

**DECATUR DISTRICT 61 BOARD OF EDUCATION
CLOSED MEETING MINUTES**

DATE/TIME: January 25, 2022

4:30 PM

LOCATION: Keil Administration Building
101 W. Cerro Gordo Street
Decatur, IL 62523 and Zoom

PRESENT: Dan Oakes, President (zoom) Andrew Taylor, Vice President (zoom)
Alana Banks (zoom) Kevin Collins-Brown (in-person)
Jason Dion (zoom) Regan Lewis (zoom at 4:35 PM)
Al Scheider (in-person)

STAFF: Assistant Superintendent Jeff Dase (in-person), Board Secretary Melissa Bradford (in-person), Attorney Brian Braun (zoom) and others (in-person)

President Oakes called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

TOPIC	DISCUSSION	ACTION
Call for Closed Executive Session	President Oakes moved to Closed Executive Session to discuss the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance or dismissal of specific employees of the public body, and the purchase or lease of real property for the use of the public body, seconded by Dr. Collins-Brown. Hearing no questions, President Oakes called for a Roll Call Vote: Aye: Oakes, Scheider, Banks, Taylor, Dion, Collins-Brown Nay: None Absent: Lewis (arrived 4:35 PM) Roll Call Vote: 6 Aye, 0 Nay, 1 Absent	Board moved to Closed Executive Session at 4:30 PM.
<u>Purchase or Lease of Property</u> Land Acquisition	Rochelle Clark, Jeff Dase, Attorney Braun, Bobbi Williams and Kent Metzger joined the Closed meeting. Kent Metzger, Director of Buildings and Grounds, shared information regarding the potential real estate for the new Dennis Elementary School as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">01/04/22: Interview with three architectural firms who had interest in the projects.<ul style="list-style-type: none">This happened after the departure of Dr. Todd Covault, former Chief Operational Officer, therefore, administration was trying to get up-to-speed on what had already transpired.There was discussion of the school on the former Woodrow Wilson property (bounded east of Oakland Ave., south of Sunset Ave., west of train tracks by Fairview Ave. and north of Cottage Hill Ave.).The homes along the north side would be part of the land.Presentations were given with acreage and it was determined that the site would require 13 acres.There was no selection on an architectural firm at this time.	Information only.

**Land
Acquisition
Continued**

Mr. Metzger shared some site plans/scenarios (no handouts given).

Information
only.

Woodrow Wilson Site:

- Homes and properties would have to be acquired, which would be a total of 29 properties including the Woodrow Wilson site.
- The project has to be completed by September 2024. Therefore, decisions would have to be made fairly quickly.
- There was a meeting with Scot Wrighton, City of Decatur Manager, and Andrew Chiligarius, Attorney for a local title company. Dr. Covault had previously talked with Attorney Chiligarius regarding the process for acquirement of the properties.
 - If everything went as planned, the District could acquire the properties and complete the project on time.
 - If a property owner decided not to sale, it could stop the project. Therefore, the committee had concerns on this site.

Kiwanis Park Site:

- An alternative site.
- The park bounded to the south by the Sangamon River.

For the record, Dr. Mike Curry, Chief Operational Officer, joined the meeting.

- The park bounded west by the Sewer Treatment Plant and north and east by residential properties.
- The park itself is approximately 16 acres.
- There was an elevation change north of the property line, but flattened to the south.
- 40% of the southern end falls under the flood plain of the Sangamon River.
- Administration wanted to get up-to-speed due to the departure of Dr. Todd Covault and talked with BLDD regarding the feasibility study.
- Once information becomes public, it could have an effect on property value.

Two scenarios of Kiwanis Park from BLDD (no handouts given).

- The District does not want to build on the 100-year flood plain.
- BLDD focused on the northern end of the property and tried to maintain the current improvements at the park.
- The allocation for the parking lot was insufficient.
- The building would fit on the Kiwanis property and maintain the park's improvements.

All scenarios could be adjusted.

Woodrow Wilson:

- Projected to house 600 students; 90,000 square footage.
- Three story building.
- On-site parking would not have enough spaces.
- 7 ½ acres – space allocation could be an issue.
- No adequate space for buses at the Woodrow and Kiwanis sites.

