

Monmouth-Roseville Deficit Reduction Committee
Meeting Minutes – Wednesday, February 24, 2010
6:00pm – Willits School

Present: Tim Tibbetts, Nancy Buban, Angela Winger, Deb Moore, Julie Richardson, Marcia Parrish, Don Farr, Aaron Sikorski, Kevin Killey, Ross Williams, Donna Spears, Elke Narkiewicz, Cathy Olson, Sam Brooks, Paul Woehlke, Anita Sells

Board Member(s) Present: Lynn Shimmin, Brad Larson, Jerry Kinney

Visitor(s): Mike Kirby, Ed Thompson, Don Daily, Kurt Fowler, Beth Reedy, Bob Reedy, Amy Quinn, Christine Ayers, Jen Rovinski, Deena Neal

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by Tim Tibbetts at 6:15pm.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve minutes was made by Nancy Buban, Cathy Olson seconded. Motion carried.

Correction from 2/17/10 minutes:

Model 3 of the building restructuring would **not** include using Willits as an Ag building.

Building Closure Plans:

Committee members addressed the issue of building reorganization. A previous vote was taken relative to committee members supporting a building restructuring scenario if the state announced a 9% cut. The vote was 10 in support of building closures if the state aid is cut by 9%; 3 opposed and 2 abstentions (see 2.10.10 minutes). Discussion ensued relative to committee support for each building scenario.

Three models for building restructuring (recap):

Model 1 – Pre-K, K, 1 at Lincoln. 2-3 Central, 4-6 at Roseville. Close Harding & Willits

Model 2 – close RES; Roseville students would be divided between Willits, Harding, Lincoln

Model 3 – close RES & Willits; Willits' students move to Central with Roseville k-3. Roseville 4-6 goes to Lincoln. (Variation – create learning centers; 2-3 at Harding, K-1 at Central. The original proposal involved using Willits for the district office and including cardio space to be used by Monmouth-Roseville high school students).

Discussion:

- There is little savings in keeping RES open for K-3.

- It is human nature for teachers to feel ill will if they have 26 students while another teacher at the same grade level has 14. If grade levels were in the same location, student numbers can be evened out. Learning centers are the best option.
- Let's not make a small move this year, and then have to move again in the near future. Let's do what we have to do now.
- Regarding Model 1: it keeps the class sizes lower and requires only one major move.
- Regarding Model 3: The grade levels (K-3) can be divided between Central and Harding to put all classes of the same grade in the same building and without adding the transportation like model 1.
- Superintendent Woehlke stated the district wouldn't want to pick students up any earlier than they are picked up now, which is 6:50am. School times would be adjusted as needed.
- There is still concern for Roseville if we close the elementary school. There will be votes in the future, and that has to be taken into consideration. Lack of planning for the future has gotten us in the predicament we are in.
- Would we rather send nearly 600 students to Roseville even though we are the center of the district? That requires much more money for transportation.
- If we ever end up with a county school, we're still going to have a lot of transportation issues out of Monmouth. We'll never get away from transporting out of Monmouth.
- In the event of a future consolidation, what would happen to the current junior high building in Roseville if the grade school is left open now? It would close. Why would we sacrifice the junior high building to keep the grade school open?
- Was the focus of this committee to eliminate money expenditure, or are we to be thinking ahead 10-15 years to what may or may not happen? If we are concerned with the financial situation now, transportation is already bringing us down.
- There is great concern for Roseville and how the community feels about the grade school building. However; our charge is the financial aspect. That has to be our central concern.
- Keeping only k-3 in Roseville doesn't fully use the building.
- There is a fine line between fair and financially feasible. It would be great to consolidate Willits & Harding into Central, but they won't fit. The fair decision is to close a building in Monmouth and keep Monmouth students here and Roseville students can stay there. However; that is not a financially feasible decision.
- Look at this situation as if the district has economic cancer and we have to address it; we can't put it off or the district will die. If we sit back and take out loans, the cancer spreads. There are a lot of feelings associated with the body when there is cancer; one doesn't want to give up a leg, but one would likely do it if it was necessary to keep the body alive. We have to think about what is best for the body as a whole.
- The state of IL isn't going to be out of debt in 2 years. We are looking at 3 years to stay alive. Do we want to close a school 3 years in a row, or bite the bullet and do it once?
- If the state isn't coming through with money any scenario that adds transportation costs is not the best financial option. We are hoping they send us transportation money. If they don't – we are out of luck.

