LITTLEFIELD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #9
GOVERNING BOARD WORK SESSION
Administrative Services Site
3490 East Rio Virgin Road
Thursday, August 13, 2026
3:30 P.M.
(Doors Open at 3:15 p.m.)

Mission Statement

The Littlefield Unified School District is committed to excellence. Therefore, we are committed to providing opportunities for all students to learn and develop socially, emotionally, and academically. We are committed to providing resources to our students, parents and teachers in an ongoing effort to help students transition from childhood to adulthood.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Board President Cobb called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. There were eight (8) people in attendance. Board Secretary Hogan was absent at the beginning of the meeting.

2. ROLL CALL:

Mark Cobb, Board President
Sean Hogan, Board Secretary
Mike Fagnan, Board Member
Karen Johnson, Board Member
Cathy Wright, Board Member

Troy Heaton, Superintendent/Secondary Principal
Lael Calton, Elementary Principal
Edward Dickie, Business Manager
Sheree Goessman, Human Resources Director

CEREMONIAL ITEMS

3. Pledge of Allegiance: By invitation of Board President.

DISCUSSION

4. Discussion and review of a Small School Adjustment Levy.

Troy Heaton explained that this was a work session, which allows those in attendance to participate in the discussion. He stated that the levy provides an opportunity for small and rural schools to raise additional revenue because they do not have the same funding opportunities as larger schools. He clarified that the K–8 school does not qualify for the levy, while the high

school, grades 9–12, does qualify.

Board Member Fagnan asked whether the levy funds would be restricted to the high school. Board President Cobb asked whether any of the funds could benefit the elementary school. Troy Heaton explained that the levy could fund high school expenses that would normally be paid from other funding sources, allowing those other funds to be redirected to support the elementary school.

Board Member Johnson asked who determines the amount of the levy. Troy Heaton explained that this is not a bond and that the amount is determined by the School Board. He stated that the district would not be pursuing the levy this year but could consider it next year. If the district moves forward, they would be required to hold a public hearing.

Board President Cobb asked whether the numbers could change since the levy would not be considered until next year. Troy Heaton discussed current enrollment projections and noted that enrollment is declining. The elementary school was projected to have approximately 180 students this year, which is consistent with current enrollment. Overall, the district anticipates being down approximately 20 students between the elementary and high schools. Troy Heaton emphasized that no decision has been made regarding the levy; however, the district will need to consider additional revenue options or potentially reductions in force due to declining funding.

Nadine Peterson asked whether levy funds could be used to pay teachers. Troy Heaton confirmed that they could and explained that, based on current projections; the district may face the possibility of reducing teaching and staff positions next year. He noted that Ed Dickie would review some preliminary levy figures. Troy Heaton reiterated that the district would be required to hold public meetings and provide notice to the community. Unlike a bond election, however, the levy would ultimately be approved by the School Board rather than by a public vote.

Ed Dickie explained that the levy amount would depend on what the Board determines is necessary. Troy Heaton reiterated that the district cannot pursue the levy until next year and would still be required to hold a public hearing.

Mervin Peterson expressed concern about pursuing additional taxes after two previous attempts to pass a bond were unsuccessful. He stated that some community members do not have children attending district schools and may be frustrated by repeated requests for additional funding. He asked whether the levy would be for only one year. Troy Heaton stated that the district would research and confirm that information.

Board Member Fagnan noted that a $150,000 levy would amount to approximately $4 per month for a taxpayer, while acknowledging that some community members may still oppose an additional tax. Mervin Peterson discussed Arizona's school tax credit and stated that he and his wife have contributed $400 to the school through the tax credit program. He encouraged the district to better inform residents about the opportunity to support the school through tax credits.

Troy Heaton stated that the district had promoted the tax credit program in the past, including during a Dixie Power community dinner. He noted that a significant portion of the district's current tax credit contributions comes from staff. Mervin Peterson encouraged additional community

outreach, including going door to door to provide information.

Board President Cobb discussed the challenges of community engagement. He noted that only three community members attended the work session despite the district's efforts to communicate and stated that changing meeting times has historically not resulted in significantly greater attendance. Board President Cobb said he frequently hears from residents who do not have children attending district schools and therefore question why they should support additional school funding.

Board President Cobb compared school funding to other community services, such as ambulance and law enforcement services, which residents support through taxes even if they do not personally use them. He emphasized that supporting the schools benefits the entire community and provides opportunities for local students. He stated that teachers are working hard to educate students and encouraged the community to work together to support them. He emphasized that the purpose of work sessions is to receive community input and asked those in attendance to help share information with others.

