JOINT MEETING
LINCOLN BOARD OF EDUCATION
LINCOLN CITY COUNCIL
LANCASTER COUNTY BOARD
MAYOR

Tuesday, January 20, 2004 – 7:30 a.m.

Lincoln Public Schools District Offices
Board Room (E102)
5901 O Street

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BOARD

AGENDA

1. Minutes of November 4, 2003 (handed out at January meeting)
2. Budget Discussion
3. Risk Insurance Coverage
4. LPS Transfer Policies (Maximizing Current Use of Existing Facilities
5. Availability of Soft Drinks and Junk Food at Schools (Efforts by LPS to Encourage Healthy Habits and Lifestyle Choices Among Students)
6. Insurance Requirements for Contractors by Kerry Eagan
7. Continuing Business

8 New Business

9 Future Meeting Date

MINUTES

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LANCASTER COUNTY BOARD

JOINT MEETING
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MAYOR
LANCASTER COUNTY BOARD

January 20, 2004
Lincoln Public Schools District Offices

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Board of Education:** Keith Prettyman-President, Kathy Danek, Jim Garver, Lillie Larsen, Ed Zimmer
City Council: Jon Camp-Chair, Patte Newman, Ken Svoboda, Terry Werner
Mayor Colleen Seng
County Board: Ray Stevens-Chair, Bernie Heier, Larry Hudkins, Deb Schorr, Bob Workman

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Prettyman called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. He advised that the meeting was being taped for airing at a later time.

MINUTES

The minutes of the November 4, 2003, joint meeting of the Lincoln Board of Education, the Lincoln City Council, the Mayor, and the Lancaster County Board were approved as distributed.

BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mr. Garver, chair of the School Board's Finance Committee, reported that February 1 would be a key date for the school district, as that is when the Nebraska Department of Education will give certification of state aid for the next year. He indicated that the school board is slightly worried, as the Legislature, for the last two years, has had a zero growth formula. Comparing the growth in Lincoln with rural Nebraska penalizes Lincoln. The School Board will have to make budget decisions based on the certified state aid figure.

Mayor Seng reported that the City's finance people met with the City Council and directors to go through an exercise of reviewing resources, needs, and wishes. Two different retreats have been scheduled with the City Council. Directors are currently working with their departments on putting together their requests.

Mr. Hudkins reported that the County will have a better handle on its budget after tomorrow, when it will learn how tight things are. He noted that the State continues to solve its problems on the backs of schools, cities, and counties. A better picture will be known tomorrow on what County Government has to do.

Mr. Camp indicated that it might be helpful for this group to discuss how all of this will affect taxpayers from the three jurisdictions, as all have budget needs. To the extent possible, all three entities being understanding of the taxpayer and coordinating their needs would be most beneficial.

Mrs. Larsen reminded everyone that at the last meeting the issue was raised on whether the City would have a bond election in the spring. She asked when this decision would be made and to what a bond election would refer.

Mr. Camp advised that the City has been discussing its infrastructure needs.

Mayor Seng indicated that if there will be a spring bond issue, it would have to go before the City Council in February.

Mr. Camp asked about the School Board's plans for a school bond election.

Mr. Garver reported that the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce has agreed to review data on the school district's current situation and projected enrollment, and staff is in the process of getting this data to the Chamber. It's hoped that the School Board will hear from the Chamber soon.

Dr. Zimmer noted that the School Board is on the same schedule as the City for decision-making and, possibly, tying into a spring election. He stated that the School Board is working with an excellent committee of the Chamber, and added that the school district is going through the same process as the City regarding a possible bond election.

Mr. Camp asked what the amount of the bond issue would be, if the School Board were to hold a bond election.

Dr. Zimmer advised that it would be much smaller than the school district's ten-year need. There are four-five critical projects, as outlined by the long-range planning study conducted by MGT of America, which would probably be considered in the first round. Not all of the projects have to come from bonds; this is one of the things being discussed with the Chamber, and the school board should have more information on this soon.

Mr. Werner talked about the certainty of the Infrastructure Committee recommending a bond issue to the City in the $60 million range. He emphasized the need to work together on these projects, adding that it's no big secret that the City Council will vote on this before March.

