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Contact: Steve Goss, Assistant Superintendent, (269) 321-1000

Vicksburg Community Schools Hopes to Preserve Jobs, Reduces Costs Through Innovative Agreement With Its Custodial Staff

Current Custodians Will Stay On Board, District can Save Costs Long Term Through Attrition and Transition To Outside Firm

VICKSBURG, Mich. – Vicksburg Community Schools has reached an agreement with its custodial staff that they will retain their jobs, while creating an opportunity for the Board to achieve long term savings, by gradually turning custodial services over to an external firm, district officials said today.

“This move is strictly a financial decision – we’ve been happy with the work of custodial staff across our district, but we can no longer afford to ignore the additional costs of maintaining the staff internally,” said Charlie Glaes, Vicksburg Community Schools Superintendent. “We believe this transition is an outstanding compromise in which no school custodian loses their job, and sets the Vicksburg Community Schools up for eventual long-term savings that will benefit our classrooms, educators, and students.”

According to the terms of the agreement, current custodians will keep their jobs as retirements or departures create openings. Those vacant positions can then be absorbed into an outside firm’s contract.

“The district had no interest in obtaining cost savings at the expense of our school support personnel and their families,” Glaes said. “We’ve worked hard to make sure our current employees do not suffer harm. As openings naturally occur, those individual positions could be contracted by an outside janitorial service.”

Any custodians hired by a third party vendor also will undergo rigorous background and criminal checks before working in the Vicksburg school environment, Glaes said.

The agreement was reached with custodial workers who are part of the union which represents the district’s school support personnel on May 7.

The district is making decisions associated with its custodial costs after participating in a collaborative bidding process coordinated by Kalamazoo RESA which included other local school districts throughout the county.

“We’re excited to achieve a collaborative outcome between district administration and union personnel which maintains stability while making it possible to adjust gradually to a changed fiscal reality,” Glaes said. “We remain committed to constructive labor dialogue with all of our employees as we work together to provide a high quality 21st century education for all of our children.”

The administration will be recommending to the Board an agreement to enter into a contract for custodial services with a private vendor through an attrition model. Given the fact that the Board shared the same concerns for protecting the jobs of the current staff, it is expected that the Board will approve this recommendation.