Troy Heaton recalled that only approximately eight people attended the bond meeting held in the gymnasium three years ago. He explained that the levy is being discussed now so the district and community have time to consider options before next year. He stated that district funding is expected to decrease and that the district needs to explore possible ways to address the anticipated loss of revenue. Troy Heaton also discussed restrictions associated with Proposition 301 funding and how those funds may be used to support classroom-related positions.

Board Member Johnson asked how the district could better communicate information to the community. Troy Heaton noted that the previous bond election resulted in approximately a 45/55 split. Board Member Johnson stated that she had been told the bond appeared to have strong support until several individuals began speaking against it. She added that some individuals stated they withdrew their support because of a lack of communication.

Sonny Graham suggested using available community communication resources, including the billboard sign, and stated that the district historically had strong community participation. He discussed past activities such as evening homecoming events, carnivals, and bonfires and encouraged the administration and schools to increase community engagement and communication.

Board Member Fagnan stated that since joining the Board in 2019, the Board has repeatedly discussed how to increase public participation at meetings. Sonny Graham stated that communication begins within the schools and encouraged the district to distribute information to the community as it had done in the past.

Troy Heaton clarified that school resources cannot be used to advocate for the passage of school levies or bonds. Nadine Peterson mentioned opportunities to share general community information. Board President Cobb asked those opposed to the levy to explain their concerns.

Nadine Peterson stated that residents do not have a choice regarding taxes for services such as fire, ambulance, or libraries because those taxes are already established. She noted that residents already pay taxes supporting schools and expressed concern about being asked to pay

additional taxes. She suggested that the district explore other methods of generating revenue.

Board Member Johnson noted that state taxes continue to increase. Troy Heaton explained that part of the district's current financial challenge is related to the loss of ESS grant funding. Mervin Peterson again encouraged the district to distribute information regarding the Arizona school tax credit. Troy Heaton stated that the district had previously provided information about the program.

Board Member Fagnan recalled discussions from when he joined the Board in 2019 regarding what would happen if grant funding disappeared. Troy Heaton stated that the district intends to request only what is necessary and discussed a potential levy in the range of $100,000 to $150,000.

Ed Dickie provided preliminary estimates, stating that a $50,000 levy would result in an estimated annual tax impact of approximately $17.42, while a $100,000 levy would result in an estimated annual impact of approximately $34.84. He noted that the levy being discussed would be for one year.

Troy Heaton stated that district revenues continue to decline and that the district needs to consider how to replace projected funding losses next year. Nadine Peterson asked whether the levy funds would be used to retain a teacher, and Troy Heaton confirmed that maintaining staffing would be a priority.

Board Secretary Hogan explained that because the levy applies to grades 9–12, the district could use levy funds for eligible high school expenses and redirect other district resources to support elementary needs. He noted that the district receives only half-day funding for kindergarten and that preschool grant funding does not fully cover program costs.

Board Member Wright questioned why potential budget reductions often focus on teachers rather than administrative or other expenditures. She encouraged the district to clearly communicate its financial needs and review expenditures carefully before reducing teaching positions. He emphasized that reducing teachers does not benefit students.

Troy Heaton stated that the district could consider reductions in other budget areas as well and noted that the high school has not had a full-time librarian for many years. Board Member Wright stated that the last full-time high school librarian was approximately during the 2005–2006 school year.

Lael Calton stated that the district is experiencing financial pressures and believes significant efforts have been made to reduce expenses while preserving staff. She emphasized the importance of maintaining smaller student-to-teacher ratios and stated that smaller class sizes provide significant benefits for students.

Troy Heaton explained that Proposition 301 funding may provide another option for supporting positions and reducing class sizes. He summarized two potential strategies for addressing projected revenue losses: utilizing allowable Proposition 301 funding and considering a levy.

Troy Heaton again emphasized that even if the district decides to pursue a levy, a separate public meeting would be required, along with appropriate public notice. Exact financial figures

would be presented at that time. He reiterated that the current work session was intended only for discussion because the district is anticipating a possible decrease in revenue.

Nadine Peterson stated that she understood that the final decision regarding the levy rests with the Board. Board President Cobb responded that the Board still wants community members to share their opinions and concerns. Troy Heaton clarified that the Board could approve the levy only if the district meets the eligibility requirements.

Board President Cobb stated that the Board reviews district expenditures carefully. As an example, he referenced a previously approved vehicle purchase of approximately $70,000–$80,000 and explained that the district ultimately purchased an older vehicle for approximately half that amount. He stated that the Board is reviewing expenses closely and wants the community to have a voice in financial decisions.

