

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 709  
Duluth Public Schools**

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**In the Matter of the Proposed Closing  
Of Morgan Park Middle School**

**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS,**

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A hearing on the proposed closing of Morgan Park Middle School (“Morgan Park Middle School”) by Independent School District No. 709, Duluth Public Schools (“School District”) was held on April 30, 2012, at 6:30 P.M. at Morgan Park Middle School.

The hearing was conducted pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.51, subdivision 1. The hearing was recorded by a court reporter. A transcript of the hearing has been provided to the members of the School Board. Exhibits were offered, received, and kept as part of the record of the hearing. All individuals wishing to speak and offer evidence in favor of, or in opposition to, the proposed closing were given the opportunity to testify during the hearing.

**FINDINGS**

1. Morgan Park Middle School, located at 1243 – 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue West in Duluth, sits on an approximate 10 acre site. Morgan Park Middle School is a three story, 130,000 square foot building. The building was constructed in 1916-59,500 square feet, 1939-30,100 square feet, 1955-433 square feet, 1966-8,200 square feet, 1976-18, 2000 square feet, 1983-10,400 square feet, 1999-864 square feet, 2000-931 square feet.
2. Morgan Park Middle School is currently configured as a 6-8 program.
3. Morgan Park Middle School has an enrollment capacity of 851 students. This number is based on a classroom size of 27 students.
4. The School District currently operates two high schools, two middle schools and nine elementary schools.
5. In accordance with its long range facilities plan, the School District completed construction of a new middle school building (at the new Lincoln Park) within Morgan Park Middle School’s enrollment area. This new facility will open in September of 2012.
6. The Lincoln Park Middle School will have an enrollment capacity of 1,100 students.
7. In 2006, the School District commissioned a report from Dr. Hazel Reinhart. Her demographics report predicted a 10 year decline in the School District’s enrollment of approximately 25%. The demographics report attributed this decline to shifting age demographics in the area served by the School District.

8. Since 2006, the School District's enrollment has been, on average, less than what the demographics report predicted.
9. Considering the enrollment capacity at the new Lincoln Park Middle School, the current enrollment of Morgan Park Middle School, the enrollment figures predicted in the demographics report, and the enrollment trend, it is not necessary to keep Morgan Park Middle School open to provide enrollment capacity for students. Closing Morgan Park Middle School would eliminate the excess use of a separate building.
10. During the 2010-2011 fiscal year, the total building operations cost (including utilities, supplies, and custodial labor) for Morgan Park Middle School was \$555,595.
11. The projected building operations cost for New Lincoln Park Middle School for the 2012-2013 fiscal year is \$592,332, a slight increase in total cost of \$36,737, but a 26% decrease in cost per sq ft (130,000 old compared to 189,000 new).
12. During the 2010-2011 fiscal year, the total cost of employing administrators and school support personnel (such as nurses, nutritionists, media specialists, etc.) at Morgan Park Middle School was \$573,699
13. The projected cost of employing administrators and school support personnel for Morgan Park Middle School for the 2012-2013 fiscal year is projected to be roughly the same as 2010-2011.
14. Moving Morgan Park Middle School into the new Lincoln Park Middle School also allows the School District to streamline student transportation.
15. During the 2011-2012 school year, operating fewer school buildings has already saved the School District's general fund approximately \$4,400,000. These savings have primarily been used to offset potential deficits.
16. In order to consolidate Morgan Park Middle School into the new Lincoln Park Middle School and realize the benefits associated with student transportation, the School District must first close Morgan Park Middle School.
17. Morgan Park Middle School building and surrounding land has been valued at approximately \$465,000.
18. If the School District closes Morgan Park Middle School, it will be able to sell Morgan Park Middle School building and surrounding land to reduce the School District's bonded debt by the sale value.
19. If the School District does not sell Morgan Park Middle School building and/or surrounding land, it will not be able to use the proceeds from such sale to pay down the School District's bonded debt. Instead, the anticipated value of that sale will be drawn

from either or both of: (1) an additional tax levy; or (2) a reduction from the School District's general fund.

20. If the School District closes, but does not sell, Morgan Park Middle School, it will annually incur an anticipated \$90,000 plus inflation and ongoing maintenance and repair costs in order to keep Morgan Park Middle School in a serviceable and minimally preserved condition.
21. Closing Morgan Park Middle School permits the School Board to later choose whether to incur the annual cost of approximately \$90,000 in case of future need for the existing facility, or sell Morgan Park Middle School building and surrounding property to eliminate this cost and pay down the School District's bonded debt. The School District loses these options if it does not close Morgan Park Middle School.
22. Closing Morgan Park Middle School will not necessitate the non-renewal, termination, or layoff of any classroom teacher. Teachers currently assigned to Morgan Park Middle School will be reassigned to other teaching positions, based on enrollment, and in accordance with the provisions of the applicable collective bargaining agreement and/or School District policies.
23. All classes and services, including special education classes and services, currently available at Morgan Park Middle School will be available at the new Lincoln Park Middle School.
24. If Morgan Park Middle School is closed, all students currently attending Morgan Park Middle School will attend the new Lincoln Park Middle School starting in the 2012-2013 school year.
25. The School District has published notice of the school closing hearing in the official newspaper for two weeks before the hearing.
26. At the hearing, the School District administration presented documentary evidence regarding the proposed closure of Morgan Park Middle School. Specifically, the following documents were entered as exhibits:
  - a. An Educational Adequacy Report completed in connection with the School District's Long Range Facilities Plan;
  - b. A Facility Assessment Report completed in connection with the School District's Long Range Facilities Plan;
  - c. A Property Value Report completed in connection with the School District's Long Range Facilities Plan;

- d. A Solutions Options Report completed in connection with the School District's Long Range Facilities Plan;
- e. The Review and Comment Documents that the School District submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education in connection with its Long Range Facilities Plan; and
- f. The Demographic Report from former State Demographer, Dr. Hazel Reinhart.

The School Board has fully considered this evidence prior to reaching any conclusion or adopting any resolution regarding the closure of Morgan Park Middle School.

- 27. At the hearing, members of the public were allowed to present testimony for and against the proposed closure of Morgan Park Middle School. The School Board has considered all comments by members of the public prior to reaching any conclusion or adopting any resolution regarding the closure of Morgan Park Middle School.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

- 1. The closure of Morgan Park Middle School is necessary and practicable.
- 2. The School District has complied with the procedural requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.51, subdivision 3, for the purpose of closing Morgan Park Middle School.