
STATE OF INDIANA

DISTRESSED UNIT APPEAL BOARD



INDIANA GOVERNMENT CENTER NORTH
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Distressed Unit Appeal Board Meeting Memorandum

October 14, 2021

A meeting of the Distressed Unit Appeals Board (“DUAB” or “Board”) was held October 14, 2021, at 3:00 p.m. CDT at the Gary Area Career Center, 1800 E. 35th Avenue, Gary IN 46409. Members of the Board attending the meeting include Justin McAdam (Chairman), Wes Bennett, Tracy Brown, Paul Joyce, Representative Jeff Thompson, and Senator Eddie Melton. Peter Miller (Executive Director) and Emily Crisler (Counsel) were also in attendance, as well as Rep. Vernon Smith and Rep. Ragen Hatcher.

Chairman McAdam called the meeting to order and recognized compliance with the Open Door Law. Chairman McAdam and the board members introduced themselves to the community.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item 3—*Approval of Minutes*. Mr. Bennett made a motion that the September 28, 2021 minutes be approved as presented. Mr. Joyce seconded the motion. The motion passed (4-0).

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item 5—*Gary Community School Corporation Manager Update*. Dr. Paige McNulty presented updates on parent and focus group meetings, insurance costs, a potential “hall of fame” in Westside High School, and an engineering apprenticeship program. Sen. Melton asked for an update on academics and school safety and Dr. McNulty responded.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item 6—*Path Forward*. Ms. Kimberley Bradley overviewed academic improvements and added programs. Chairman McAdam asked if the fall assessment has been completed and Ms. Bradley responded that it has and the data is being compiled. Chairman McAdam asked how the teachers are adapting as well as what professional data resources are provided and Ms. Bradley responded. Sen. Melton asked for an update on the extended school day and Ms. Bradley provided one. Mr. Joyce asked what obstacles they are currently running in to and Ms. Bradley responded. Mr. Joyce asked how they get everyone on the same page and Ms. Bradley responded.

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item 7—*GCSC School Improvement Fund*. Ms. Nicole Wolverton presented an update. Chairman McAdam asked for an update on HVAC and roofing projects, and Ms. Wolverton responded. Sen. Melton asked for an update on the Lew Wallace demolition and Ms. Wolverton responded. Sen. Melton asked for an update on the vacant buildings and Dr. McNulty responded. Chairman McAdam asked for an update on transportation and Dr. McNulty responded. Mr. Joyce made a motion the claims docket be approved as presented. Ms. Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed (4-0).

Chairman McAdam introduced agenda item 8—*Viable Deficit Reduction Plan*. Mr. Ricardo Cepin provided an update. Chairman McAdam noted the amount of debt that has gone down since becoming engaged with GCSC. Sen. Melton added that this is the light at the end of the tunnel in terms of returning the district to local control. Sen. Melton asked if a shift in student population would have an

impact and Ms. Wolverton responded. Mr. Bennett encouraged GCSC to look into refinancing opportunities.

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

1. Rep. Vernon Smith thanked the Board for coming to Gary and the community for showing support for GCSC. He expressed concern for Lew Wallace demolition and what will be done with the bricks, various funding streams, communication between the management team and the community, regaining local control, and academic improvement.
2. Ms. Judi Mead expressed concerns about Roosevelt's ownership and requested answers in writing.
 - a. Who owns Roosevelt?
 - b. When is another RFI going to be put out?
 - c. What is the process to allow alumni the same chance to purchase Roosevelt as a charter school?
3. Ms. Talethia Barrett discussed inequality and disenfranchisement, as well as concerns for her children's safety.
4. Ms. Jackie Lee stated that it is time to regain local control and for the Board to apologize to the community for failing the children.
5. Mrs. Lovetta Tindal stated that those holding the power have been failing GCSC and that there needs to be change. She noted that those in charge failed to have busses and student schedules in place for that start of school.
6. Sister Patrick thanked the Board for coming and stated that Christ is needed back in schools.
7. Mr. Jim Nowacki stated that he was in favor of the DUAB takeover and noted that they have corrected the financial status. He noted that they have lost their way with the academic side.
8. Ms. Rachel Wilburn questions who though it was best to start the meeting at 3:00 p.m. and for everyone to go in and out the same doors. She also discussed not being informed of her students' progress in a timely manner.
9. Ms. Dawn Darceneaux stated that some former maintenance workers should be prosecuted for stealing from GCSC.
10. Ms. Labrada Dunham requested a breakdown of how the property tax dollars are being spent, expressed her hope for students to be able to have a job after high school, discussed testing data, and stated that she does not want Roosevelt's memorabilia displayed at West Side.
11. Rev. Dwight Gardner requested the Board listed to Rep. Smith and stated his support for the transition to local control. He also discussed the need to handle the referendum funds carefully.
12. Ms. Carolyn McCrady noted that more policing of students is not a solution and that more student engagement is necessary.
13. Ms. LaVetta Sparks-Wade thanked the Chairman for allowing everyone to speak. She commented on the West Side band's lack of uniforms, the school's lack of preparation for the start of the school year, and lack of communication around safety concerns.