Mr. Prettyman noted that the School Board has seven members and each has one vote regarding a possible bond election. He reported that at this time, the board has had no formal discussion and has not voted on the issue.

Mr. Werner stated that the School Board should be aware of the City's plans, as this might be helpful in the School Board's decision-making process.

Dr. Zimmer observed that there are City needs and school needs, which are genuine and urgent. He added that he couldn't recommend to his fellow School Board members, or to the City Council, which should take precedence. Dr. Zimmer talked about the tolerance level of taxpayers, noting that the School Board and the City know they are spending hard-earned dollars and taxpayers expect results for it.

Mr. Camp reiterated that the City has an Infrastructure Committee looking at things similar to the School Board's Chamber of Commerce group. The information they provide should be helpful to everyone. He indicated that it's difficult for the City to pinpoint the exact amount of a bond issue, observing that it could be much higher than the $60 million mentioned by Mr. Werner. Mr. Camp noted that each governmental entity would probably receive input from the groups studying the issues and would have to make decisions based on that input. He added that it would be nice if the entities could consolidate their bond issuance needs. It seems that something urgent will be seen by one or both entities and, hopefully, presented positively to the community.

Mr. Svoboda commended the Chamber of Commerce for taking on this challenge. He indicated that he was curious how the Infrastructure Committee got started, what its charge is, and what the City Council would do with committee's report.

Mayor Seng advised that she did not appoint the Chamber of Commerce committee, but did appoint the task force on infrastructure geared only to looking at streets, roads, and trails. She noted that the streets are in desperate need for infrastructure and the schools need the streets for students getting to school. Mayor Seng stated that there is enough membership on both bodies, with some overlapping membership, and there is good communication. She advised that she did not know what would be coming from the task force, but she is certain that it will come forward on a recommendation, which will then go to the City Council. Mayor Seng observed that the Chamber task force is trying to identify needs at the same time.

RISK INSURANCE COVERAGE/INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTRACTORS

County administrator Kerry Eagan advised that at the last joint meeting, Mr. Stevens raised this issue on insurance requirements for independent contractors who do business with the County. A meeting was held to discuss the issues. Mr. Eagan reported that each governmental body does things differently. They have asked for a legal opinion regarding this vicarious liability, and to find out what the real risk of liability is. Until this opinion is received, it's difficult to come to any conclusion on this issue.

Mr. Prettyman asked if this agenda item should be held over until the legal opinion is received. Mr. Eagan responded yes, adding that there it is premature to come up with an overall policy at this time and, perhaps, it will not be possible.

Mr. Stevens stated that the County was hoping that LPS or the City had a solution on which the County could piggyback.

Mrs. Danek noted from the minutes of the last joint meeting that the three entities' risk management committees were asked to discuss their policies and practices, in an effort to look for ways to save tax dollars. She requested a report at the next joint meeting, with members receiving it in advance of the meeting.

Mr. Eagan reported that the risk management groups discussed contractor insurance, health insurance, etc., and did not find too many opportunities to share. They did not reach any conclusions, but will continue to work on this issue.

LPS TRANSFER POLICIES (MAXIMIZING CURRENT USE OF EXISTING FACILITIES)

Mr. Svoboda asked about the school district's grandfather policy regarding transfers. Mr. Prettyman advised that the school district's transfer policies were discussed by the board two meetings ago, a vote was taken on transfer policies, with a 3-3 tie vote. Therefore, the current transfer policies remain in effect. He added that the School Board has discussed the decisions made, and can share the policies with the City and County, if desired.

Mr. Garver reported that one in seven students attend a school outside of their regular attendance area. He stated that if this were a problem, the board wouldn't allow it, and transfers are monitored every year. Mr. Garver noted that North Star has been open less than one year, yet all of the high schools are virtually balanced in enrollment, without forcing any student into any school at the high school level.

Mr. Garver also reported that a public meeting is going to be held on proposed boundary changes for Irving Middle School to relieve overcrowding at Scott Middle School. This meeting is scheduled for January 21 at 7:00 p.m.

