



USD 497 NEWS

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Superintendent Appoints Community Members to Working Group

Lawrence Public Schools Superintendent Rick Doll announces the appointment of 26 community members and nine teachers (Kennedy and Woodlawn teachers will share duties) to the Central and East Lawrence Elementary School Consolidation Working Group. Teachers will serve as ex-officio, non-voting members. The appointment of a chairperson is pending confirmation.

Cordley: Kelly Jones
Mark Kalusha
Sally Kelsey
At-Large: Chuck Epp
Ex-Officio: Lois Orth-Lopes

Kennedy: Dawn Shew
Tim Laurent
Stella Murphy
At-Large: Amy Scrivner
Ex-Officio: Paula Meyers/Jill Anderson

Pinckney: Karla Hughes
David Unekis
Stacey White
At-Large: Andrea Albright
Ex-Officio: Alison Nye

Hillcrest: Leslie Newman
Dennis Hill
Edith Paredes
At-Large: Donna Osness
Ex-Officio: Jessica Larsen

New York: Josh Davis
Mike Myers
Natasha Naramore
At-Large: Chris Lempa
Ex-Officio: Melissa Turpin/Linda Kucza

Sunset Hill: Kissan Joseph
Daisy Wakefield
Don Barnett
At-Large: Milton Scott
Ex-Officio: Paulette Breithaupt

Woodlawn: Megan Richardson
At-Large: Michelle Iwig-Harmon
Ex-Officio: Jeny Bellavia/Barbara Gossett

“I appreciate that these community members are willing to volunteer the time and effort necessary to thoughtfully study the various issues, values and opinions involved, and to build consensus toward accomplishing the group’s charge,” Doll said. “The board made it clear that the purpose of the working group is not to debate whether consolidations should occur, rather to discuss how consolidations might best occur to meet the needs of students and the community.”

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When the Lawrence Board of Education approved \$4.6 million in budget cuts in March of 2010, it established the Lawrence Elementary School Facility Vision Task Force. The board charged the Task Force to “recommend a community vision and plan for the school district’s elementary facilities that reflect the varied community and educational values, and how to best reflect those values given the restraints of current and anticipated district resources.” The Task Force studied elementary facility issues for eight months and presented its recommendations to the board in February of 2011.

Acting upon the Task Force recommendations, the school board voted to close Wakarusa Valley Elementary School and to establish this working group to recommend a community plan for reducing six elementary schools (Cordley, Hillcrest, Kennedy, New York, Pinckney and Sunset Hill) to four or three schools in the next 2-3 years. The board also approved a Vision Statement for elementary facilities and created guidelines for the Central and East Lawrence Elementary School Consolidation Working Group. (Both are available on the district’s website.)

“The board and administration understand that neighborhoods deeply value their schools. We wouldn’t want it any other way,” said Doll. “This working group has an opportunity to help redefine ‘community schools’ and to set a course for much needed re-investment in central and east Lawrence.”

“The board’s goal is to direct resources in such a way as to maximize student learning,” Doll said. “In light of decreasing school budgets, operational cost-savings from consolidations and ongoing economies of scale will enable the district to improve instruction for all students.”

The board anticipates that a no-tax-increase bond issue, possible because of the retirement of current bonds, will be required to successfully implement the consolidation plan and to sufficiently remedy the deficiencies and needs of elementary facilities across the district.

An organizational meeting for the Consolidation Working Group will take place later this month; that meeting date has not been set. The group’s formal work will take place from August-January with a recommendation to the school board expected in February of 2012.

Contact: Rick Doll, 785/832-5000.

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