14. Ms. Saundra Starling stated the importance of keeping students in public school and agreed with Rep. Smith's comments on needing a plan in place for transitioning GCSC back to local control.
15. Ms. Caren Jones discussed YWCA of Northwest Indiana's engagement with GCSC.
16. Ms. Linda Gates discussed the need for student transportation to access the different programs at different schools.
17. An unidentified gentleman stated that young men need to be taught how to dress.
18. Bishop Norman Harrison thanked the Board for coming and noted his agreement with Rep. Smith.
19. Dr. Michaela Spangenburg discussed the referendum ambassador program, concerns with how the rest of the state talks about Gary, and stated the need for local control.
20. Mr. Alex Dunlap stated that GCSC needs help. He stated that he wants the students to have good guidance and to be protected.
21. Ms. Nikki Byrd discussed school safety and discipline policy concerns. She noted that when kids are not in school they don't have anywhere to go. She also read a letter from Dr. McNulty to an advisory board member and expressed concern for their lack of access to the buildings. She discussed students' lack of respect for teachers, bussing schedules, and school lunches.
22. Ms. Tiffany Swagerty stated that she has lost all confidence in this administration and discussed her concerns surrounding the school safety and environment. She noted that students are being treated like prisoners and that her son would like to transition to online classes. She wanted to know why the homecoming game could not be held at their home field, why students are not able to access water in the morning, and why drop-off/pick-up is a traffic jam. She also shared her relative's concerns about the special education programs.
23. Rev. Rameen Jackson discussed meeting with Dr. McNulty.
24. Ms. Lori Kuykendall stated that the Gary Literacy Coalition is here to partner with GCSC and noted that their services are free.
25. Ms. Akilia McCain thanked the Board for coming to Gary and discussed her concerns about mental health, low literacy rates, student behavior, school security, food service, communication with parents, and long-term substitutes.
26. Rev. Carrell Cargle shared information on his book, his support for GCSC, and encouraged the community to come together.
27. Ms. Arlinda Tarver asked the board about trophies and banners from past athletic achievements.
28. Ms. Angela Lockett stated concerns about her students not having teachers and books, organized sports being canceled last minute, band uniforms not being provided, and a lack of communication and follow through with ambassadors.

29. Ms. Alice Pryor requested the Board pray for GCSC and stated that they need a plan to support the students. She noted that everyone needs to ask themselves what they can do to support the students and community. She asked why a new school cannot be built with all the money going to repair the old buildings.
30. Mr. LeBarron Burton stated that pointing fingers is not helpful and challenged the group to present solutions, not problems.
31. Mr. Samuel Coleman stated that he is a concerned student and asked the Board members if they would want to send their children to a schools with the conditions of West Side.
32. Ms. Tracy Coleman compared GCSC food service to Valparaiso's food service, shared concerns about athletic and academic instability, noted that Roosevelt should be a museum, and stated that MGT needs to go.
33. Mr. Clinton Jackson stated that he would like to see the career center be maximized.
34. Ms. Denise Comer Dillard stated that education makes the difference between poverty and a lack of poverty.
35. Ms. Carla Jude shared concerns about the current transportation system, computer access, academics, and food service.
36. Ms. Joretta Shropshire stated that the bussing issues have been around for ten years and noted that RFIs have received bids as she placed one that was ignored. She also noted that she has left many calls and messages that have not been met with a response.
37. Ms. Jasmine King stated that the ambassadors come up with activities for students.
38. Mr. Caleb Cheatham stated that there is a lot of good going on at West Side. He noted that band uniforms are being made and that their t-shirts are placeholders.
39. Mr. James Piggee stated that he is on the advisory board but was never able to give any advice. He advocated for job training.
40. Mr. Norman Bailey thanked the Board for coming to Gary and stated that he hopes to get rid of MGT.
41. Mr. Robert Buggs brought concerns about Lew Wallace, Mr. Nathan Williamson, transportation, and the referendum. He then submitted the following recommendations:
 - a. Students dropped off at school before 7:00 a.m. should be allowed in the building.
 - b. Students defending themselves should not be disciplined.
 - c. Teachers without adequate licensing should not be teaching students.
 - d. A list of all new hires and terminated employees and the violations that led to the termination should be provided.
 - e. All department heads should be present in person for advisory board meetings.
 - f. Be transparent with transportation contracts.
 - g. Dr. McNulty should make arrangements for advisory board members to attend SBOE continuing education for board members.

h. The school lunch program should be immediately improved so that it is equal to the program in Valparaiso.

42. Ms. Juana McLaurin thanked Rep. Smith and agreed with his statements. She stated that Indianapolis was built on the wealth of Gary and that Indianapolis owes Gary. She noted that Dr. McNulty has too much power for one person.

43. Ms. Otis.Sewood stated that she is concerned that students are not being prepared for construction and development careers. She stated that she would like to see more programs of substance at the career center.

Chairman McAdam asked if there was any other new business. Mr. Bennett thanked the community for their hospitality and recognized that it is important for every community to preserve their historical documents and awards. Sen. Melton thanked the community for coming out. He encouraged the community to put politics and differences aside in order to work together and be successful.

Chairman McAdam adjourned the meeting.