Dr. Zimmer indicated that if there are additional transfer information inquiries from the City or County, it would be helpful for the School Board to know these prior to the next joint meeting.

AVAILABILITY OF SOFT DRINKS AND JUNK FOOD AT SCHOOLS (EFFORTS BY LPS TO ENCOURAGE HEALTHY HABITS AND LIFESTYLE CHOICES AMONG STUDENTS)

Mrs. Larsen reported that she has received a number of e-mails regarding soft drinks and junk food in schools, which she turned over to LPS' nutrition expert. A report went back to the e-mail inquirers that LPS does have a quality meal program in schools, which is available to students. It also has choices for students to add into their diet. The school district receives income from vending machines and a compromise has been made to ensure that the machines also have nutritional products. LPS does comply with federal recommendations for quality food service. Mrs. Larsen added that there is a real push to look into all of the choices offered students.

Mrs. Danek noted that vending machines now contain milk, fruit juices, and healthy snacks. She added that the schools do a good job of telling students what they should eat.

Mrs. Larsen advised that the interested citizens who inquired, and were provided with the report, were impressed with the choices available to students. They asked that the school district continue to look at additional options for students.

Mr. Camp asked if consideration has been given to not allowing certain food items in vending machines that are below some standard set by the LPS nutrition expert.

Mrs. Larsen noted that a number of students are mobile, and part of the reason for the broad selection of food items is to encourage students to stay in the building for lunch.

Mrs. Danek advised that elementary and middle schools do not have vending machines; they are only at the high school level.

Mr. Svoboda reported that a number of parents have spoken to him about the open campus policy at the high school level. He asked if there has been a review of that policy recently, or if it is time to have this discussion again.

Mr. Garver advised that Northeast and Southeast both have expansion needs for their cafeterias. He reported that the school district couldn't feed all of the high schools students in their cafeterias.

Superintendent of schools Phil Schoo noted that the open campus policy was modified at the high school level within the last five-six years. At that time it was narrowed to juniors and seniors, which is the current status. Ninth and tenth grade students are not allowed to leave campus, and this is policed at the school level. Mrs. Danek added that every student has to have parental permission to leave campus.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

There were no continuing business items discussed at this portion of the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Road Work

Mrs. Larsen asked if there would be a report from the City on February 2 that will give a year-long agenda for road work.

Mayor Seng reported that on February 2, she will have a town hall meeting at the Auld Center at 7:00 p.m. At 6:00 p.m., there will be a Capital Improvement Program presentation, for those who want to see where upcoming roadwork will occur. She advised that citizens will have trouble getting around the city during the upcoming roadwork season.

Mrs. Larsen indicated that this information would be very important to the school district.

Mrs. Danek asked if some of this information could be put on the City's website, and Mr. Camp advised that Public Works is in the process of doing this. Mayor Seng reported that the link to this information is very easily accessed from the City's website.

NEW BUSINESS (continued)

Report from Chamber

Mrs. Schorr requested that the school district's report from the Chamber of Commerce by provided to the County Board.

State Fair

Mr. Hudkins talked about the discussions underway regarding the future of the Nebraska State Fair. He advised that in those discussions, it has been mentioned that if the State Fair moved to another location, LPS might be interested in the grandstand facilities. Mr. Hudkins asked if there is anything to this.

School board members present at the meeting indicated that it was the first time they have heard about that issue. Dr. Zimmer advised that he has heard, from State Fair discussions, that there are efforts underway to try to help the Fair remain at its current site.
Mr. Hudkins reported that they are looking at all possible ways to strengthen the State Fair concept, and he noted that LPS has utilized some of the State Fair space for classrooms in the past. He added that as the State Fair Board makes decisions, it must continue to look at use of facilities.

FUTURE MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the Lincoln Board of Education, the Lincoln City Council, the Mayor, and the Lancaster County Board was scheduled for Tuesday, April 13, 2004, 7:30 a.m. The County will host the meeting and announce a location at a later date.

ADJOURNMENT OF JOINT MEETING

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:17 a.m.