

RSU #16 School Board
Operations Report
John Hawley, Director of Operations
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FACILITIES

The scrubbing project conducted over Christmas break at Minot was a success. Air quality reports indicate a dramatic improvement from previous reports taken following the water damage incidents from the past year. Our insurance claim, however, was not as successful as the work was denied by our carrier, stating that the reports we submitted did not specifically indicate that the air quality was the direct result of water damage. There was also a requirement that we had 180 days following any damages to claim, and this claim was well outside of that requirement. My attempts to argue the case for relatability to the water damages fell on deaf ears and we were told that if we could provide proof, they would reconsider. Todd discussed our plight with the attorney, and the attorney requested copies of the air quality reports. Before sending them, I read the October 18, 2022 air quality report. That report had specific recommendations for follow-up cleaning to prevent future decline in air quality. Those recommendations were never followed up, leaving us without an appeal for the denied insurance claim. The \$176,000 expense will come from ESSR funds (we hoped to use towards a building ventilation project at MCS) earmarked explicitly for air quality improvements in our buildings.

The School Revolving Renovations Funds awards that were recently announced were not in favor of RSU 16. Of the multiple projects we submitted, only the application for ADA improvements at Minot was approved for \$110,180. With the air quality reports we submitted, our confidence level was high that funding for ventilation at MCS would be a priority. However, our erroneous enthusiasm resulted in that project falling short in the scoring. This project will have to be taken on with local funds and needs to be very high on our urgency list of projects considered for HVAC improvements.

As for the ADA improvements, we will be replacing the ramp at the end of the modular section and the rear gym door, installing a new ramp at the bus circle (door 7), installing grab bars in the restrooms, modifying the widths of bathroom stalls, and relocating the attic access closet (currently in a bathroom) to allow for appropriate turning radius areas required by ADA.

We have successfully secured a distributor for the disposable filters for the classroom ERVs (energy recovery ventilators). These are the white box units that had been installed in all of the elementary classrooms and workspaces during COVID. The original filters for these units could only be ordered from Europe (a German company manufactured the units), and shipping costs made those an expensive option. The difference is that the European filters are made in millimeters versus the US inches. We have a couple of test filters built using the closest measured equivalent and have tested them. They seem to be working and fit appropriately. We have also encountered a situation where the unit sensors are failing. These are all under warranty, but they are causing the units to show that the unit is at fault and needs service. There are 180 of these units in our district, and each unit has two filters at \$8.99 each.

Our schools' maintenance and repair budgets and general supplies lines are either expended or drastically low for this point in the year. Our team has spent substantial time catching up on much-needed repairs and deferred maintenance, but unfortunately, our momentum has hit a wall. Although nervous about our funding shortfall, slated CIP projects in the works for this budget year have been put on hold so that there is money to deal with any emergency we encounter between now and June.

TRANSPORTATION

There are two full-time bus driver positions open. With the present openings and minimal substitute drivers available, we have unfortunately reached a point where bus routes may need to be canceled. We continue to seek ways around this option and are exploring the possibility of combining or doubling up routes. Canceling runs will be the last resort and will only be used when we have exhausted all other options.

As we anticipate bus driver availability becoming more challenging, we are exploring options for maintaining dependable and efficient student transportation with safety at the forefront of our considerations. Stewart and I sat through a transportation software demonstration that amazed us and provided tools for doing just that. Although pricey up front due to hardware that needs to be purchased for each bus, this program gives real-time data for drivers and administrators. Drivers who get placed on non-routine runs or use substitutes present issues that often create uncertainty for drivers who don't know the routes and the students on those routes. This frequently results in delays and occasionally missed stops. Tablets linked to the new transportation software and our student information software provide drivers with stop-by-stop directions, student information for each stop, and warning notices (such as protective orders). It also tracks which students are on the bus at any given minute, their pick-up time and location, and their drop-off location and time. The software also comes with an app that gives users visibility of their student's bus location and can see when buses are on time or delayed. We will be looking into this further.

The bus repair lines are over budget. You may remember that thirteen buses were removed from service this past summer following a state police inspection. Significant expense was required to get the buses roadworthy for school opening, which has put us in the current financial deficit. Unlike building repairs, bus repairs cannot be put off, and we address them immediately.