

**MINUTES OF THE LEWISTON-ALTURA REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING**  
**ISD #857**  
**November 14, 2022**

A regular meeting of the School Board of Independent School District #857 was held on November 14, 2022 at 6:00pm. The Board members met in the High School Library. Members present were Toby Brummer, Bree Maki, Connie Meyer, Melissa Meisch, Dave Pringle, Jenny Koverman and Sarah Sommer were present.

Chair Brummer called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Meyer and second by Sommer to approve the November 14th meeting agenda. MCU.

Open Forum comments were presented by Bob Schell and John Mask.

Pringle introduced the following Resolution and moved its adoption:

**RESOLUTION CANVASSING RETURNS OF VOTES OF SCHOOL DISTRICT GENERAL ELECTION**

BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of Independent School District No. 857, as follows:

1. It is hereby found, determined and declared that the general election of the voters of the district held on November 8, 2022, was in all respects duly and legally called and held.
2. As specified in the attached Abstract and Return of Votes Cast, a total of 3211 voters of the district voted at said election on the election of (three) school board members for four year term vacancies on the board caused by expiration of term on the first Monday in January next following the general election as follows: Sara Daley 910 votes, Daniel Kreidermacher 793 votes, David J. Baer 775 votes, Holly Burt 700 votes, Jeffrey Nelson 642 votes, Maria Baer 572 votes, Write-Ins 74 votes.
3. Sara Daley, Daniel Kreidermacher, and David J. Baer having received the highest number of votes, are elected to four year terms beginning the first Monday in January, 2022.
4. The school district clerk is hereby authorized to certify the results of the election to the county auditor of each county in which the school district is located in whole or in part.

The motion for the adoption of the foregoing Resolution was duly seconded by Board Member Maki, and upon vote being taken thereon, the following voted in favor thereof: Pringle, Meyer, Maki, Brummer, Sommer, Koverman, Meisch; and the following voted against the same: None, whereupon said Resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

Craig Popenhagen presented a summary of the FY22 Financial Audit conducted by CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP.

Meyer moved and Sommer seconded to accept the FY22 Financial Audit as presented. MCU.

Motion by Meisch and second by Pringle to approve the Consent Agenda. MCU.

Board members discussed the possible closure of the Altura Intermediate School at the end of the 2022-2023 School Year.

Board Member Maki introduced the following Resolution and moved its adoption:

**RESOLUTION CLOSING**  
**LEWISTON-ALTURA INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL**

WHEREAS, on September 12, 2022, the School Board heard a presentation by the School District's Facilities Task Force regarding key strategic planning recommendations, including the recommendation to close Lewiston-Altura Intermediate School; and

WHEREAS, a community public meeting was held on October 5, 2022 to further discuss the information and the recommendations; and

WHEREAS, a Notice of Public Hearing on the question of the necessity and practicability of closing Lewiston-Altura Intermediate School was published in the legal newspaper of the School District, the St. Charles Press, for three successive weeks on October 13, October 20, and October 27, 2022; and

WHEREAS, the time and place of the meeting was set forth in the Notice; and

WHEREAS, Lewiston-Altura Intermediate School was identified in the Notice as a school considered for closing; and

WHEREAS, the reasons for the proposed closing were set forth in said Notice; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing on said closings was conducted in accordance with Minnesota Statutes § 123B.51, subd. 5 pursuant to said Notice by the School Board beginning at 6:30 p.m. on November 1, 2022 at the Lewiston-Altura Intermediate School, 325 1<sup>st</sup> Ave., Altura, Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, testimony and materials were received during the course of the hearing by anyone in favor of or opposed to said closings and the hearing was not deemed closed until everyone who requested to speak had an opportunity to do so; and

WHEREAS, information and materials considered by the School Board include the following: September 12, 2022 Operating Costs FAQ document; August 15, 2022 Capacity Study; August 15, 2022 Comprehensive Planning Summary; September 9, 2022 Historic, Current, & Projected Enrollment data; Winter 2022 Community Survey data; and a November 1, 2022 presentation from Superintendent Gwen Carman; and

WHEREAS, the School Board has considered public input and the recommendation of the Facilities Task Force and the School District administration to close Lewiston-Altura Intermediate School.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that after considering the materials in the record, the testimony presented at said hearing held pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 123B.51, subd. 5, and the recommendations of the Task Force and administration, the School Board of Independent School District No. 857 (Lewiston-Altura) hereby determines that **the Lewiston-Altura Intermediate School located at 325 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. SE, Altura, Minnesota, 55910, shall be closed effective at the end of the 2022-23 school year** for the following reasons and based on the following findings of fact:

1. The School District is facing significant budgetary challenges as a result of declining enrollment and aging facilities. In April 2021, the School District entered into an agreement with a consulting firm, InGensa, Inc., to lead the School District through a comprehensive planning process to

identify needs and assess the educational adequacy of existing spaces, the current physical conditionals of district facilities, and the past and future student population. The School District also worked with its financial advisors, Ehlers, Inc., to analyze the District's financial operating needs, and conducted a community strategic planning survey to solicit feedback from all district stakeholders. Two community engagement meetings were held in 2022, and a Facilities Task Force was initiated to assist the School District in developing a community-supported comprehensive plan.

