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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 29, 2021

**Call to Order:** A meeting of the Distressed Unit Appeal Board (“DUAB” or “Board”) was held June 29, 2021, 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, Representative Jeff Thompson, Senator Liz Brown, and Senator Eddie Melton. 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 that the May 13, 2021, minutes be approved as presented. Mr. Bennett seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0).

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item four – Public Comment.

Mr. Robert Buggs overviewed information he sent to the Board. He expressed concern over a lack of leadership continuity. He also noted that he is unable to answer his constituents’ questions due to a lack of transparency.

Senator Ed Charbonneau stated that he is an Emerson High School graduate and has lived through the great times and has watched it deteriorate. He noted that the student population was cut in half though none of the buildings were closed. He recognized the remarkable comeback, down from many schools to one, specifically noting student athletes’ achievements. He stated that hard decisions are being made and he fully supports what is happening with Gary schools.

Nina Burton stated that she is a current parent of four students and one graduate and expressed her support for an extended school day.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item five – Contract Approvals by the DUAB Executive Director. Ms. Schaafsma gave overviews of and background information on the three contracts. Mr. Joyce asked if these contracts and rates are common throughout the state. Nathan Williamson gave information on the contract negotiations and how the outcomes compare to other districts’ contracts. Mr. Bennett asked how they know they are getting the best value and Mr. Williamson gave more information on the vendor selection process. Mr. Bennett asked if schools have access to the IDOA vendor list. Ms. Brown noted that DOE does as an agency and Mr. Williamson noted that schools have some but not for all their needs. Mr. Joyce asked how GCSC’s paving costs compare to other places across the state. Chairman McAdam held that conversation until the contract is presented.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item six – Gary Community School Corporation (“GCSC”) Manager Update. Dr. Paige McNulty allowed district staff to share updates on professional development training.

Angela Grayson, assistant principal at Beveridge Elementary, stated that she was excited for and blessed by the trainings this past week. The new approach allows everyone to be more intentional with students and teachers.

Chaitra Wade, assistant principal at Banneker at Marquette, stated that she was excited about the incorporation of professional learning communities.

Tanisha Banks, principal at Beveridge Elementary, noted that the trainings provide them with a framework for professional learning communities and tools to strengthen parental engagement.

Shelly Martin, director of the Gary Area Career Center, stated that she walked away with a lot of nuggets on how to educate the whole child. She also commented on the support they are receiving from Dr. McNulty and leadership.

Brandi Herrod, principal at West Side Leadership Academy, stated that this has been the best professional development in years.

Dr. McNulty gave a summary of the trainings the administrators have been participating in and gave an overview of the referendum ambassador program progress. She noted that they have received a \$125,000 grant from Indiana Department of Education, hosted an in-person graduation, completed an SBOA audit, and are updating their district policies. Chairman McAdam asked what referendum revenue collection looked like and Nicole Wolverton gave an overview. Sen. Melton asked for clarification on the collection rate and Ms. Wolverton responded. Sen. Melton asked how the funds will be used when they come in and Ms. Wolverton noted that the only funds spent so far have been on teacher raises. Sen. Melton asked if it went to their base pay or if it was a stipend and Ms. Wolverton confirmed that it went to the base. Mr. Bennett asked for clarification on why there was 41 percent collection and Ms. Wolverton responded noting that she does not have any historical data. Mr. Bennett asked for more information on the ambassador meeting and Dr. McNulty provided more details about how the meeting was run. Mr. Bennett asked for an update on the rebidding for insurance and Dr. McNulty responded. Chairman McAdam asked where things stand for back-to-school and Dr. McNulty stated that she hopes all students will be back in person in the fall. She noted that there will be a small virtual option for students, but the expectation will be in-person attendance. Chairman McAdam asked about masks and Dr. McNulty answered that they will be optional. Mr. Williamson added that they will still be encouraging positive health practices. Chairman McAdam asked if they received community feedback on the plans and Dr. McNulty confirmed that they did. Ms. Kubacki asked if they are requiring vaccines and Dr. McNulty answered that they are strongly encouraged but cannot be required. Mr. Bennett asked about chronic absenteeism and Dr. McNulty noted that they are aware of chronically absent students and worked to get them engaged. She also noted that kids are excited to get back to school in person. Mr. Bennett asked if the virtual component was a main reason for the absenteeism and Dr. McNulty confirmed that it was. Mr. Joyce asked for an update on Roosevelt and Dr. McNulty stated that they are still looking for a buyer. Mr. Joyce asked about rebidding the insurance and Dr. McNulty noted that they have done the RFP. Mr. Joyce asked if there is interest in the other properties for sale and Dr. McNulty confirmed that there is. Eric Parish gave more information on Roosevelt and their partnership with Indiana Landmarks. Sen. Melton encouraged them to look for opportunities to collaborate with the city. He then asked if they foresee any communication issues as a result of Covid and Dr. McNulty answered that the parents are surrounded with information now more than ever. Ms. Kubacki stated that she appreciates the enthusiasm of those

