
STATE OF INDIANA

DISTRESSED UNIT APPEAL BOARD



INDIANA GOVERNMENT CENTER NORTH
100 N. SENATE AVENUE, ROOM 1058
INDIANAPOLIS IN 46204
(317) 234-2273

Distressed Unit Appeal Board Meeting Memorandum

Thursday, May 26, 2022

Call to Order: A meeting of the Distressed Unit Appeals Board (“DUAB” or “Board”) was held May 26, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. EDT at the Indiana Government Center South Building, Conference Room 29, 302 W. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204. Members of the Board attending the meeting in-person include Chairman Justin McAdam, Tracy Brown, Paul Joyce, Rebecca Kubacki, Rep. Vernon Smith, and Rep. Jeff Thompson. Wes Bennett and Sen. Liz Brown joined remotely. Peter Miller, Executive Director, and Emily Crisler, Counsel, were also in attendance.

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

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item 3 – *Approval of the Minutes*.

Mr. Joyce made a motion the April 26, 2022, and May 18, 2022, minutes be approved as presented. Ms. Kubacki seconded the motion. All Board members present were in favor of the motion.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item 4 – *Public Comment*.

- **Ms. Nikki Byrd** stated that community members came to the meeting because they are concerned about what is happening in Gary schools. She stated that they need local control and to have someone in charge that is concerned about Gary children. She stated that GCSC students are not getting the education they need. She raised concerns about community members not being allowed in GCSC buildings and about pedophiles being on staff.
- **Mrs. Lovetta Tindal** stated that there is currently no plan in place to return GCSC to local control and that she would like DUAB to have a regular monthly meeting in Gary. She stated that the community needs to see detailed presentations regularly with specific data. She stated that the community needs MGT to leave GCSC.
- **Ms. Tracy Coleman** stated that the GCSC curriculum has been dumbed down and that it has been made harder for students to obtain a Core 40 diploma. She stated that the students deserve more and need renovated bathrooms. She stated that if the Board really cares about GCSC they will return it to the community for local control.
- **Mr. Robert Coleman** played a pre-recorded audio clip of statements from the community. He stated that the community needs to regain local control of GCSC.
- **Dr. Michaela Spangenburg** stated that MGT needs to leave GCSC, that they keep asking for more time and showing no progress. She stated that it is frustrating that the referendum ambassadors are not meeting as had been discussed.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item 5 – *Gary Community School Corporation Manager Update and Path Forward*.

Dr. Paige McNulty stated that Bailly Middle School has been designated as a STEM certified school and that two others are in the process of completing the required certifications for the designation. She stated that enrollment efforts are underway, the fine arts department has put on their last performance of the year, the auditorium seats are set to be sent out for restoration, and that there will be various training opportunities for teachers throughout the summer. Rep. Smith asked about the graduation rate and Dr. McNulty discussed preliminary graduation numbers. Chairman McAdam asked Dr. McNulty to speak to school safety protocol and she overviewed current and planned measures. Rep. Smith asked about student recruitment and Dr. McNulty discussed their current recruitment strategy. Rep. Smith stated his concerns about not having transparency with referendum dollars and Ms. Nicole Wolverton shared how she has engaged with the community and worked to be transparent. Rep. Smith clarified that he would like more information shared with the community before the dollars are spent. Chairman McAdam shared his thoughts on the meeting held in Gary the previous week and areas of needed improvement for GCSC. He specifically discussed the areas of academics, finances, operations, and transition of power. Rep. Smith stated that he was sad to see the low community turnout at the May 18th meeting in Gary but attributed it to a feeling of defeat. Rep. Smith asked for information on how much money is being spent with Gary businesses and asked if Dr. McNulty removed “MGT Must Go” signs from school property. Dr. McNulty stated that she did not have the signs removed. Rep. Smith asked if Dr. McNulty will put her children in GCSC and Chairman McAdam stated that the question is not fair to ask as her children go to school in the community in which they live. Ms. Kubacki stated that the comments the Board hears from the Gary community are not unlike comments heard by any school board. She stated that Rep. Smith only discussed the negatives and she would like him to acknowledge the good things that have happened. Rep. Smith stated that he has discussed the good job done with the fiscal situation.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item 6 – *School Improvement Fund/1065 Claims*.

Ms. Wolverton presented the docket. Chairman McAdam asked about the progress on the West Side roof project and Ms. Wolverton provided an update. Rep. Smith asked if the bathrooms will be renovated. Chairman McAdam and Mr. Eric Parish discussed how renovation projects were prioritized and if a bathroom renovation would be an option. Ms. Kubacki made a motion the claims docket be approved as presented. Mr. Joyce seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0).

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item 7 – *Contract Authorization by the DUAB Executive Director*.

Mr. Miller presented the contracts with Rieth-Riley Construction and Education Networks of America. Rep. Smith asked if local vendors are encouraged to bid for these contracts and Ms. Wolverton confirmed that they were.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item 8 – *Consideration of GCSC Contractual Obligation*.

Ms. Wolverton presented the bus transportation contract. Chairman McAdam clarified that this is a 3.25% increase over the last contract and that fuel rates are adjustable. Rep. Smith stated that Illinois Central is a good corporate citizen and asked about the bonus provided if a 95% pickup rate is achieved and Ms. Wolverton explained the bonus structure. Mr. Joyce stated that they are not a good corporate citizen but acknowledged they are the only bidder in the area. Ms. Brown asked why they selected a three-year contract and Ms. Wolverton stated that it was more financially responsible to lock in the current rates. Ms. Brown made a motion to approve the contract as presented Mr. Bennett seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0).

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item 9 – *Discussion of GCSC Manager Contract Renewal*. Chairman McAdam stated that this is the third time the Board has taken up this issue and that this is “the beginning of the end.” He overviewed how the Board believes the next two years will roll out. Mr. Parish introduced Mr. Andre Wright and Mr. Rajeev Bajaj. Dr. McNulty stated that GCSC received preliminary i-Ready scores and the students showed a 5% growth in math and reading proficiency. Mr. Wright and Mr. Bajaj provided information on their background, previous experience, and hope for GCSC. Rep. Smith stated that their presentation gives him hope and asked Mr. Wright how he plans to engage stakeholders. Mr. Wright responded to the question. Chairman McAdam asked clarifying questions about the IREAD scores and Dr. McNulty responded. Chairman McAdam requested a copy of Mr. Wright’s case study he referenced. Rep. Smith asked follow-up questions on the academic plan. Rep. Thompson thanked the Board for carrying out the duties tasked by the General Assembly and thanked MGT for their work. Sen. Brown provided an overview of how far GCSC has come and clarified that this is not the Board’s only job. She stated that they all want Gary to succeed and that they would ultimately be bad stewards if they hand back the school system to the community without ensuring that there is a structure in place that this never happens again. Rep. Smith reminded the Board of the Gary delegation’s recommendation. Chairman McAdam recognized their recommendation and stated that he appreciates the conversations he has had with them. Rep. Smith stated that he has concern about the included incentives and Chairman McAdam recognized those concerns. Mr. Joyce clarified that the motion would be for the Chairman and Executive Director to work with MGT on negotiating a contract. Chairman McAdam agreed and stated that there is a lot of work that goes into the process, as it is not just a mirroring of the previous years’ contract. Mr. Joyce made a motion that the Chairman and Executive Director engage with MGT on creating a contract. Mr. Bennett seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0).

Rep. Smith raised concerns about a student being placed on full-time E-learning and not receiving teacher engagement. Dr. McNulty stated that the information is incorrect and that they can discuss the situation after the meeting.

Chairman McAdam adjourned the meeting.