

**MINUTES OF THE ELEMENTARY ENROLLMENT / ATTENDANCE  
AREAS COMMITTEE  
December 9, 2024**



**Call to Order: 5:06 p.m.**

**Committee Members Present:**

Jake Dixon – Zone 1 Parent	Holli Haws – Zone 2 Parent (absent)
Eryn Kelsey – Zone 3 Parent (absent)	Jennifer Warner – Zone 3 Parent
Lauren Dalton – Zone 3 Parent	Emily Astin – Zone 4 Parent
Jennifer Lloyd – Zone 5 Parent	Tara Dayley – Teacher
Cody Perry – Teacher	Nick Muckerman – Administrator
Angela Stevens – Administrator (absent)	Troy Johnson – Administrator
AJ Watson – Director	Jackie Reader – ArcGIS Specialist

**Committee Purpose**

- Address Decline in District-Wide Enrollment
- Maximize Use of District Resources
- Develop Recommendations/Options to Provide to School Board for Elementary Enrollment Areas

*Mr. Watson welcomed the committee and went through the agenda.*

**Committee Goals**

- *Optimizing Capacity-* balance populations make best use of available space
- *Equitable Access-* fair access to educational programs and facilities
- *Minimize Disruptions-* for learners and families
- *Maintain Efficiency-* travel time and middle school feeders
- *Future Needs and Considerations-* planning for future changes and needs

**Updated Information and Data**

- Discuss November School Board Meeting and Board Feedback
- State Funding Allocation Information – Enrollment/Units
- Updated Enrollment Area Maps and Information

*Mr. Watson stated that the plan would be to meet over the next three weeks to come up with different options based on the feedback from the Board of Trustees. Mr. Watson thanked Ms. Dayley and Ms. Dalton for attending and speaking on behalf of the committee at the Board Meeting. He said it was a packed meeting and there was a lot of input given. He said Ms. Dayley and Ms. Dalton provided information and the recommendation as well as gave them the information on how the committee came to the decision. He said the Board asked a lot of questions and asked the committee to reconvene and look at two additional options. He said Option 1 would be to close Tendoy which the committee had originally looked at and Option 2 would be to not close any building and just redistribute learners to balance everything out and bring those back to the Board to present as soon as possible. He asked Ms. Dayley and Ms. Dalton to share out from the Board Meeting. Ms. Dalton said she was surprised about the public comments being prior to them presenting and felt a lot of their questions would have been answered if they were able to present first. She said there was confusion on how balancing the numbers make capacities go up and down and the Board thought some of the key stakeholders were not included in this recommendation. She said the Board also shared they felt some of the decisions were not objective enough and not creative enough. Ms. Dayley said the meeting was focused on closing the school but not addressing forming the committee to address an enrollment problem. She said she did not feel they got to present a lot of information about addressing the enrollment issue but just closing a school. Ms. Dalton said she feels whether the Board wants to address the issue if they keep Washington Elementary and start doing renovations learners will have to be displaced during this process. She said if the district was going to do renovations it will take years*

