



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 21, 2018

District 157-C December 19, 2018 Board of Education Meeting Recap

FRANKFORT, IL — The regular Frankfort School District 157-C Board of Education meeting of December 19, 2018, was called to order by Board President Gina Briese at 7:00 p.m. The roll call was taken, and a quorum was present. The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Board approved the Open and Closed Session minutes of the regular meeting of November 14, 2018.

No one spoke during the Public Forum portion of the meeting.

Director of Business and Operational Services Kate Ambrosini presented the finalized 2018 tax levy for Board consideration. She recommended a capped levy of \$29,794,965 based off of a 3.41 percent increase in equalized assessed valuation and \$13 million in new construction.

At 7:04 p.m., the Board adjourned the regular meeting and entered into a public hearing for the tax levy. No one spoke during the hearing. At 7:04 p.m., the Board adjourned the public hearing and reentered the regular meeting.

The Board discussed a property tax abatement for 2018. Ambrosini prepared potential abatement scenarios for the Board to review ranging from abating \$2 million to \$4 million. Board Secretary Edie Adamski said \$2 million would be too low, and \$4 million would be too high. She said she would like to see the district abate \$3 million. Board Members Brett Cosich and Edith Lutz agreed. Superintendent Dr. Maura Zinni said that, financially, the district's auditors are most concerned with a potential shift of pension costs from the State of Illinois to school districts. Adamski said this has been a concern for years, and the Board can make decisions based on that information if the State legislature were to pass a law on pensions. Board Member Dr. Larry Kociolek said he agreed with the \$3 million abatement for taxpayers. He said it would allow the district the flexibility to potentially complete upgrades at Chelsea Intermediate School.

The Board took action to approve and ratify the Levy Resolution and Certificate of Levy; and direct the Administration to file the documents, along with any other necessary certifications, forms, documents, resolutions or other such information, as needed, with the County Clerks for Will County and Cook County, the Will County Regional Office of Education, the Illinois State Board of Education and any other related entities or organizations requesting said documentation, as required by law and existing bond covenants.

During their reports to the Board, school principals highlighted one grade level at each building. Hickory Creek Middle School Principal Will Seidelmann said eighth-graders recently received their PSAT results. In math, 77 percent of students met standards, up from 66 percent last year. In English, reading and writing, 86 percent of students met standards, which stayed steady from last year. He said the school's PSAT Blitz test preparation contributed to the improvements in scores. Chelsea Principal Doug Wernet highlighted a pen pal program between third-graders at Chelsea and second-graders at Grand Prairie Elementary School. He said this program helps second-graders transition to a new school, and students recently experienced the first of three Step-Up Transition Days during which the pen pals met each other. He added that Chelsea is launching a Student Council in January for the first time and is aiming to give students more leadership opportunities. Grand Prairie Principal Kirsten Frankovich said the schools' second-graders were excited when they returned from the Step-Up Transition Day at Chelsea, discussing how large the school was and how it had lockers. She also highlighted second-graders' construction of gingerbread houses for the holidays, each representing a different country. She said this project allowed students to use creativity and engineering skills.

During administrative reports, Zinni and district administrators presented progress of the district's 21st Century Continuous Learning Plan. Zinni said that this year, during Year 2 of the plan, the district began to pick up the pace of its progress as it met more objectives, particularly with technology. Hickory Creek is entirely one-to-one, meaning each student has his or her own laptop to use at school. Chelsea fifth graders are also one-to-one, while third and fourth grade classrooms share one laptop cart for every two classrooms. Increased technology is planned for Grand Prairie next year.

Director of Technology Jacob Nelson said the district has increased the amount of devices threefold for a total of nearly 2,200 devices, as well as implemented cloud-based infrastructure for students and teachers to store work, new security cameras, a new card access system, and more. "Looking back, this shows how far we've come, and I'm looking forward to the next initiatives," he said.

Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds Rodney Davis said the district upgraded alarms in all three schools and implemented offsite monitoring of security systems, electricity and temperature. The district installed playground gates at Grand Prairie and Chelsea to deter unwanted vehicles from the areas, completed roof overlays at Grand Prairie and Chelsea, upgraded the parking lot at Hickory Creek, improved exterior lighting at Chelsea, and more. "We want to keep kids safe and run the schools efficiently," he said.

Director of Curriculum & Instruction Janet McClarence said the district worked to tightly align curriculum and assessments to Illinois Learning Standards, enhance learning environments with technology and technological support for teachers, and ensure the district is catering to the needs of all learners, regardless of proficiency. The district also worked to expand its extracurricular options. "We continue to see teachers do creative things in their offerings after school," she said.

Director of Special Services Jennifer Bajda said the district paid attention to how to help learners who were struggling, including through social and emotional support through the adoption of social emotional curriculum. She said the district is working on streamlining social emotional supports for all students. Director of Human Resources Shayna Cole said the district continues to provide professional development and training opportunities for staff members, standardized hiring practices and established a new teacher induction program.

