

January 8, 2008 at 7:00 pm
School Growth Committee Meeting

Call to Order

Public Comment

New Business

Discussion with Mary Ellen Fitzgerald, Gallatin County Superintendent, about growth issues in other rural school districts.

Old Business

Discussion of getting started with a needs assessment

Adjournment

Next meeting Tuesday, February 12, 2008 at 7pm.

Special Meeting of Trustees, Gallatin Gateway School District #35

Date: January 8, 2008

Time: 7:00 pm

Place: Gallatin Gateway School Multipurpose Room

Members Present: Celia O'Connor
Nikki Robbins

Committee Members Present: Terry Threlkeld
Sandra Hart
Kim DeBruycker, Superintendent
John Vincent
Doug Marshall
Ann Prescott
Mary Ellen Fitzgerald, County Superintendent

Others Present: Christie Francis

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm

Nikki Robbins introduced Mary Ellen Fitzgerald, the County Superintendent, and explained that Mrs. Fitzgerald was asked to come speak to our committee about growth issues that other rural schools are experiencing and to explain the pros and cons of sending our middle school students to another district to be educated.

Mrs. Fitzgerald discussed growth in Gallatin County. She handed out information on school enrollment figures of all schools in Gallatin County and pointed out the increases that many schools are experiencing. She expressed that Gallatin County is destined to grow. Mrs. Fitzgerald handed out information on taxable values of Gallatin County Elementary Districts. The bonding capacity is calculated from the taxable value. High taxable values usually come from commercial properties. Mrs. DeBruycker asked if we could receive information of the highest contributors to our taxable value in our district. Mrs. Fitzgerald agreed to supply that information. Mrs. Fitzgerald explained that the taxes on a house being built or sold are not received by that school district until 18 months to 2 years after the house is built or sold, yet, the school districts are required to educate those children immediately.

Mrs. Fitzgerald handed out information of the proposed developments in Gallatin County. She uses the figure of .28 students per household to predict school growth for a district. Mrs. Fitzgerald explained the situation of Amsterdam School District where there are many developments going into their school district but their bonding capacity is

limited. She explained that schools like LaMotte and Springhill are land locked, as is Gallatin Gateway School

Public Comment

Christie Francis asked how a school district can get around the public policy of taking the lowest bid.

Mrs. Fitzgerald and Mrs. DeBruycker explained that the laws have changed and a school can take the most reasonable bid.

The group discussed the state of Gallatin Gateway's sewer system.

Mrs. Fitzgerald explained how Amsterdam sends their 7th and 8th graders to Manhattan. Amsterdam does not pay tuition and Manhattan gets the ANB for those students. Mrs. Fitzgerald strongly advised against Gallatin Gateway school using this as a method for planning for growth. It breaks up a community and the middle school students bring in the most ANB, thus, we would lose a lot of our funding. She also explained that out of district students are the first to go and our middle school students may be sent back to us if the district we are sending them to can not longer take them. Mrs. DeBruycker explained the verbal agreement with Cottonwood out of district students. She also explained that the amount that the minutes in the school day is driven by the middle school requirements, thus, the elementary students get more than their required minutes.

Mrs. Fitzgerald stated that Gallatin County's population is predicted to get to 250,000.

Doug Marshall raised the question of "How do we know development is coming?" Christy Francis emphasized that a plan based on numbers (student enrollment increases) and not years is logical and most beneficial to the school.

Mrs. DeBruycker asked if we could receive information on the home school families in our district. Mrs. Fitzgerald agreed to supply that information

Mrs. Fitzgerald answered Doug Marshall's question of our bonding capacity.

Nikki Robbins asked Mrs. Fitzgerald which rural school we were most similar to in our growth issues in this county. Mrs. Fitzgerald stated Anderson School is most similar in size and because of lack of commercial development.

Mrs. DeBruycker asked the group what information she could give to the community so they would understand our school's financial and building situation better. The group gave suggestions of a simplified explanation of school funding.

Public Comment

Christie Francis asked if this committee had goals and ways to assess our goals. She explained that the Community Growth Planning Committee was going to have their plan

ready to present to the Gallatin County Commissioners in April and she would like to have our plan submitted with it.

Terry Threlkeld emphasized the usefulness of a needs assessment. In planning for growth in increments of 25 students each new increment would trigger a need for improvement.

Mrs. DeBruycker explained that she could schedule JGA architects to come speak to up about the criteria required in our building as our enrollment increases. Doug Marshall felt that the architects may just be trying to sell us something. The group agreed that we needed the architect's expertise on room, facility, playground needs as our enrollment increases. We agreed that we could ultimately use any architect we wanted.

Mr. Marshall questioned whether the committee was intended to fix existing problems.

Mr. Threlkeld explained that we look where the school is deficient now and where it will be deficient with an addition of 25 students etc.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 pm

Meeting with JGA Architects – to be determined.
Next scheduled meeting – February 12, 2008