Board President Cobb also noted that a work session provides greater opportunity for community discussion than a regular Board meeting. Troy Heaton stated that the district has already missed the deadline to pursue the levy for the current fiscal year. He encouraged community members to share the information with their neighbors and bring feedback to the Board.

Board President Cobb stated that because the levy concept is new to him, he does not yet know exactly how the funds would be allocated. He expressed his understanding that the Board would have input regarding the use of the funds and encouraged the community to participate in determining priorities. He emphasized his support for retaining teachers and stated that teachers are extremely important to him.

Board President Cobb also expressed concern that employees should feel comfortable raising concerns without fear of retaliation. He stated that additional work sessions would be held to continue discussing the issue and reiterated that his priority is to preserve teaching positions.

Troy Heaton encouraged attendees to share the informational materials with their neighbors and noted that approximately 80% of the district's current tax credit contributions come from staff.

Board Member Johnson stated that the district is working hard to improve communication. Sonny Graham emphasized the importance of transparency and encouraged the district to clearly communicate what resources it currently has and what additional funding is needed.

Board President Cobb expressed disappointment that last year’s homecoming dance had been scheduled on the same night as a football game. As a result, students participating in football were only able to attend approximately the last hour of the dance. Board President Cobb stated that he felt the Student Council needed appropriate adult guidance and supervision when scheduling activities to help prevent scheduling conflicts. Troy Heaton explained that Mrs. Okelberry was responsible for overseeing the activity at that time and noted that her husband had passed away during that same month.

Troy Heaton concluded by reiterating that if the Board ultimately decides to pursue the levy, the district would be required to hold a Truth in Taxation hearing before moving forward.

5. Discussion regarding the Districts Preschool and Kindergarten program.

Board President Cobb stated that he had heard the cost of operating the preschool and kindergarten programs is significant. He noted that many families rely on these programs for full-day care and stated that he does not want to reduce the programs to half-day. He emphasized the need to explore options to continue providing full-day programming.

Troy Heaton agreed and recalled a conversation from when he first became the Superintendent. He stated that Kevin Boyer had raised the issue of full-day kindergarten and joked that the last administrator who proposed reducing kindergarten services had been "burned in effigy." Troy Heaton explained that there are other funding sources available for kindergarten and that district funds can potentially be reallocated to support the program. However, preschool presents additional challenges because it is not state-mandated. He stated that Proposition 301 funds and a possible levy are among the options that could be considered.

Board Member Fagnan asked why the district could not consider using Proposition 301 funds now to help maintain full-day kindergarten. Troy Heaton explained that two or three years ago, a certain percentage of Proposition 301 funding was required to be used for teacher performance pay. A significant portion of those funds was subsequently incorporated into teachers' base salaries.

Board Member Fagnan discussed his experience with a previous employer, where annual raises were based on employee evaluations and employees completed self-evaluations as part of the process.

Jami Reynolds clarified that the $6,000 of 301 money that is being discussed is not tied to performance pay.

Troy Heaton stated that another Proposition 301 committee meeting is scheduled and that the committee needs to consider adding language related to instructional support and class-size reduction.

Board President Cobb noted that the previous year's Proposition 301 committee consisted primarily of high school representatives and stated that he would like representation to be more evenly distributed between the schools. Lael Calton indicated that five or six elementary representatives had signed up to participate.

Troy Heaton stated that the administration did not learn that the elementary school had not held its Proposition 301 committee meeting until the day the Board voted on the plan. Board Member Johnson recalled that there had been breakdowns in the process and that teachers were ultimately affected. Troy Heaton noted that currently one person from the high school has volunteered to participate on the committee, while approximately five or six people from the elementary school have volunteered.

Regarding the preschool and kindergarten programs, Board President Cobb requested that the principals and Ed Dickie develop a plan for the Board to consider at the September Board meeting, including the possibility of using Proposition 301 funding. Troy Heaton stated that they could have information prepared for the next meeting.

Board President Cobb reflected on the importance of the kindergarten experience, stating that he still remembers every student from his own kindergarten class, while he does not have the same memories of students from other grades. He stated that he wants current students to have those same positive and lasting memories.

Board Member Wright asked for clarification regarding the concern with the preschool and kindergarten programs. Board President Cobb explained that the issue was raised because the programs are currently costing more to operate than the funding they generate. He suggested exploring grants or other available funding sources to help sustain the programs.

Melea Leavitt noted that reducing the programs to half-day could create additional transportation costs. Board President Cobb added that a half-day schedule could also create hardships for parents.

Nadine Peterson emphasized the importance of both preschool and kindergarten and expressed her support for maintaining full-day kindergarten.

