

## A Summary of Work Accomplished on BOE Goal 1

By Doug Conwell

Over the course of the past two weeks, I have heard several rumors regarding the work the USD 417 BOE is doing in relation to Goal 1 of their 2013-14 Board Goals. Let me take a minute to dispel the rumor that the BOE is closing the Prairie Heights Schools next year. To date, the board has never once mentioned or discussed this possibility. I have shared data with the BOE regarding what if scenarios, with more to come, in an effort to look at resource allocation and options in response to our declining enrollment and shrinking budget.

There is more data to come for the BOE in the next two months. On March 24, the BOE will hold a work session at 6:30 at the district office to review the preliminary 2014-15 budget to include both projected revenue and expenses for the next school year. Other information will include proposed staffing changes for the 2014-15 school year and, if possible, a breakout of the projections with the same "what if" scenarios regarding the Prairie Heights Schools. As always, I would encourage patrons who want to understand this work to come and listen to the presentation. As this is a BOE work session, this meeting is not interactive (no audience participation) but people can at least hear what is shared with the BOE. I will be at the Prairie Heights Middle School on March 27 at 7:00 pm to share all of this information and to answer questions for interested parents and patrons.

The purpose of this article though is to summarize shared information from the past three BOE work sessions so those who are interested have the facts. Remember that this all began last year during negotiations and through discussions of issues on how we can best serve children with our administrative team. Topics such as improved teacher pay on the base salary (our teachers base salary ranks 214 out of 283 school districts and is \$2,000 below the state average); additional counseling, early childhood education, and more access to our after school programs (the % of our students qualifying for free/reduced meals, which correlates with family poverty, is around 50%); and technology opportunities for our students, and more help for our at-risk student population.

Here is a summary of the information that has been shared with the Board of Education.

- From 2013-14 through 2014-15, the district will lose well over \$300,000 in revenue. This is due to a decrease in enrollment of approximately 48 students between 2011-12 and 2014-15 (projected) and a lack of state funding. This could increase depending on whether or not the state legislature votes to renew the current LOB funding formula that expires at the end of June.
- Morris County population is in decline and has been since 1910. The district's long-term enrollment pattern is one of decline though we will see some increases now and then in the short term. Both the Council Grove and Prairie Height's schools have seen a decrease in enrollment. Projections for

the coming five years show a fairly level enrollment at CGES, CGMS, PHES, and PHMS. However, CGHS shows a declining enrollment projection.

- The capital outlay needs for the district will be a challenge in the coming years. Our needs may well exceed our budget resources especially if more LOB fund expenditures get pushed into the capital outlay fund.
- A look at a breakout of revenue and expenditures by school for the 2012-13 school year shows the following information. \*

	Council Grove Elementary	Council Grove Middle	Council Grove High	Prairie Heights Elementary	Prairie Heights Middle
Total Revenue	\$2,618,342	\$1,395,062	\$2,138,830	\$723,238	\$493,791
Total Expenditures	\$2,391,260	\$1,229,586	\$2,230,848	\$824,219	\$684,771
Difference	\$227,081	\$165,477	-\$92,018	-\$100,981	-\$190,980
Enrollment for 2012-13	238.5	154.0	226.7	69.0	57.0
Revenue per Student	\$10,978	\$9,059	\$9,435	\$10,482	\$8,663
Expense per Student	\$10,026	\$7,984	\$9,841	\$11,945	\$12,014
Difference	\$952	\$1,075	-\$406	-\$1,463	-\$3,351

\* As I have told the BOE, I am not an auditor but have many years of experience with school budgets. I have done the best I can to take the data that was available to me and to record it for each respective school.

In the coming weeks there will be more information in regards to our district's finances and reports on programs that we believe would help our students to reach our achievement and student growth expectations. I will continue to share this information with parents and patrons through newspaper articles and on our district website. I will also have public meetings share all information and to answer questions. I hope that all interested patrons will positively contribute to this discussion.