

CROSBY-IRONTON SCHOOLS  
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY  
May 13, 2024

Item 7.2a

The finance committee met in the Forum Room on May 13, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. with the following present: Beth Hautala, Mike Domin and Kim Coughlin. Jamie Skjeveland, Abby Geotz and Bill Tollefson were also present.

Community Education – This meeting continued the discussions regarding community education that started at the finance committee meeting held on April 15, 2024. The discussion at this meeting including topics that ranged from the transition of elementary sports from Community Education to Ranger Youth Sports, the Community Education Advisory Council, and feedback from senior citizens that was voluntarily provided at the recent commerce and industry show at the Hallett Community Center. The School District will also be working with Sourcewell to engage in a strategic planning process for Community Education. Two goals will be to work toward providing a parent educator dimension to the early learning program and to find opportunities for senior citizens by offering community education programs for them. Three themes emerged. When there is a focus or attempt to cater to one or two issues, there will be chaos and failure. There is also a need to take the offensive to work together and create a spirit of collegiality. A great deal of strife comes from inconsistent information, so development and enforcement of consistent protocols and procedures will help. During the period when those protocols and procedures are trying to be enforced, there will be a period of time when people will grieve the loss of some of the freedom that they previously had. Abby Geotz left the meeting.

Project Unite and Operating Referendum – Project Unite members Janel Lewandowski, Becky Pakarinen and Liz Toftness joined the meeting to discuss how Project Unite and the School District might collaborate on a potential upcoming operating referendum election. The School Board has been concerned about wanting to not get ahead of Project Unite in terms of the process, and to find out what opportunities and steps that will be taken, if any, in the run up to the operating referendum election. The goals for this meeting are that the Board wants to support Project Unite and make sure Project Unite knows that, find out what Project Unite might need from the School Board, and to determine if there is a need for a project manager. In the discussion, both sides acknowledged that this is an issue that needs a broader base than just Project Unite.

Community Survey – The process that led to the community survey was described. Because the School District is a bit behind in the timing of the survey and gathering information that can be used to form decisions, the survey was reviewed and polished by a committee that included both Hautala and Lewandowski. The goal of the survey is to gather as much information as possible in a short period of time, while also educating the public about the needs of and decisions that the School District will likely face regarding future budgets. It is focused on intentionally providing information and taking a look at possible outcomes, regardless of what the thought is about a referendum.

Operating Referendum – The School District can provide information but cannot engage in Vote Yes actions or activities. Individual School Board members and employees can engage in those activities on their own time. Discussion focused on whether there are enough people to engage and whether there is a need for a project manager. Project Unite indicated that their focus is not to become a Vote Yes operating referendum group and that their comfort level with that as an expectation is not very high. There was a discussion about the need for one or two “champions” who would help to mobilize a broader base of support. None were identified. Discussions continued about communication and what appears to be a loss of inertia or energy from January, February and March when budget reductions were being discussed to today.

The School District will continue to move forward with the release of the community survey in the next week or two and will continue to gauge plans for a potential operating referendum ballot question on the November 5, 2024 ballot.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by William Tollefson