

Public hearing held for Central School's future

(KAIR)--Another step forward toward the possible closure of Atchison's Central School was made Thursday evening, following a public hearing, focused on the fate of the facility, held at the school.

The forum was lightly attended, brief, and drew no comment from patrons of the Atchison Public Schools of USD 409.

Although no formal action was taken, School Board President Carrie Sowers presented the Board's proposal to close the school and relocate the students to the renovated Roosevelt Building, located at the Atchison Middle School.

Sowers outlined several reasons, including excessive operating costs, needed upgrades not being a good use of public tax revenues, and Central School students having fewer educational opportunities because of the school's condition.

Jay Robinson, School District Maintenance Director, provided details of the facility's condition, saying the building has roof, wiring, and plumbing issues. He further explained that the piping is in very poor condition, despite repairs being made frequently, and that the building provides no handicapped accessibility to the second floor.

Robinson, offering a positive note to the evening's list of problematic aspects of the building, said there have been window upgrades and asbestos removal has been completed.

Central School Principal Latisha Downing provided her insight, saying relocation would be a great move as far as facility conditions are concerned, and that the Central students deserve that. She expressed what she sees as numerous benefits, including a science room, library, and food service all on-site, but added that no matter what is decided by the Board of Education, the district would be able to meet students' needs.

Dr. Renee Scott, Superintendent of Schools, said if Central School were to close, and students relocated, those students would have their own entrance and would stay separated from students attending the middle school.

Scott said the School Board will move forward with a possible recommendation to close the Central School at the end of the school year, and consider options to sell it and the property its located on, at the Board's March meeting. Scott added that the district does not want to see the building sit vacant.

The Central School serves approximately 45 to 50 students in grades K-12.

Many Signals Communications