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# NORTHWEST ARKANSAS TIMES

## School board members hope to vote this month on high school proposals

BY BRETT BENNETT Northwest Arkansas Times

Posted on Tuesday, February 13, 2007

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The future of the high school and more time for recess were among the topics discussed Monday at the Fayetteville School Board's Zone 3 meeting at Ramay Junior High.

The meeting was attended by about 10 people and hosted by board member Tim Kring, the Zone 3 representative. Also in attendance were three other school board members — Zone 5 member Tim Hudson and atlarge representatives Susan Heil and John Delap.

An appointed committee is scheduled to present a recommendation on whether Fayetteville should convert to a two-high school district or continue with one high school at the full School Board's next meeting on Feb. 22 at Adams Leadership Center in the School Administration Building. The committee is also scheduled to make a recommendation on whether ninth grade should be added to the high school campus.

The board members indicated Monday they hoped to vote on those two concepts at the next meeting, although Kring noted many details, such as whether to retain the current building site or build a new facility elsewhere, will need to be worked out later.

" If we just keep it at those two things (number of schools and grade format ), I think I'll be ready to vote, " Delap said.

At that moment a thunder clap was heard from the rainstorm, and some audience members said to take that as a sign.

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Hudson said he hopes whatever the decision, it will be something that future board members look back on in 20 to 25 years and view as the correct decision.

Delap, a former Springdale School District administrator, said that district first discussed the possibility of going to two high schools in the 1980 s. One of the focal points back then was that two high schools should be built on north and south locations in the city.

Instead, Springdale built the new Har-Ber High to the west, which he charged was a mistake. Some of the challenges that city has faced make Fayetteville residents more wary of the conversion.

“ I’m sorry they blew it, ” he said.

The board members said whether to keep the current location is a tough decision because of the challenges involved with doing a renovation while school is in session.

Hudson noted his house was built in 1938, and it should be able to continue serving as a family home for many years. Schools undergo changes in district demographics and education standards over time, though, so retaining an older site is not always practical, he said.

“ A 50-year-old high school may have gotten its usefulness, ” he said.

Parents Julia and Dan Kennefick spoke at the meeting Monday in favor of increasing recess time at elementary schools, as recess time has been cut back over the years to allow for more class time. The Kenneficks recently started an organization called “ Fair Play for Recess. ”

They said the unstructured play time is important for young children, and many parents are concerned about the limited recess time at school. Dan Kennefick said he thought increasing recess would fit in with one of the district’s strategic goals, which states, “ Create and promote participation in a variety of activities that develop a full range of life skills. ”

“ It bothers me that they don’t have a right to recess, ” Julia Kennefick said.

Kring said a topic of concern he hopes to discuss at the school board meeting on Feb. 22 is “ city-centric” schools. The concerns include lower enrollments at the more centrally located elementary schools and topheavy enrollments at the schools on the east side of the district.

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