

Dundy County Stratton Public Schools
September 2009 “State of the Schools” Report
Dr. Dallas Watkins, Superintendent

Watermelon Feed – Thanks BWTelcom! As always, we appreciate the watermelon that BWTelcom provides annually for staff and students.

Board Accomplishments – We would like to recognize four of our Board of Education members for their achievement with the Nebraska Association of School Boards. They have achieved award status as follows: Mike Blecha (Level V), Shad Stamm (Level III), Sandy Noffsinger (Level I) and Kent Lorens (Level I). Congratulations!

Ron Raikes – We have lost one of our great statesmen and leaders for education in Nebraska. Senator Ron Raikes died on September 5, 2009 as a result of a farming accident. Ron’s influence on me personally, for our school district and our state has been irreplaceable. His intellectual consciousness and belief that all children in this state deserved an equal opportunity for school curriculum was rare, if not exceptional. Senator Raikes visited our district and many of you have met with him through the years at different times. Ron helped develop many of the concepts in the state aid formula that reflect our current district’s needs and rural education policy needs in Nebraska. We have lost a friend that truly cared and made a difference, but we are fortunate that his influence will help our state for years to come.

Board of Education Meeting Highlights

Special Meeting – We had a special meeting on August 31, 2009 to consider insurance bids. There were two agencies represented at the meeting (four bids). Indiana Insurance received the liability and property insurance contract for 2009-10. The bids and agencies were:

Company	Agency	Price
Indiana Insurance	AmFirst Insurance Services	\$31,725
EMC Insurance Companies	MNB Insurance	\$39,584
Continental Western Group	AmFirst Insurance Services	\$43,531
Columbia Insurance Group	MNB Insurance Services	\$45,607

Shane Sis, Peggy McDonald and Clayton Luther represented the AmFirst Insurance Services bid while Carol Furniss represented MNB Insurance Services. All the agents were professional and presented planned comprehensive packages. We have had a great relationship with MNB Insurance Services and Carol for many years and would like to thank them for excellent coverage during that time. We look forward to working with Shane, Peggy and Clayton and Indiana in the future.

Bus Routes – The Board of Education approved the bus routes as presented by the Transportation Committee and staff.

Stratton Elementary Project – Phase II of the Stratton Elementary renovation/construction project is about finished. The asbestos abatement, renovation, landscaping and demolition are nearly all done. We have to sow buffalo grass seed next spring and have some work that needs to be completed on an interior wall, a retaining wall and interior finishing projects before final payment is made. The school and grounds have really changed and look great. We would like to thank everyone for their patience during the two year project.

School Budget – The Board of Education conducted hearings for the budget (s) and levy request on September 14, 2009. At the regular monthly meeting the budget (s) and levy request was adopted by the board. The merger into Dundy County Stratton Public School took place two years ago and historical data is limited to that time period for comparison purposes. When we merged the state of Nebraska awarded us incentive funds in the amount of \$760,000 that were paid in two equal payments the last two years. Those funds have not been used for fixed or permanent expenditures, rather for reserves and construction/renovation needs. We have also received funds from the merger process that were returned to the previous Stratton School District over the past two years that also make it difficult to compare receipts to past budgets. The additional cash balance has allowed us to maintain somewhat normal revenue/expenditure levels while we received a reduction in state aid in the amount of \$830,082 for 2009-10. We do anticipate future cuts in state aid and the reserves should help us avoid budget increases for all the state aid decrease with local revenue sources. Some additional information about the 2009-10 budget includes:

- No levy or tax request in the Special Building Fund
- No levy or tax request for the Bond Fund
- A general fund levy of .950017 (state minimum is .95)
- A levy of .009006 for the Qualified Capital Purpose Undertaking Fund (for construction costs including: asbestos abatement, ventilation, air quality projects)
- The General Fund Budget will be decreased 4% (\$289,683) from last year
- The General Fund Budget is \$6,949,515 compared to \$7,239,198 in 2008-09 which includes \$975,000 in reserves in both years
- A decrease in state aid from \$1,761,006 to \$930,923
- Valuation increased from \$390,754,857 to \$417,076,481 (6.74%) for the school district

In 2008-09 total levy requests for area schools were Alma (1.12), Arapahoe (1.09), Cambridge (1.21); Chase County (1.08), Hayes Center (1.21), Hitchcock County (1.05), McCook (1.22), Southern Valley (1.23), Southwest (1.30) and Wauneta-Palisade (.97). Levies for 2009-10 are not available at this time. Dundy County Stratton in 2008-09 was .96; in 2009-10 it is projected to be .96.