Ambrosini said the district continued to prioritize financial stability, implemented Forecast5 software to analyze data and plan for the future, modified the Capital Improvement Plan to be more specific and timely, paid off an inter-fund loan between Working Cash and Capital Projects funds, maintained a AAA

bond rating, and implemented internal controls to help with oversight and risk reduction. “We want to maintain momentum and plan for the future,” she said.

Zinni said all of the district’s leadership staff are involved in professional organizations, and the district strives to demonstrate transparency to the community. She said the district works to make its volunteer groups feel welcomed and appreciated, as well. “We feel confident about each of these objectives,” she said. “When we set the course two-and-a-half years ago, we talked about how we believe these action items should improve students’ performance. We feel we are accomplishing that. We’re currently ranked ninth in the state overall in performance. That’s a testament to the work that happens here in this district from this team, to the teachers and the support staff, to you, the Board. I can’t say enough about all we’ve accomplished in these two-and-a-half years. The plan has served us well. It’s nice to have a road map and look forward to what’s ahead.”

Board Vice President Tom Reidy said he thought the progress was remarkable and asked what the district’s next goals would be to ensure it is not overly focused on outcomes.

Zinni said that is where a focus on the social and emotional support and learning comes in.

“Social emotional issues are connected to the academic piece,” Bajda said. “We’re looking at how to incorporate social emotional learning in everyday curriculum, materials, novels. It’s a work in progress, but we’re taking those next steps.”

Briese thanked the administrators for their hard work. “I get the sense all the time that this is a great district,” she said. “The reporting shows what you’re doing to create a successful environment and that all the hard work you’re doing is paying off.”

Board Member Edie Adamski provided the Board with the November 5 Advisory Board and November 27 Governing Board meeting minutes from Lincoln-Way Special Education District 843.

Chorus Booster President Cori Chojnacki gave the Board an update on the organization’s projects from this school year. She said the Boosters served two hot lunches and noticed a decrease in sales, potentially due to multiple organizations using Aurelio’s Pizza for these lunches. She said the organization may offer a different type of food next year. The Third-Grade Chorus at Chelsea performed earlier in December, and the Boosters provided T-shirts and food for a celebration party. The Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Chorus will begin after Winter Break. Roughly 133 students are in Hickory Creek choirs. The Varsity Chorus and Advanced Choir did a holiday tour, and the Boosters sponsored a bowling party following the event. In May, Hickory Creek will perform its musical, “Beauty and the Beast.”

Director of Business and Operational Services Kate Ambrosini provided the Board with the November 2018 Treasurer's Report and Graphs. In November, the total fund balance decreased by \$1,620,069. Monthly revenue receipts totaled \$799,948 primarily due to Will County property tax receipts, evidence-based funding and impact fees. Monthly expense disbursements totaled \$2,400,016 primarily due to payroll and accounts payable.

There was one Freedom of Information request that was responded to in a timely manner.

In discussion, Ambrosini provided an update on student transportation. She said that following last month’s meeting, the district submitted a survey to Hickory Creek families regarding an activity bus for students participating in extracurricular activities. Of 900 surveys, the district received roughly 200 responses, and 150 responses indicated an interest in the bus. Of these, half indicated that the duration of the route and distance would be a concern. Lutz asked if the district could try implementing the bus for

half of a year following Winter Break to gauge its success. Briese said she was concerned about offering it and then pulling it back. "I don't think there's enough momentum to make it worthwhile," Briese said.

Ambrosini said the district worked on communication with Lincoln-Way Community High School District 210, and D210 hired a new dispatcher at the end of November. D157-C created an organizational chart with one point of contact for transport, and the district is working on policies and procedures for transportation. Ambrosini added that the district considered adding aides to bus routes. She said that, historically, the district has not had aides on routes and has had principals or assistant principals ride routes to resolve conflicts. Zinni said the district could have bus drivers adhere to seating charts and report conflicts to school administrators for appropriate follow-up.

In discussion, Ambrosini said the district's transportation renewal agreement with D210 has generally been for three years at a time, but D210 is working to stagger its contracts to sync with bus leases. D210 presented D157-C with a one-year contract this year. "With the concerns we have, this is providing us with the opportunity to see if our plan will work and gives us the opportunity to pursue something else in a year if we choose," she said. "I feel, for most part, that the relationship we have with Lincoln-Way is positive. They have a genuine concern for our students and safety. They want to communicate and be responsive to us, which is huge." She added that an outside vendor may not be as responsive and may also be more expensive. Briese said she agreed with the one-year contract.

In discussion, Ambrosini said the district does not plan to increase or decrease any student fees for the 2019-2020 school year.