and that school will be closed during that time. Ms. Dayley said moving forward she feels the committee needs to make it clear that we are addressing the issue of declining enrollment not closing a school. Ms. Dalton said there needs to be public clarification of what the committee's job is. Ms. Reader asked what the perception was from the public? Ms. Dalton said she feels people thought the opinion of the public was that the school district was thinking too much monetarily and not enough sentimentality of the neighborhood school building. Ms. Dayley said the enrollment piece was never brought up or focused on at the Board Meeting. Mr. Watson said it did shift and it focused on the closing on the school even after trying to share the information and we know there is a lot of emotions involved. He said no one wants to see a school close. He said the number one reason we formed a committee was declining enrollment has led us to look at resources like staffing and the proposing to close a school that secondary to that. Ms. Dayley said she felt they tried to address the monetary piece with the Board and money does play a part of it. Ms. Lloyd said she did not think any of the declining enrollment was talked about on that the district wanted to save money and the reality is the "why" needed to be pointed out. Ms. Dalton said the Board also asked what the committee was going to do with Washington Elementary if it were closed and she said that was not part of the committee's scope. Ms. Astin said she is part of the Washington Elementary neighborhood and there are emails and texts going around and there was a high concern of classroom numbers going up and she felt that was a misunderstanding on the parents' part. She said closing Washington Elementary was also the only option the committee presented instead of presenting multiple options to the Board. Ms. Warner said she watched the meeting and she did not feel the Board went about presenting it the right way to introduce it to the public. She said our committee never got the chance to say it was one idea that we discussed not the only idea. She said closing Washington Elementary is not the committee's decisions, it's a recommendation we make to the Board and they make the final decision. She said she felt it needed to be a meeting all on its own and the public should have had more information so they were well informed. She said she felt it was thrown out there pretty quick and now there is a bad taste in the public's mouth of what is going on and the Board of Trustees and the committee are the bad people for recommending a school closure. Ms. Warner said the information should have been on a board for people to see, not just meetings behind doors making decisions. Mr. Muckerman said in his experience it's a process when decisions are made. He said every single parent in the district was invited to be a part of the committee and got the Infinite Campus message, all minutes and handouts have been posted in several areas and all meetings are open to the public. Ms. Lloyd said she felt that she has heard the comments of people had read the minutes but also that they were hard to find and Ms. Jensen clarified they are posted in several different areas on the website as well as Board Docs. Ms. Astin asked for clarification of what the committee's task was and Mr. Watson said the committee's job was to only make recommendations to the Board and they will have to make a decision. Ms. Astin said she feels people did read the minutes but the meeting and the term "closing" fielded emotional responses. Ms. Warner said there needs to be clarification to the public and the Board that the committee makes the recommendations and the Board is the one that makes the decision. Mr. Watson said everything that was posted and put out to the public stated it was a preliminary recommendation that was going to the Board with no action to be taken. Ms. Warner said no one gets involved until they hear the word close. Mr. Watson said with open meeting law these things can be complicated as we have to put information together as we were directed and the problem is the Board has to get this information and it's all done in an open meeting and it can create a situation where it looks like a decision is being made even though it is only the start of the process of making a recommendation. He said we have several more meetings for the community and public to give input at public hearings. He said it makes things a little more challenging with school district settings because of the open meeting laws that have to be followed. He said he was very clear up front that there was no action being taken at this meeting and it was put out to the public that way as well. Ms. Lloyd asked if the Board want us to clean up the Washington Elementary closure proposal? Mr. Watson said the only feedback was that they want two additional options. Mrs. Lloyd asked if we could propose to temporarily close Washington Elementary while it was being fixed and then close Tendoy Elementary once it is complete. Mr. Watson said we can come up with other options but the Board directed the two options for the committee to look at which was closing Tendoy Elementary and then not closing any school and redistributing learners. Ms. Lloyd said she feels that Washington Elementary is going to fall down very soon and kids safety is at risk. Mrs. Astin said she would assume if the building was going to fall down the district would not keep it open right now. Ms. Dayley said people are attached because that is their neighborhood school and they feel a connection to those schools. Ms. Astin said some of these kids are being

bussed to other schools and cleaning up the proposal would not eliminate the way Washington Elementary neighborhood feels. Ms. Astin said there the perception is that there is a lot of funding the district has that is spent on different school projects and they do not understand why that money is not going into Washington Elementary to fix it, also there are potential creative options to repair it. Ms. Dayley said the committee is proving the point that we are focusing on a school closing and not the enrollment issue. Mr. Muckerman said you could do a trial of all 13 schools and close them down and you would have line out the door for each of those schools with upset families because they are all connected to their school. Ms. Lloyd said if we just built a new school that would help the district and we could keep Washington Elementary. Mr. Johnson said we are addressing the declining enrollment which is over 700 kids in the last seven years and that is equal to almost two elementary schools.

