked about pre-K transportation and Mr. Tanner answered that pre-K transportation is only provided for special education students. Dr. McNulty confirmed this to be true and Ms. Bradley added that bussing for all pre-K students stopped two or so years ago. Rep. Smith asked about how they recoup money for vandalized buses and Mr. Tanner answered that he would guess a civil action would be the only option. Ms. Kubacki asked if there is insurance to help cover this and Mr. Tanner confirmed that the busing company does have to have insurance. He added that GCSC is trying to help the busing companies keep insurance costs down. Chairman McAdam asked what this looks like going forward and Mr. Tanner stated that they will post the RFP with approval and have a pre-bid meeting in early October. Rep. Smith asked about the roofing company that was listed in the claims docket for the School Improvement Fund Plan and if the company was a Gary company. Mr. Tanner said he would have to find out and get back to him.

Mr. Tanner presented the School Improvement Fund plan update. He noted that an architect has been selected and that painting has begun at the middle school. Chairman McAdam drew attention to the action item of approving the claims item and noted that they will vote after questions. Rep. Smith asked if the signs at each school building are permanent and Mr. Tanner answered that they are not. Mr. Tanner talked through the claims docket with the Board. Mr. Joyce made a motion to approve the docket as presented. Mr. Bennet seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0).

Ms. Bradley presented The Path Forward and gave background information on how GCSC developed this plan. Ms. Kubacki asked if GCSC is able to track why enrollment is increasing. Ms. Bradley answered that they do not have specific data on that although they were ahead of others on being able to offer Chromebooks to students. Mr. Bennett asked for their rationale on having a food service advisory committee and Mr. Parish explained that they learned that food services is a high priority service for GCSC when GCSC had considered bringing food service in-house. Mr. Bennett asked when the committee will be stood up. Mr. Parish answered that first actions will be taken in September. Mr. Bennett asked what other local districts are doing in terms of transparency. Ms. Bradley answered that she has not seen another dashboard with the scope and span of theirs. Rep. Smith asked for more information on how they will improve instruction and student learning. Ms. Bradley noted that they have been focusing on digital instruction and how do they get to where they want to be – more individualized instruction. Rep. Smith asked about the inclusion of African American history in curriculum and Ms. Bradley said that those themes will be used to teach the lessons.

Mr. Parish presented the Roosevelt School RFI. Chairman McAdam asked what they are looking for in a bidder and Mr. Parish answered that they will be looking at their intent of use and track record with projects of this size. Mr. Parish clarified that they will not automatically rule out groups of a smaller size and that they will be focusing on preserving the legacy of the building. Chairman McAdam clarified that they have left room for someone to come in and cast a vision and Mr. Parish agreed. Chairman McAdam asked how the community will be involved and Mr. Parish explained that it will be a broad consensus of folks involved. Rep. Smith asked if there have been any viable plans submitted at this point and Mr. Parish answered that there have not been any formal submissions. Rep. Smith asked if there were any informal discussions and Mr. Parish answered that nothing has gone beyond an interest-level stage. Rep. Smith asked about how this request will be distributed and Mr. Parish explained how they will be casting a wide net.

Mr. Ricardo Cepin presented the Operating Referendum Control Document. Rep. Smith asked about the language used to discuss how the funding will be used. Mr. Parish explained that those categories align with the ballot questions and that they will add more details in later drafts. Rep. Smith shared feedback and concerns he has heard from the community and Mr. Parish explained that it is important for the community to understand how the referendum and school improvement fund work together.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item six – Update on the GCSC Viable Deficit Reduction Plan. Mr. Cepin presented the plan. Rep. Smith asked if the anticipated revenue for the referendum include the collection rate and Mr. Parish answered that it does. Chairman McAdam asked if there are any non-viable initiatives and Mr. Cepin answered that the establishment of an online program is a discontinued initiative. Mr. Parish explained that they had considered creating an online platform to compete with virtual schools and that did not turn out. Mr. Cepin added that they also now have a more realistic picture of what needs to happen to sell the properties.

Chairman McAdam asked if there was any new business and seeing none adjourned the meeting.