

**SMITHTON COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT #130**  
Smithton, Illinois 62285  
Strategic Planning Committee Meeting, September 29, 2015  
MINUTES

The Strategic Planning Committee meeting of the Board of Education of Smithton Community Consolidated School District #130 was held on September 29, 2015, in the Smithton School Art Room, 316 South Hickory, Smithton, Illinois 62285.

Mrs. Sara Sutherland, Board secretary, recorded minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on September 29, 2015 beginning at 6:03 p.m.

Present: Committee Chairman Brian Lester; Board Member Sara Sutherland, Board Member Ed Farley, Superintendent Dr. Susan Homes; Principal Vicki Norton; Director of Business Heidi Etling; Teachers Courtney Hammel, Michelle Smith, Shelley LePere, and Stephanie Berry; and community members Jennifer Davis, Neal Trentman, Curt Whitworth, and Tom Springborn.

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Brian Lester at 6:03 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.
3. Strategic Planning

Mr. Lester provided an overview of the agenda for the meeting which included the following (a copy of the handout provided committee members is attached):

- 2015-2016 District Budget Overview and Enrollment Update
- Architect Selection Process
- Survey Development
- Subcommittee Establishment
- Next Steps

Mr. Lester and Dr. Homes reviewed the details related to the recent FY16 budget adoption by the Board of Education. Mr. Lester reported that the district had made some headway in reducing the amount of the deficit in the Education Fund through continued money management as well as increased General State Aid, a commitment by the state to prorate GSA at 92% rather than the previous 89% as well as an initial promise to provide 4 categorical payments during the FY16 year. Dr. Homes reported that she had met with Dr. Bill Phillips on Monday, September 28. Dr. Phillips was less optimistic about the state's promises and suggested the district consider that proration may come in between 88% and 89% and that districts could see as few as two categorical payments this year. The fiscal uncertainty at the legislative level has left entities scrambling to try to deal with realistic projections. Dr. Homes reported that services were being reduced at the Illinois State Board of Education as a result of the budget stalemate. Dr. Homes also reported that the impact of a property tax freeze on the district's budget could be significant and that the district is keeping an eye on Senate Bill 318 which is expected to pass as a compromise bill, freezing property taxes based on the 2015 levy for at least two years. Experts in the field contend that once the property tax sunsets, districts subject to

the freeze as a result of this legislation will continue to be capped under PTELL. Dr. Homes shared that 80% of Illinois citizens are currently impacted by PTELL and that legislatively PTELL appears to be a popular political move despite its impact on governmental entities.

Mr. Lester and Dr. Homes pointed out that the district's FY16 budget is projected to reflect a \$215,654 deficit in the Education Fund and an overall budget deficit of \$257,208 although \$41,554 of that total deficit includes one-time, non-recurring costs. The impact of the deficit will reduce the district's overall fund balance total from \$4,567,151 to \$4,309,943.

Dr. Homes indicated there is county-wide district support for placing a one-cent sales tax issue on the November 2016 ballot. Dr. Homes will be attending a meeting of county superintendents on October 8 to receive up-to-date information as well as guidance for getting information out to the public about how the sales tax may benefit the school district.

Dr. Homes reported that the district has 20 fewer students in K-8 this school year, representing an approximate decline of 3%. It was noted that the district experienced an enrollment spike the previous year (6%) and that the spike/decline pattern was last seen between the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years.

Mr. Lester reported that the district received applications from five architectural firms in response to a request for professional services: FGM, Ittner, Baysinger, Hurst-Rosche, and TRI (the district's current architect). After reviewing the submissions, the Board interviewed FGM, Ittner, and Baysinger. The Board ultimately leaned toward FGM because of their range of services, their background in Health, Life and Safety work, the architect's previous experience completing Smithton's 10-Year Health, Life and Safety survey (Art Hayhurst who was with another firm at the time), the firm's focus on Smithton as an entity during the interview process, and well as their broad investment in Illinois architecture—primarily schools and other government entities. It was also noted that FGM was the architectural firm that designed the Smithton firehouse. Dr. Homes reported that she had done extensive reference checking after the interviews regarding FGM and heard very positive remarks from Dr. Brent Clark, IASA Director, Dr. Nick Osborne, IASA Field Director, as well as several superintendent colleagues who have worked with the firm. Mr. Lester and Dr. Homes reported that FGM had already completed the modular building inspection, the bleacher inspection, and had agreed to complete the 10-Year Health, Life, and Safety survey in 2016 for a total of \$500.


Mr. Lester next led a conversation about establishing a subcommittee of individuals to review possible questions to be included on a public survey about opinions related to the school and school needs. The following volunteers offered to serve on the subcommittee: Brian Lester (Board member), Susan Homes (Superintendent), Neal Trentman (Citizen), and Shelley LePere (Teacher).

The subcommittee was charged with preparing a draft survey to present to the full committee on October 13 at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Lester indicated that the date would be fluid based on the subcommittee's ability to complete the work by October 13. The goal would be to present the survey to the full Board of Education at the October 20 meeting.

There was considerable discussion about the timing of sending the survey and the concern that the survey might stir up concern among taxpayers regarding the true intent of the questions. Discussion ensued related to how to educate and communicate to the public regarding the school's current challenges. Several committee members suggested a Town Hall style meeting and the possibility of multiple presentations at key organizations in the community prior to launching a survey. It was determined that the survey would be drafted and further discussion about the launch would occur at a subsequent committee meeting.

The next meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee will be held on Tuesday, October 13, at 7:00 p.m.

4. The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Lester at 7:15 p.m.



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President



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Secretary