Mr. Watson said included in the packet was the State Funding for General Fund – Salary Based Apportionment. He said Mr. Balls, Business Director, put this together from a funding stand point and what it looks like with declining enrollment. He said the state funds are based on ADA (Average Daily Attendance) so the district receives funding based on the amount of time students are in their seats. He stated you can see based on the comparison it looks a little bit different because during the covid years they funded off of ADM (Average Daily Membership) so that is why there are gaps in the years that are on the handout. He said in 2019-2020 it shows that the district received 599 units based on ADA and it comes out to about \$157,000 per unit. He said each unit the district is funded for equals about one classroom and that includes salaries of certified staff, health insurance, support staff, administrator and special distributions. He said the state tells us how many units we are supported for. He said in 2023-2024 the district was reduced by 21 units from the state and the district only had to reduce by 14 units and all of those were through attrition. He said the state provided a one-time funding to help from the transition from ADM to ADA so the district had enough to cover those other 7 units so we did not have to reduce the 21 positions. He said at the start of the 24-25 school year we are estimated to be funded for 560 units which equates to 18 positions. He said annually we are looking at a loss of \$6.1 million in funding. He said there are different budgets that provide funding for other staff positions. He said this reflects that is comes down to an enrollment issue that is driving the decision. He said we are now at a point where things are so unbalanced that some classrooms have 15 learners and other classrooms have 30 learners. Ms. Dayley said that funding is based on 28 learners per classroom so when you only have 15 learners in a classroom you now have the state giving salary for one teacher but we have to fund two teachers. Mr. Muckerman said we have had to reduce 39 units over two years and that is equal to almost two schools. Ms. Lloyd asked how many of the 21 positions were elementary and Mr. Watson said we only reduced 14 positions and of those 12 were elementary positions. Mr. Watson said the reality is right now the declining enrollment is mostly in the elementary. Mr. Watson said the state does not dictate where the district needs to cut the staffing at, those decisions are made at the district level. Mr. Muckerman said from a legislative stand point they went back to ADA from ADM and school districts around the state are struggling. Mr. Watson said our units during the covid years were up to around 621 for ADM. Mr. Johnson said if 90% of learners are attending that school they only get funding for that 90% and that 10% gap was being filled when they were funding districts with ADM as opposed to ADA. Ms. Lloyd asked if we get money for homeschool students that are using our facilities. Mr. Watson said we do not have options for homeschool or online students. Ms. Jensen stated that we could get partial ADA when we have dual enrolled students. Mr. Johnson said the point of the committee was to help address the enrollment which boils down to the units we are losing. Mr. Muckerman said the Board could decide to redistribute everybody and we will be back here in another year because the trend of enrollment is going down. Ms. Dayley said by redistributing and trying to equalize enrollment the district is affecting every single school and more learners when doing that. Mr. Watson said he wanted to clarify that when the district reduced the 12 positions at the elementary level some teachers were redistributed to other buildings. He said the hard part is you do not lose enrollment of 30 learners from one grade level and from one school so balancing can be a challenge. He said as an example Indian Hills Elementary was reduced by multiple teachers and their class sizes were quite large and they got to the point where they had to overload learners because they had more students enroll than what was anticipated. Mr. Johnson said it is hard to reduce one or two teachers per school and at Jefferson Elementary they reduced a third grade and they are bigger classes and it can make it hard because you have to shift based on numbers each year. Ms. Dayley said it changes the dynamics in classrooms and at Wilcox Elementary they try to make sure students

are with a different group each year. She said also as a teacher it is hard when teacher groups are constantly shifting and you do not have a co-teacher to prep with.

### **Enrollment Areas Collaboration and Committee Work**

- Committee Discussion, Collaboration and Input- ArcGIS (Geographic Information System)

Mr. Watson said he, Mr. Muckerman, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Stevens and Ms. Reader got together and looked at closing the option of Tendoy Elementary. He said included in the packet was a map of closing Tendoy Elementary and you will notice they only modified Greenacres Elementary and Washington Elementary boundaries. He said since the committee had already changed the other boundaries to balance enrollment, they did not change any of the other boundary lines. He said with Tendoy Elementary and Washington Elementary being so close in size it made it easier to distribute the learners. He said Greenacres Elementary boundaries picked up a big portion to the north of what is Tendoy Elementary's current boundaries. He said Washington Elementary picked up some of Greenacres Elementary (the area of 10<sup>th</sup> and Sublette Ave). Mr. Muckerman said the northeastern section that Edahow Elementary took in the Washington proposal they are keeping in the Tendoy Elementary closure proposal. Mr. Watson said if you look at the Tendoy Elementary closure proposal it makes Greenacres Elementary's enrollment 273 learners and Washington Elementary's enrollment 288 learners. Mr. Muckerman said they put a lot of thought behind doing this. Ms. Dayley said the schools happen to be in such close proximity it makes sense to make those shifts. Mr. Dixon said geographically it looks really nice. Ms. Dayley said she feels we need to make it clear to the Board of why we chose making the recommendation of closing Washington Elementary over Tendoy Elementary. Mr. Watson said after the committee reviewed information and made a decision that a school needed to be closed step two was taking into account the conditions of the building and that helped the committee make the decision of Washington Elementary. Ms. Lloyd said she feels the only reason Tendoy Elementary would be a better choice is because of its location. Ms. Dalton said it was also the smallest school and the learners would be easier to move around to other buildings. Ms. Astin said the Board has the information of the costs of the building repairs for both Washington Elementary and Tendoy Elementary. Mr. Dixon said these lines are balanced out and it is equitable and of these two options the difference is the district will need millions of dollars for updating and more if you keep Washington Elementary open and you have to displace students while doing that. Ms. Lloyd asked that within our proposal if there could be a chart where it compares things side by side for the Board to see. Ms. Dalton said Tendoy's PTA is already asking for parents to show up on December 17<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting. Ms. Lloyd said it would be good for the Board to see it on the same paper Ms. Astin said the Board should already have all that information as Washington Elementary closure was already presented to them. Mr. Watson asked the committee what they would want on a comparison sheet for the Board:

- Structural / problems / cost
- Staff and learners impacted
- Number of classes / average class sizes

