

USD 113 Board Votes To Close Bern & Summerfield Schools

The Prairie Hills USD 113 board of education during a special meeting Saturday morning voted to close both the Bern and Summerfield schools.

Following discussion, the board voted 6-1 to adopt a resolution to close the Summerfield Elementary School by June 30th, 2013 and voted 6-1 to adopt a resolution to close the Bern Attendance Center at the end of the current school year.

Board member Brent Lortscher cast the lone no vote to close the Bern school and board member Julia Alferts cast the lone no vote to close the Summerfield school.

Prior to adoption of the resolution to close the Bern School, a motion by Lortscher to allow Bern two more years to meet certain enrollment benchmarks died due to the lack of a second.

Lortscher proposed bare minimum benchmarks of 12 additional students for the 2012-2013 school year or a total FTE of 128 students, and 13 additional students for the 2013-2014 school year or total FTE of 141 students. He noted the Bern school saw an 8 percent enrollment increase this school year....(play audio)

Board member Tim Aberle said he feels the board has an obligation to start making those changes necessary now so by the time they get to the last year of the locked in budget, June 2015, they are fiscally viable....(play audio)

Board member Ed Reznicek said the main problem he sees in waiting another year or two is that given the demographics, geography of the district, and where they are in school funding ,it's hard to see how they can sustain all seven buildings and still provide the best education for students.

Reznicek said to continue like they are puts the board, administration, teachers and staff, and many parents in the district in kind of a planning limbo.

With the Summerfield school closing, Superintendent Dennis Stones said more room will be needed at the Axtell school where the pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students at the school are to attend. Being looked at is the addition of outside modular units. However, Stones told the board there isn't time for them to be in place by the beginning of next school year.

The board held public hearings last month on the proposal to close the schools.

The board said the closings were being considered due to increased costs, reduced budgets and changing demographics as well as to preserve a strong curriculum for all students of the district.