

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

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**In the Matter of the Proposed Closing  
Of Lincoln Park Elementary School**

**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS,**

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A hearing on the proposed closing of the Lincoln Park Elementary School ("Lincoln Park") by Independent School District No. 709, Duluth Public Schools ("School District") was held on May 2, 2011, at 7:30 P.M. at Lincoln Park.

The hearing was conducted pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.51, subdivision 5. 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. The Lincoln Park Elementary School, located at 2424 West 5<sup>th</sup> Street in Duluth, sits on an approximate 2.75 acre site. Lincoln Park is a three story, 170,596 square foot building. The first 26,809 square feet of the building was constructed in 1889. An additional 17,790 square feet was constructed in 1930; 50,132 square feet in 1951; 16,184 square feet in 1959; 18,559 square feet in 1994, 4,929 square feet in 1915; 12,061 square feet in 1999; and 33,797 square feet miscellaneous construction in 1915, 1966, 1979, 1992, 1993, 1999, and 2000.
2. Lincoln Park is currently configured as a K-5 program.
3. Lincoln Park has an enrollment capacity of 1,050 students. This number is based on a classroom size of 23 students.
4. Lincoln Park is one of ten elementary schools currently operated by the School District.
5. In accordance with its long range facilities plan, the School District is completing construction of a new school building (for purposes of this document, hereafter referred to as "New Piedmont") within Lincoln Park's enrollment area. New Piedmont will open in September of 2011.
6. The enrollment of Lincoln Park in the 2010-2011 school year was 432 students.

7. The Lincoln Park and New Piedmont schools have a combined enrollment capacity of 1,600 students – more space than necessary.
8. In 2006, the School District commissioned a report from Dr. Hazel Reinhardt. 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.
9. Since 2006, the School District's enrollment has been, on average, less than what the demographics report predicted.
10. Considering the enrollment capacity of New Piedmont and the current enrollment of Lincoln Park, the enrollment figures predicted in the demographics report, and the enrollment trend, it is not necessary to keep the Lincoln Park Elementary School open to provide enrollment capacity for students. Closing Lincoln Park would eliminate the excess use of a separate building.
11. During the 2009-2010 fiscal year, the total building operations cost (including utilities, supplies, and custodial labor) for Lincoln Park was \$455,502.
12. The projected building operations cost for New Piedmont for the 2011-2012 fiscal year is \$242,445.
13. Utilizing the New Piedmont building is expected to save the School District \$213,057 building operations costs.
14. During the 2009-2010 fiscal year, the total cost of employing administrators and school support personnel (such as nurses, nutritionists, media specialists, etc.) at Lincoln Park was \$314,065.
15. The projected cost of employing administrators and school support personnel at New Piedmont for the 2011-2012 fiscal year is expected to be roughly the same as 2009-10. Total non-classroom staff costs for Piedmont and Lincoln Park were reduced prior to the 2009-10 school year.
16. During the 2010-2011 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.
17. In order to utilize New Piedmont and realize the financial savings and benefits described in paragraphs 13 and 15, the School District must first close the Lincoln Park Elementary School.

18. The Lincoln Park building and surrounding land has been valued at approximately \$610,000.
19. If the School District closes Lincoln Park, it will be able to sell the Lincoln Park building and surrounding land to reduce the School District's bonded debt by the sale value.
20. If the School District does not close the Lincoln Park 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.
21. Closing Lincoln Park will not necessitate the non-renewal, termination, or layoff of any classroom teacher. Teachers currently assigned to Lincoln Park will be reassigned to other teaching positions based on enrollment and in accordance with applicable provisions of the collective bargaining agreement and/or School District policies.
19. All classes and services, including special education classes and services, currently available at Lincoln Park will be available at New Piedmont.
20. If Lincoln Park is closed, all students currently attending Lincoln Park will attend New Piedmont starting in the 2011-2012 school year.
21. The educational benefits of closing Lincoln Park include a reduction in split classes and travel time for specialists (art, media, physical education, and music) who travel between buildings.
22. The School District has published notice of the school closing hearing in the official newspaper for two weeks before the hearing.
23. At the hearing, the School District administration presented documentary evidence regarding the proposed closure of Lincoln Park. 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 Lincoln Park.

- 24. At the hearing, members of the public were allowed to present testimony for and against the proposed closure of Lincoln Park. 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 Lincoln Park.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

- 1. The closure of the Lincoln Park Elementary School is necessary and practicable.
- 2. The School District has complied with the procedural requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.51, subdivision 5, for the purpose of closing the Lincoln Park Elementary School.