

## **Press Clippings 7/24/2018**

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### **U-46 board to review guidelines for travel expenses**

**Madhu Krishnamurthy**

Elgin Area School District U-46 officials will be reviewing travel guidelines after a school board member raised concerns about taxpayer funds being used to pay for travel costs of nonemployees.

School board member Jeanette Ward said Monday night she recently learned of a trip last September to Nashville by 18 people from the district, including two members of the U-46 Citizens' Advisory Council.

The purpose of the trip was to visit Nashville schools to learn about the implementation of career pathway programs. The registration cost was roughly \$1,400 per person, including hotel accommodations and meals, Ward said.

"Why were taxpayer dollars used to fund the trips of two members of the community who are neither board members or district employees?" Ward said, adding that such expenses should require school board approval.

School board member Phil Costello agreed the district should not pay for the travel of nonemployees.

U-46 CEO Tony Sanders said it's up to the board to change its guidelines to require board approval for travel costs of administrators, employees and nonemployees.

School board President Donna Smith and board member Sue Kerr acknowledged they went on district-sponsored trips as CAC members before being elected to the board.

Smith said it's beneficial for parents and community members who are helping the district work through issues to be part of such a learning experience alongside employees and administrators. "There is some value to it," Smith said.

Sanders said the district has sent several teams to Nashville to learn about how schools there have implemented career academies and pathways.

He added that the district previously has paid for members of parent-teacher groups to travel for similar learning opportunities.

U-46's CAC members are helping the administration review and create new high school academies or career pathways, expected to be established for the freshman class of 2020-21 and to enroll 400 to 600 students each.

Among the academy ideas being vetted: hospitality and tourism; government, public administration and safety, including a Reserve Officers' Training Corps program; education, training and human services; business, management, marketing and finance; engineering; manufacturing, transportation, distribution and logistics; and health care sciences.

School board member Melissa Owens said she doesn't mind discussing new guidelines for travel expenses but would not support asking past attendees to reimburse the district for trips already taken.

Sanders said now might be the right time for the board to evaluate travel guidelines in light of rising fuel and air travel costs.