Ms. Dayley said she heard comments from the public input that the principal and teachers know their kids name but that is happening at all schools and regardless a lot of kids are moving and they will get that experience at any school. She said we depending on the outcome we could talk about those new families coming to get introduced to the school and staff for an easier transition. Ms. Lloyd said someone complained about some of the schools that are at or above capacity and that is why the committee need to redistribute learners. Mr. Johnson said that is the reason we adjusted all boundaries to get them balanced out. Mr. Cody said the more information we can get out there to the public the better so they are informed of what the committee is doing. Ms. Dayley she feels part of the response was because the Board did not ask the right questions when they were presenting the information and recommendation. Mr. Watson said there will be more opportunities for this to be shared and the public to give input at the public hearings. Mr. Watson said there have been quite a few people that have reached out to him and have asked questions but very few have been about the enrollment but more about the impact of closing a school. Mr. Dixon said this is all the committee can do because it seems like it is Washington Elementary families against Tendoy Elementary families and that is the Board's job to listen to the recommendations and make a decision.

*Ms. Lloyd said she felt like the boundary of Greenacres Elementary looked weird but Mr. Muckerman said geographically it is not far for those learners to attend that school. Ms. Dayley said the driving time is not that bad in Pocatello and Mr. Watson said no, but it is a change for those neighborhood kids.*

*Mr. Watson said there is a framework they have of not closing schools and redistributing learners to balance enrollment but he wants feedback from the committee. Ms. Lloyd said that it does not make sense the Board would ask the committee to do that as it doesn't fit in the task of the committee if we are to address declining enrollment. Ms. Dalton said no, but it gives another option to present to the Board. Ms. Astin said it also allows the committee to say here is a third option. Ms. Dayley said this option would optimize classroom capacity but not building capacity. Mr. Watson said they did not have time to get actual numbers together for this option but were able to draw some different boundary lines for the committee to look at but it will change the resources of the school to where we will probably have to look at reducing again next year. Mr. Watson said we are anticipating that no one will lose their job. Mr. Watson said is it sustainable to not lose anyone except through attrition. He said included in the packet was a map of not closing any schools and just balancing enrollment. He said they touched every single enrollment area. He stated the colors on the map showed the current boundaries and the black lines show the proposed changes. He said with Indian Hills Elementary they added a bit to bump up Washington Elementary enrollment. Ms. Dayley asked what numbers they used to make this proposal and Mr. Watson said they tried to keep the schools a 2 by, 3 by, or 4 by teacher wise. He said at Indian Hills Elementary they shifted to have Jefferson Elementary pick up some learners as well. He said with Jefferson Elementary boundaries they shifted on Oakwood and pushed those students to Wilcox Elementary. Mr. Johnson said they had kept Wilcox Elementary at a 4 by and this map and numbers still needs some fine-tuning. Mr. Watson said Tendoy Elementary picked up north some of Gate City Elementary to relieve their enrollment numbers. Mr. Muckerman said Gate City Elementary would be a 3 by with room for growth. Mr. Watson said what you will see is no real good way to balance these out capacity wise because you are limited on geography and some schools have to get smaller because we are redistributing and trying to balance out enrollment. He said for example Chubbuck Elementary might have to have four teachers in one grade level and three teachers in other grade levels. Ms. Dayley asked if any school will ever go down to a 1 by as she is highly against that and it gives that teacher no-one to prep and plan with. Mr. Muckerman said if we continue the trend of declining enrollment, it is a possibility. Mr. Johnson said he does not think it is avoidable with some schools and that they might have only one teacher per grade level. Mr. Watson said they did look at making one school a 1 by but it was not a desired option so they decided not to do that. Mr. Dixon asked if they could have the week to look at the map and numbers that were presented and Mr. Watson said absolutely and asked the committee to come back with any questions or feedback they have.*

*Mr. Watson said the Board Work session is tomorrow and tentatively he is not presenting anything. He will tell the Board that the committee has met and started the process of looking at the two options they asked for. He said for the next Elementary Enrollment Meeting we will come up with a more fine-tuned proposal of not closing any school with accurate numbers and a comparison list for them to look at. He said we will have a presentation from the Washington Neighborhood Association next week and he said there will not be any discussion with the committee. Ms. Dayley said she thought the Board wanted information from some historical group and Ms. Dalton said she thought it was dependent on what the outcome was. Ms. Lloyd asked if they were just coming to pull on our heart strings and Mr. Watson said they could come present many options to us of what they would like to see with Washington Elementary. Mr. Watson said the Board has the decision-making power in the end.*

## **Discussion/Questions/Resources**

**Meeting Adjourned at 6:33 p.m.**