In discussion, Zinni presented two options for the 2019-2020 school calendar. She said the Illinois State Board of Education changed its policy around school improvement days, requiring the district to eliminate two of its typical four institute days to still meet the required 176 days of attendance for students. Zinni said to recuperate this professional development time, the district plans to add seven half-days to its schedule, all scheduled around long weekends. "We felt strongly that a half-day is still valuable learning time and still gives our teachers a chunk of time for professional development," she said. The district's calendar is aligned closely with D210's calendar in terms of breaks, but D210 is in school the Monday after Easter. In the past, D157-C and D210 have taken that day off. "If community members work on that day, they won't have high school students to babysit if we're off," Zinni said. "I'd like to hear your feelings on that." Lutz said she would prefer the district be in session that day, particularly because if it were not off that day, the last day of school would fall on the first Monday of June. Reidy said he remembers receiving negative feedback in the past when D210 was in school on a day when D157-C was not, so he would prefer to have school that day, as well. Briese added that the district should try half-days, and if it receives any negative feedback, it could troubleshoot as needed. The Board is expected to make a final decision on the calendar at its January meeting.

In discussion, Zinni said the district made significant updates to its Parent/Student Handbook for 2019-2020, attempting to make it read less like a legal document and adding hyperlinks to district policies for each entry in the book. Lutz said she would like to see more detail on dress code to make it less vague. Zinni will include more specific language that is developmentally appropriate for the age ranges of the students. Briese said she liked the language in the revised handbook much better.

In discussion, Zinni said that with the enhanced and additional technology the district is using, the district is seeking to add an assistant network administrator to its team. Nelson said this would be an entry-level job that would support the Technology Department in whichever ways are necessary from day to day.

In discussion, Ambrosini said that, following the Board's October meeting at and walkthrough of Chelsea, FGM Architects walked through the building to brainstorm ways to make the school a more conducive

learning space. The firm found roughly 15,000 square feet of underutilized space, a large portion of that being former science labs from when the school served older students. Ambrosini said the Board should consider if it wants to pursue the development of a master plan with FGM for the improvement of the space. The district could choose how it wants to pace the project. Kociolek asked if people who use the building would be involved in focus groups or providing feedback about the space. Zinni said that is part of the plan to get teachers, support staff and other stakeholders involved, telling FGM what improvements they would like to see at Chelsea. Cosich said he thought the master plan is a great idea that would give the district a good idea of where to move forward and what to prioritize with the renovation.

In discussion, Ambrosini said the district could go to bid on three capital improvement projects for next summer — Grand Prairie parking lot repairs, repairs of Chelsea’s breezeway roof and the replacement of Chelsea’s carpet in the north wing. Board members suggested waiting on the Chelsea carpet until the district has a master plan for renovations at the school.

The Board took action to approve the replacement of Grand Prairie Condensing Unit No. 4 by Precision Controls for a total cost of \$49,620.

The Board took action to approve a memorandum of understanding with the Village of Frankfort regarding the School Resource Officer Program. Briese said she is excited about the program and will be sending a “thank you” to the mayor and Village trustees for working with the district on this program.

The Board took action to approve a reciprocal reporting agreement with the Village of Frankfort regarding the School Resource Officer Program.

The Board took action to approve a contract with Yakos Therapy to fill FMLA leaves during the second semester for speech language pathology.

The Board took action to accept a 48-month proposal from Imagetec, LP of leased digital multi-functional copiers, with a \$1 buyout option, in the amount of \$3,140 per month. Ambrosini said this lease would include four color copiers — one for each building — which the district did not previously have.

The Board took action to approve the employment of Angela Vander Kooi as a full-time teacher on daily assignment at Chelsea Intermediate School with a start date of January 7, 2019, contingent upon the receipt and evaluation of employment documentation required by District 157-C and the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Board took action to approve the employment of Robert Bopes as a full-time special education paraprofessional at Hickory Creek Middle School with a start date of December 10, 2018, contingent upon the receipt and evaluation of employment documentation required by District 157-C and the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Board took action to approve the employment of Erik Hark as a stipend assistant wrestling coach at Hickory Creek Middle School at with a start date of November 30, 2018, and tentative end date of February 28, 2019, or until the assignment ends, contingent upon the receipt and evaluation of employment documentation required by District 157-C and the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Board took action to approve the payment of bills for November 2018 as presented.

In the consent agenda, the Board approved the final fiscal year 2018 audit report; property and casualty insurance renewal at an annual premium of \$79,222; an inter-fund loan transfer of up to \$50,000 from

Working Cash Fund reserves to the Debt Service Fund, as needed; an inter-fund transfer of \$2 million from the Education Fund to the Debt Service Fund to be used for payments related to operations and maintenance, and outstanding debt service obligations; and the disposal of surplus property.

The Board adjourned the regular meeting at 8:23 p.m.

The next regular District 157-C Board of Education meeting will be held on January 16, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the District Office, 10482 W. Nebraska St. in Frankfort, Illinois.