**Land
Acquisition
Continued**

- Could be traffic congestions.
- Serious reservations regarding Woodrow Wilson site.
- Space allocation was better at Kiwanis site.
- There were ramifications at both sites.
- Meeting with Decatur Park District (DPD) to discuss agreement regarding Kiwanis site.
- Met with the City regarding the Woodrow site and they were okay either way.

Information
only.

Administration asked for some direction from the Board of Education as there were pros and cons to both sites.

President Oakes noted that DPD wants gym and playground access. Administration replied that a gym or annex (field house) could be built and opened to the public; this would not be inside the main building. The District does not want the public in and out of the main building during afterhours.

The District was weeks behind with the acquisition of properties at the Woodrow site. If properties were to be acquired around Woodrow Wilson, administration would discuss with Attorney Chiligarius and DPD. There would be various decision to be made regarding the acquirement of properties.

Mr. Metzger noted that the allotted funds must be expended by September 2024. In order to reach that goal, the District must start construction by March 2023.

One property owner could lock up the entire Woodrow site.

President Oakes asked for the administration's recommendation after their meeting with DPD so that the Board Members could call a possible special meeting to discuss.

Vice President Taylor asked what does DPD want.

Mr. Scheider noted that this was not a Board decision yet because there was a discussion regarding a school near the Millikin area. He thought the District was headed towards building on the Woodrow site. He asked if Dennis needed a middle school and if not, should there be a new school?

President Oakes noted that it was not in ADA compliance and possibly other things.

Mr. Scheider was not totally opposed to replacing Dennis, but he does not want the new school built on Kiwanis Park. He does not want to decide in just a few days because this would affect a lot of west-end families. The educational side has to be discussed too. This was not fair to the Board Members and he was not comfortable with the current process.

Ms. Banks noted that she thought the Board Members had already decided and that she was not in support of Kiwanis Park.

**Land
Acquisition
Continued**

Interim Superintendent Bobbi Williams noted that Woodrow and Kiwanis were brought up and she supported the Woodrow site from the beginning. The Board Members knew administration was going to work with the City of Decatur regarding the properties around Woodrow. [REDACTED]

Information only.

[REDACTED] Dr. Covault left and administration met to discuss current projects. There were concerns with the feasibility around the Woodrow site. A study was going to be done on both sites (Woodrow and Kiwanis).

Vice President Taylor asked how long would it take to get a feel regarding the properties around the Woodrow site. Mr. Metzger replied that some legwork had been done.

Mr. Metzger continued sharing site plans (no handouts given) around the Woodrow site with the Board of Education. The Board Members continued discussion.

Attorney Braun [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Mrs. Lewis noted that Andrew Chiligarius may have already pulled the initial searches. You generally give the homeowner their options and go from there. There could be potential delays, but if this is the site best for our students, the Board of Education should work through it. Mr. Metzger replied that Mr. Chiligarius knew the process.

Mr. Metzger noted that Scot Wrighton, City Manager, stated that there should not be any issues with the demolition of the Woodrow site, however, the residential properties could be problematic. The handshake agreement was if the District were to use the Woodrow site, the District would reimburse the City of Decatur 100% for the cost of the demolition. If the District opted to not use the site, we would reimburse the City of Decatur 50% of the demolition cost. Either way, the City of Decatur wants to work with the District.

President Oakes asked if there could be a reconfiguration of the design to get more room upward instead of outward. Mr. Metzger replied that three floors should be the maximum, but if the properties could be acquired to the south and the west, we could possibly push it further down the hill; this would change the configuration. The shape of the property is crucial.

- K5 building – 5 acres for the site + one acre for every 100 students (600) = 11 acres; the property is only 7.5 acres.
- To add 6-8 grades – 1 acre for each grade level.

This would improve the area, but we may need to acquire homes on the north side of Collage Hill. However, we could proceed without them.

**Land
Acquisition
Continued**

Dr. Collins-Brown noted that there were a lot of unknowns:

- Need a market analysis.
- Is there a need for a K8 school? This would determine acreage.
- Not in favor of using Kiwanis Park.
- If the District did not have the money, what were the plans?
- There needs to be a list of pros/cons and needs/wants.

Information
only.

Mr. Metzger noted that the initial thought was to use the same footprint as the old building, but the usage is different. The space for parking was an issue.

The Board Members continued discussion.

Interim Superintendent Williams noted that it was inadequate to place K8 grades in the current Dennis building. People were pushing for that configuration because that is what they love.