2. Based on the analysis conducted as part of the strategic planning process, the Facilities Task Force made recommendations to the School Board on September 12, 2022, which included the recommendation to close Lewiston-Altura Intermediate School.
3. The recommendations were significantly and substantially predicated on the School District's enrollment decline; building capacity; general fund budgetary challenges; and significant and costly maintenance and repair needs.
4. The School District's enrollment is declining:
  - a. Over the ten-year span of time from 2013-14 through 2022-23, the School District's overall K-12 enrollment declined from 729 students in 2013-14 to 618 students in 2022-23.
  - b. Over the next five years, the School District's enrollment is projected to further decline by 20%, to approximately 504 students in 2027-28.
5. The School District's general fund balance is declining:
  - a. The School District has lost significant general fund revenue as a result of declining enrollment and has projected to further experience revenue losses as a result of declining enrollment in the future. A loss of 113 students would equate to a loss of approximately \$1,073,500 in revenue over the next five years.
  - b. State and Federal funding increases have not kept pace with school districts' rising costs, which are expected to continue to rise.
  - c. The School District's unassigned fund balance has declined from \$953,948.00 in fiscal year 2019 to \$687,751.00 in fiscal year 2022.
  - d. One-time pandemic-relief funds have helped the School District break even, but most pandemic-relief funds must be spent by September 2024. These funding sources will no longer be available moving forward.
6. The School District's Capacity Study determined that the Intermediate School is significantly under-utilized, but that several of the support spaces for special education, reading, and speech are located in divided classrooms or small offices that are undersized for the number of students served in those programs. The Elementary School is also under-utilized and could accommodate an additional grade level of two sections. The High School is not under-utilized but has the capacity to accommodate an increase of 90-175 students.
7. Lewiston-Altura Intermediate School is the smallest of the District's three school building and currently hosts the District's 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes. The Elementary School has the capacity to accommodate the District's 5<sup>th</sup>-grade students. The High School has the capacity to accommodate the District's 6<sup>th</sup>-grade students, which will also allow access to more elective learning opportunities for sixth-graders and enable the District to retain more full-time high school teachers.

8. Lewiston-Altura Intermediate School is the oldest of the District's three school buildings and is in need of substantial repairs and improvements at an estimated cost of \$7.5 million. Closing the building will result in an operational cost savings of at least \$175,000 per year, as well as an anticipated reduction of teaching positions estimated to save a minimum of \$50,000 per year. The Elementary School and High School also need repairs and improvements, but due to the building capacities, it would not be practicable to close either of those school buildings instead of the Intermediate School.
9. In light of the School District's current and projected enrollment, building capacities, and budgetary challenges, it is necessary and practicable to close Lewiston-Altura Intermediate School. Closing this building is necessary and practicable to put the School District in the best position to serve its students, families, and communities.
10. The School District has considered all data compiled through its comprehensive planning process, including community feedback through survey, at community meetings, and the public hearing. The School District considered alternatives to the closing of the school, but determined that this closure was necessary to effectively solve the identified concerns.

The motion for the adoption of the foregoing Resolution was duly seconded by Board Member Koverman, and upon vote being taken thereon, the following voted in favor thereof: Pringle, Meyer, Maki, Brummer, Sommer, Koverman; and the following voted against the same: Meisch, whereupon said Resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

Board Chair Brummer called for a 10-minute recess at 7:37pm. The meeting resumed at 7:47pm.

A summary of the results of the 2022 World's Best Workforce Plan and proposed goals for 2023 were presented and discussed by the Board and audience members.

Meisch moved and Meyer seconded to approve the following policies on a 1<sup>st</sup> reading: 901 Community Education; 902.1 School Forest; 903 Visitors to School District Buildings and Sites; 904 Distribution of Materials on School District Property by Non-school Persons; 905 Advertising. MCU.

Board Chair Brummer read a summary of the Superintendent's Evaluation that was conducted on October 10, 2022 in Closed Session. Closed Session was held on October 12, 2022 for the purposes of discussing Superintendent Gwen Carman's performance evaluation. All Board members had submitted numeric scores and narrative comments in specific areas that were tabulated prior to the Closed Session. Board members present in the Closed Session were Bree Maki, Sarah Sommer, Dave Pringle and Melissa Meisch. The Board's summative evaluation indicated Superintendent Carman's strengths are Relationship with the Board, Management, Leadership, and Relationship with the District. Fiscal Management was identified as an area of potential growth needed. Superintendent Carman will provide the School Board specific professional goals for each area to further strengthen her job performance to meet the vision, mission and goals of the school district.

Reports were presented by Principal Riebel, Dr. Hanson and Superintendent Carman. Board Committee reports were discussed.

Motion by Meisch, seconded by Koverman to adjourn the meeting at 9:05pm. MCU.

Melissa Meisch, Clerk