who have spoken. Mr. Joyce requested they hear from the students and Dr. McNulty agreed that they could set up a forum for that.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item seven – Consideration of GCSC School Improvement Fund Plan Update. Chairman McAdam gave background information on the plan and Mr. Parish walked the Board through the update. Chairman McAdam asked when they will be able to see the full capital plan and Mr. Parish responded that their goal is September 1. Chairman McAdam asked if there are some projects that will not be funded and Mr. Parish noted that there will always be capital needs. Dr. McNulty clarified that nothing has been taken off the list. Mr. Joyce asked why ADA compliance projects would be delayed. Rob Tanner explained that the first priority was making the buildings habitable. Mr. Joyce stated that he likes the new playground and track but ADA has to come first. Dr. McNulty added that they are trying to do everything in tandem to increase enrollment as well. Mr. Bennett asked clarifying questions on delayed demos and Mr. Tanner responded. Sen. Melton stated that there should be a public meeting or document about this plan and asked if there were plans for community updates to keep them informed on how they might be impacted. He stated that he encourages overcommunicating with the community. Chairman McAdam asked if the communication plan will be part of the RFP. Mr. Tanner and Dr. McNulty agreed that the contractor should be communicating but it ultimately is the district's duty. Ms. Brown encouraged good documentation of which funds are used for which projects. Ms. Wolverton overviewed the schedule. Mr. Joyce asked about increased costs for paving and Ms. Wolverton explained that with increased access to funds they are able to do a full-scope repair. Mr. Joyce asked about completion rates and Ms. Wolverton responded. Mr. Joyce asked if they were able to provide updated completion dates and Dr. McNulty explained that they are running in to issues finding contractors similar to other schools in the area. Sen. Melton asked they can ensure local contractors know about the RFPs and Dr. McNulty overviewed how they advertise in the community. Ms. Kubacki asked if this information is on the website and Dr. McNulty confirmed that the school improvement plan is on the website. Mr. Bennett made a motion that the School Improvement Fund plan be approved as presented. Ms. Kubacki seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0). Ms. Wolverton presented the May expenditures that needed approved. My Joyce made a motion the ledger be approved as presented. Ms. Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0). Dr. McNulty introduced Facilities Director Barry O'Quinn. Mr. Tanner provided the quarterly update. Mr. O'Quinn introduced himself.

Mr. Joyce introduced agenda item eight – Consideration of GCSC West Side Leadership Academy Paving and Concrete Contract. Mr. O'Quinn overviewed the bidding process and gave background on the needs being addressed. Mr. Joyce asked clarifying questions on local vendor preference and Dr. McNulty noted that all three asphalt companies in the region participated in the bid. Mr. Joyce asked if they selected the most responsive bidder and Mr. O'Quinn confirmed that they did. Ms. Schaafsma noted that this project will be covered by school improvement funds. Mr. Joyce made a motion that they approve the contract as presented Ms. Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0).

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item nine – Review of Formative and Summative Assessment Report. Dr. McNulty and Mr. Williamson overviewed the report. Chairman McAdam asked what the reading and math drop-off can be attributed to and Dr. McNulty responded that the outdated curriculum and transience of the student population are contributing factors. Mr. Williamson added that some of the positives from the Kindergarten numbers are from the good work being done in the preschool. Dr. McNulty noted that number of open teaching positions has decreased from 45 to 8. Mr. Bennett asked when new data will be released and Dr. McNulty said that it will be done again in the fall. Dr. McNulty overviewed the district's strengths and weaknesses. Mr. Williamson noted the importance of supporting and strengthening current teaching staff. Chairman McAdam asked for clarification on the participation drop off between elementary and high school students. Dr. McNulty noted that being in person going forward will help greatly. Chairman McAdam asked about teaching the teachers to use data and Dr. McNulty overviewed the professional development plan. Chairman McAdam asked if the data gets sent

home to the parents and Dr. McNulty confirmed that it does. She added that they will be creating a more robust PTA and will host trainings. Chairman McAdam asked if there are people at each school to assist with the data and Dr. McNulty confirmed that they do and will increase the number this year. Chairman McAdam asked if they are the instructional coaches and Dr. McNulty confirmed that they are. Mr. Williamson noted that he is proud of the instructional coaches they have brought in. Sen. Melton asked what percentage of students are under an IEP and what is being done for them. Mr. Williamson answered that they have 15 percent of students with IEPs which is on track with the state average. He added that they are adding an instructional coach to support that student population. Mr. Bennett asked clarifying questions about class size and Dr. McNulty responded. Mr. Williamson added that an extended school day will allow the addition of another class period and reduce class sizes.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item ten – Review of GCSC Extended School Day Plan. Dr. McNulty presented the plan. Chairman McAdam asked clarifying questions on the extra compensation teachers will be receiving and Mr. Williamson responded. Mr. Bennett asked for more information on opting out and Mr. Williamson clarified that there can be flexibility in cases where high school students are current on credits and need to leave early for an internship. Sen. Melton asked if the \$10,000 increase is for all teachers and Dr. McNulty confirmed that it is for all teachers. Mr. Williamson added that everyone needed for the longer school day will receive a raise. Sen. Melton asked follow-up questions and Mr. Williamson answered. Mr. Bennett asked for information on why community members stated they were against it and Dr. McNulty responded. She also clarified that the plan is widely accepted by stakeholders. Mr. Bennett asked if the families were surveyed and Dr. McNulty confirmed that they had been. She noted that they expressed a higher rate of support than other stakeholders. Sen. Brown asked clarifying questions on the teacher raises and Dr. McNulty answered. Ms. Schaafsma asked what the next step would be in communicating with parents and Dr. McNulty overviewed their communication plan. Sen. Melton asked what the population size of parents surveyed and Mr. Williamson answered. Mr. Bennett thanked the management team for proposing this and being proactive. Chairman McAdam agreed. Ms. Schaafsma overviewed why the Board did not take a vote at this meeting.

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