Mrs. Lewis noted that these options were previously discussed in Finance meetings. She also does not like the Kiwanis Park site. Is it best to have two campuses for Dennis? The kids should be in one place. Interim Superintendent Williams does not like the idea of two campuses for Dennis.

Vice President Taylor noted that building on Kiwanis would change the landscape of the west end. He would be in favor of moving towards the Kiwanis site if the Board Members knew 100% that the Woodrow site was not an option. We need to make every good faith effort to find out whether the Woodrow site was unfeasible.

Mrs. Lewis would like for the District to pursue the Woodrow site option and see if it could happen.

Vice President Taylor noted that doors could be knocked on soon.

Mr. Dion noted that if we could fix the issue with the two buildings, we should move forward with the process. He prefers the Woodrow site, but also liked the Kiwanis Park site option; especially, the development of a field house with a fitness center. The District would be the owners of that building and could determine who could use it and when.

Dr. Mike Curry noted that there were pluses and minuses on both sites, but it's about the timeline of the CARES funding. Dr. Curry noted that he could look into spending the funds elsewhere, but the project(s) could go longer than the deadline for the CARES Act. There were a lot of questions from the Board. The process starts earlier than the acquirement of the homes. The concern was the construction time.

Ms. Banks asked if there was a different piece of land. President Oakes replied the land was scarce on the west end. One other area had two giant sewer mains underground; that's a no.

**Land
Acquisition
Continued**

Vice President Taylor replied another site, which was not good, was to build on the Oak Grove site, but the District boundaries would have to be redone. President Oakes noted that we do not want to do that. Information only.

Mr. Metzger noted that a couple of other sites were:

- Millikin University has property directly west of Woodrow Wilson; bounded on the west by Fairview and on the north by Forest and on the east by some railroad tracks. It's equal in size and shape of Woodrow. Millikin said thanks, but they were not interested in discussing.
- Demolish the Dennis Kaleidoscope, which was bounded by the north by Main, south by Wood and west by Monroe. We would need to acquire the rest of the block and two blocks east that equaled to the acquirement of 32 properties, with two street closures from the City of Decatur.
- Sunnyside Park is Warrensburg School District.

Mrs. Lewis noted that green space on the Woodrow site is important.

President Oakes noted that the Board will need a special meeting to hear the results of the meeting with DPD. Administration was currently waiting for a meeting confirmation from DPD.

Vice President Taylor asked if the Board Members should give Andrew Chiligarius permission to proceed with knocking on doors. Dr. Curry replied he had already started and was wanting authority from the Board Members to make options. Mrs. Lewis replied that the Board Members need to discuss the options.

The Board Members continued discussion.

The consensus from the Board of Education was to proceed with the Woodrow information and the continuation for Andrew Chiligarius' attempt to procure property.

Dr. Curry noted that Mr. Chiligarius was going to hold off on using the District making the offer. Would you like for him to setup a land trust as the anonymous silent partner?

The consensus from the Board of Education was to proceed with the land trust as the anonymous silent partner.

Mr. Metzger asked if the Board wanted administration to continue discussions with DPD.

The consensus from the Board of Education was for administration to proceed with discussions with the Decatur Park District (DPD).

Mr. Scheider noted that the District needs to be aware that some of the west end students were attending other magnet schools. Interim Superintendent Williams replied that administration would get that information.

**Land
Acquisition
Continued**

Attorney Braun [REDACTED]

Information
only.

Dr. Collins-Brown asked for the addresses of students that were attending the magnet schools to see the demographic shift; compare Dennis middle school students that reside on the west end with west end middle school students that attend a magnet school. Interim Superintendent Williams replied okay.

The Board Members continued discussion regarding the demographics and the facilities.

Mrs. Lewis noted that American Dreamers worked very hard to transition from K6 to K8 and she would like a K8 at Dennis. Dr. Collins-Brown replied that is it necessary due to land? We may have to figure out what we should do with Stephen Decatur since it is not full.

Mrs. Lewis noted that families like K8 buildings for their kids.

Interim Superintendent Williams noted that unfortunately, the District has made K8 programs in buildings that were designed for K6 programs.

More information forthcoming.

**Documents for
Info Only**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Negotiations

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**Return to
Open Session**

President Oakes moved to return to Open Session, seconded by Vice President Taylor. All were in favor.

Returned to
Open Session
at 6:16 PM.

Dan Oakes, President

Melissa Bradford, Board Secretary