- From an educational standpoint, we need to keep the class size low and the teachers together.
- In closing RES we are bringing teachers and classrooms with the children.
- Regarding Model 3: instead of keeping K-3 in each building, we should reorganize it so all grade levels are together. Willits would close, or we could rent the space out. The district office has to go somewhere. One of the comments last week was that “Monmouth would get their weight room” but it would benefit all students. It would be used for PE, etc.
- The district office can go anywhere. Renting Willits isn’t a sure thing, and the cardio room can be sacrificed. The 3rd model would be better if we completely close Willits.
- Maybe Roseville can rent their space.
- We’d be saving maintenance costs if we closed Willits completely.
- The decision to sell empty school buildings would be a closed-door board decision. Two buildings were sold in Galesburg. One of them was purchased by someone out of Florida; selling the buildings is not beyond realm of possibility.
- For board meetings, the Library has a board room that can be used and City Hall has a lot of room.
- With *No Child Left Behind* it is very difficult to meet the needs of the students in larger classes. With a big class, teachers can’t reach every child and it’s a huge concern. We are going to keep having special cases with children and we have to take that into consideration. Moving classrooms is not a concern. The number of students – especially at the lower level – has a large impact on the level of education that can be provided. It is only going to get worse with needs of kids and some of their home lives.
- That adds to the value of putting all grade levels in one building. Each grade level can equal out and teachers can use each other as resources.
- Individual issues and needs can be taken into consideration, which doesn’t mean teachers would all have the same # of students.
- It is much better when grade level teachers are together in a building. Teachers all have strengths & weaknesses and need to work together.

Committee members took a vote as to which model would best serve the district and the goal of reducing the deficit. Members were allowed one vote or abstention.

Model 1 - 3

Model 2- 0

Model 3 -9

Abstentions – 3

Chairperson Tibbetts announced cuts outlined thus far brings the total to approximately \$910,000 of savings/ revenue offsets.

Representative Myers

Representative Myers visited the school district on Friday, February 18, 2010.

- Representative Myers asked where the 9% cut came from; he wasn't privy to that discussion. Superintendent Woehlke explained the formula that was derived from the \$1 billion of federal stimulus money that went to state aid. Also, this was the word from our liaison from the Illinois Association of School Administrators – it is her job to know what is going on in Springfield.
- Superintendent Woehlke stated his appreciation for Representative Myers' candidness and sincerity.
- While it has been emphasized for the public to write letters to legislators, the district does have visibility through Representative Myers who is following the situation.

Something positive?

- There is a movement to approach the federal government about a stimulus round 2, so there is the possibility of another round of stimulus money. Representative Myers said he realized the state had made every effort in its power to keep education money intact. State aid being flat next year wouldn't be out of the realm of possibility.
- The committee shouldn't feel like we've failed if we don't reach \$1.4 million in cuts. Everything we've found is of value.
- Even if state aid is flat next year, we still need to do these things to position ourselves for a few years out.

Superintendent Woehlke explained his understanding of the state budget is that Governor Quinn will present 2 budget scenarios; one will include a tax increase and the other will not. However, it doesn't make lot of difference because one person in the state will set budget – Michael Madigan. That is the reality of how the state functions at the moment. This is not a political party issue - but rather a system function issue. Someone has to step up and be a statesman and fix the problem. It isn't a democracy when one person sets state budge. Even though we are asking board to act before gov speech, we probably won't know until May.

Chairperson Tibbetts asked for final thoughts regarding the committee's proposal to the school board. Do we want to say we found potentially \$910,000 although not all guaranteed? We will present the information we have and the school board can go from there.

Additional thoughts:

- If we cut all sports, would it put us where we need to be at \$1.4 million? Either way, if we cut all extracurricular activities we'd do too much damage to the students.
- There are supply funds (ie high school art & music line items, junior high music line item) we haven't considered. We could recommend a 10-15% cut there.
- As an outside committee, we've probably gone as far as we can go. Going further is a board decision.
- A music position is already being looked at. Music is one of the main extracurricular activities outside of athletics. It is a concern that we would be cutting in that area. Have you seen the extracurricular duties music teachers have? If a position is reduced, something will have to go.

- There is no solution that makes us all happy. We'll all leave saying this kind of stinks. But, we're in a deficit.
- We've done what we can do as a committee. After the presentation tomorrow, it will be in the hands of the board members.

Board Member Shimmin thanked the committee for their time. He noted that discussions within the committee showed the committee's desire to cut expenses wherever possible without diminishing the programs. He urged committee members to include the tax proposal in the presentation to the board. He said he'd do his best to relay committee discussions back to the board, and urged committee members to remember the discussions had within the committee when the board decisions are announced. He also shared that there were issues to which committee members weren't privy that the board will discuss, and didn't want members to be surprised.

Superintendent Woehlke noted that consolidation has been talked about for the most part as taking place with United. Does the committee have the position that we'd only consolidate with United? Or are there other districts we could consolidate with? Committee members agreed that while United seems to be the logical choice, we don't know what opportunities may present themselves, and we need to be open to all options.

A public forum with the school board is scheduled for March 2, 2010. It will be held in the MRHS Auditorium at 7:00pm. At the forum, Superintendent Woehlke will present specific information with regard to building closures.

It is on the February 25, 2010 agenda for the board to schedule another open session (March 5) at Central. At this session, Superintendent Woehlke will potentially make a proposal to the board. As it is an agenda item to be discussed on February 25, the details have not been decided upon.

This committee has been a great representation of the community. Superintendent Woehlke expressed his gratitude with applause and a standing ovation.

Chairperson Tibbetts will finalize the presentation for tomorrow night and distribute to committee members. The meeting with the board will be February 25, 2010 at 7pm in the board room at Central.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 7:36pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Anita Sells, Recorder