

Red Wing Public Schools
2451 Eagle Ridge Drive
Red Wing, MN 55066



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www.rwps.org

School Board Meeting Agenda Item

Topic: Proposal to Close Jefferson School
Contact(s):
Presenter(s): Karsten Anderson, Superintendent

Nature of Action Requested

Board Action
Board Information or Report

Background Information

Context

Until the 2020-21 school year, Jefferson School was vacant after GCED moved programming to the River Bluff Education Center. On August 3, 2020, however, the board approved the use of Jefferson as one of four K-6 schools for the 2020-21 school year due to COVID. With improved circumstances related to COVID, one of the elementary buildings is not needed for the upcoming school year. The Superintendent's recommendation is to close Jefferson School during the summer of 2021 for reasons outlined below. Before closing a school, the board must conduct a public hearing according to M.S. 123B.51, Subd.5:

The "board may close a schoolhouse only after a public hearing on the question of the necessity and practicability of the proposed closing. Published notice of the hearing shall be given for two weeks in the official newspaper of the district. The time and place of the meeting, the description and location of the schoolhouse, and a statement of the reasons for the closing must be specified in the notice. Parties requesting to give testimony for and against the proposal shall be heard by the board before it makes a final decision to close or not to close the schoolhouse."

Publication Notices

The notice of the public hearing was posted in the Republican Eagle on May 22nd and May 29th.

Purpose, Time, and Place of Public Hearing

As per M.S. 123B.51, the School Board of Red Wing Public Schools (Independent School District No. 256) conducted a public hearing to allow individuals to give testimony for and against the proposed closing of Jefferson School.

The hearing took place on Monday, June 7, 2021 at 6:00 pm in the Red Wing High School Media Center (2451 Eagle Ridge Drive, Red Wing, MN 55066). The hearing was livestreamed at www.rwps.org under "News and Announcements." There was no public comment presented during the public hearing.

Description and Location of the Schoolhouse

Originally built in 1916, Jefferson School is currently one of four K-6 schools in Red Wing Public Schools. Its address is 601 Buchanan Street, Red Wing, Minnesota 55066.

Reasons for the Proposed Closing

Closing Jefferson School is necessary and practicable for the following reasons:

1. Jefferson was temporarily reopened for the 2020-21 school year solely to accommodate COVID. Closing Jefferson will revert the district back to the same number of E-12 schools and classrooms as pre-COVID.
2. Keeping Jefferson open would cost \$200,000-\$300,000/year out of the general fund for additional staff (custodial, secretarial, nursing, paraprofessional, and administrative support), utilities, and other maintenance expenses. The district reduced its budget by about \$2.2 million this spring for next year; keeping Jefferson open would require additional reductions of \$200,000-\$300,000 to meet budget targets.
3. There are also significant logistical issues if Jefferson remains open. For example, class sizes in a particular grade would vary more between buildings, and shared teachers (such as Title I, general music, band, STEAM, art, and physical education) would rotate between more buildings.
4. Jefferson School is recommended for closure instead of another elementary school because Jefferson was intended to reopen for one year, it is the smallest building, there is no operable kitchen, and it has the greatest short-term and long-term maintenance needs (including ADA compliance).

Recommendation

I move to close Jefferson School prior to the beginning of the 2021-22 school year.