

Hearing held on proposal to close Wetmore school

**(KMZA)--The Prairie Hills USD 113 Board of Education held a public hearing Saturday morning on a proposal to close the Wetmore Academic Center.**

**More than twenty-five individuals addressed the board during the about two-hour hearing, all voicing their support for keeping the school open. They included current students, former students, parents, community members and others.**

**Taygan Fisher, an 8th grader at Wetmore, said closing the school would hurt students and staff. She said she is afraid she won't find staff who cares in a bigger school.**

**Analyssa Noe, who has helped spearhead a community action group of Wetmore patrons, said they believe the Wetmore school is worth saving but do not think they can, or that they should remain, a part of the USD 113 any longer.**

**Wetmore school parent and graduate Andrea Lago said the school has been successfully educating students for generations and noted the academic achievement of students at the school. She said the Wetmore school finished in the top twenty in the state and best in the county in recent state assessments even though half of its students are considered " at risk" due to their economic status.**

**Others questioned the need to close the school and asked that a neutral third party be brought in to review the district's finances.**

**The speakers told the board few Wetmore students would choose to attend Sabetha schools if Wetmore is closed.**

**According to a resolution approved by the board in December, the closure is being proposed due to a continued declining enrollment and budgetary considerations. The resolution said closure of the school is necessary to allow for additional educational opportunities for students and more efficient use of resources.**

**There was currently 125 students at the K-12 Wetmore school.**

**According to information presented by Superintendent Todd Evans at the hearing, the Wetmore school has seen an enrollment decline of 51 students over the past ten years and 29 students over the past five years.**

**Based on a September 2022 count, Evans said there were three classes at the**

**school with five or less students, and five with less than ten students.**

**Evans said the cost to educate a student at Wetmore is the highest among the district's schools, at \$13,059.**

**Board members did not comment at the hearing. A decision on whether to close the school could come as early as the board's February 13 meeting.**

Many Signals Communications