Melea Leavitt asked why Proposition 301 funds had not previously been used to assist with salaries. Troy Heaton explained that this use of Proposition 301 funding was not included in the existing plan. Savanna Gonzales clarified that the funds can be used for teachers but not instructional aides. Troy Heaton stated that one possible option would be to add another teacher and allocate salary costs accordingly.

6. Discussion and update regarding the School Facilities Grants.

Board President Cobb asked for an update on what had occurred with the facility grant projects. Troy Heaton explained that at the beginning of the summer, the district believed the projects were progressing well. The district later learned that it had not met a required timeline, which resulted in the projects being temporarily halted. Ed Dickie stated that the district had recently received payment for one project and expected payment for another project the following week.

Board President Cobb asked specifically about the air conditioning project for the elementary school gymnasium. Troy Heaton explained that if the district is found deficient on one grant requirement, the agency can prevent other projects from moving forward until the deficiency is corrected. He stated that the district is now in compliance.

Board President Cobb expressed concern that students currently do not have air conditioning in the elementary gymnasium. He requested that both Troy Heaton and Ed Dickie closely monitor the projects, ensure all required timelines are being met, and follow through until the projects are completed.

Troy Heaton reported that he and Ed Dickie had participated in a meeting earlier that day regarding the projects. Deputy County Superintendent Mr. Murray also participated in the meeting. Troy Heaton stated that the district is currently in compliance and had uploaded two letters requesting priority consideration for the projects. He noted that neither he nor Ed Dickie had previously been aware that these additional letters were needed.

Troy Heaton stated that the first letter requested immediate priority for the HVAC units, while the

second requested urgent priority for the fire suppression project. He also reported that the Fire Marshal would be coming to the district.

Troy Heaton explained an additional concern that Ed Dickie had brought to his attention: if the district pays any portion of the project costs using its own funds, it could jeopardize the district's eligibility to receive the grant funding for the project. Therefore, the district must continue following the required grant process rather than independently moving forward with the work.

Ed Dickie stated that the process has been very frustrating. Board President Cobb asked whether the district had been provided with a timeline for when the projects could receive funding.

Board Secretary Hogan arrived to the meeting at 4:56 p.m.

Ed Dickie stated that he has continued to communicate that these projects are a priority. He explained that he had previously met with the district's liaison and was under the impression that the HVAC project was moving toward approval. However, sometime in July, the district received notification that there was an issue with a required date. The district's regular liaison is currently unavailable but is expected to return. The liaison currently assisting the district requested notification as soon as the required letters were uploaded.

Ed Dickie reviewed the status of the facility projects and indicated that they are now in phases where progress is being made. Troy Heaton stated that the timing may be favorable because the facility grant program has recently received additional funding. He noted that the program had previously indicated that it ran out of available funds in approximately April.

Board President Cobb requested that an update on the facility projects be provided to the Board at each Board meeting until the issues are resolved. He also asked whether Mrs. Brown should assist with monitoring and following up on the grants. Troy Heaton clarified that these are facility grants and are separate from the other grants Mrs. Brown works with. He also noted that the facility grant program typically exhausts its available funding at approximately the same time each year.

7. Discussion regarding the All for Lunch Program.

Board President Cobb explained that the funding being discussed primarily consisted of individual donations and stated that he had personally approached the TA to request financial support. He also recognized and thanked Sheryl and John Cayhill for their support and contributions.

Nadine Peterson noted that Clark County provides free lunch to all students within the county.

Mrs. Goessman advised that our district did not meet the requirement for free lunches and that program would have cost the district $60,000.

8. Discussion regarding the Community Committee and its activities.

Board Member Johnson stated that a website had been created for the Greater Community Council. She noted that Annie Black and others in the community have shared information about

similar efforts. Board Member Johnson stated that she had written information earlier in the day explaining that several groups appear to be working toward similar goals and that it may be more effective to have one larger, coordinated group rather than several smaller groups. She reported that the Greater Community Council currently has 18 members.

Board Member Johnson also discussed ways to maintain anonymity for individuals who provide donations or assistance. She stated that the group has encouraged community members to submit letters regarding concerns with the freeway exit and also discussed issues such as litter in the desert.

Board Member Wright stated that the group plans to begin its efforts in Beaver Dam and then expand into Scenic. Board Member Johnson explained that the group hopes to support community, schools, and assist families experiencing crises, with the primary goal of helping individuals and families become self-sufficient. She noted that one concern is the possibility of receiving more requests for assistance than the group has the capacity or resources to address.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:09 p.m.

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Mark Cobb, Governing Board President

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Troy Heaton, Superintendent

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Sheree Goessman
Human Resources Director

DRAFT