

Press Clippings - 8/23/2023

- The Courier News -

District U-46 poised to buy two sites on Elgin's east side for possible new schools

By: Mike Danahey

Aug 22, 2023

District U-46 is moving forward with the purchase of two vacant properties on Elgin's east side and may join a national lawsuit that accuses social media of harmful marketing practices aimed at youth.

The paperwork needed to buy 5.4 acres south of Slade Avenue, a site previously used for former Sherman Hospital parking, and 12.3 acres at 2604 Rohrssen Road, adjacent to Hilltop Elementary School, is being finalized for approval, U-46 Chief of Staff Brian Lindholm said at Monday night's School Board meeting.

"We view (the former hospital land) as a great potential new location for McKinley Elementary School, which is just across the street (from the site)," Lindholm said.

McKinley was built in 1887 and earmarked for replacement by the Unite U-46 Committee last year when seeking voter approval to issue \$179 million in school building bonds. Passage of the referendum is allowing U-46 to move ahead with a proposed \$310 million to \$380 million facilities master plan that includes replacing some outdated school buildings.

The Rohrssen Road property was previously owned by the Archdiocese of Chicago.

"We view this property as a strategic acquisition of a large parcel of land with an Elgin address, not located along busy roads and potentially a site to build a new middle school," Lindholm said.

The district's ongoing due diligence includes conducting environmental studies and working with the city on any needed zoning changes, he said.

Purchase prices for the two properties were not disclosed.

- The Daily Herald -

Offers accepted: Elgin U-46 moves forward on properties for future schools

By: Alicia Fabbre

8/22/2023



Elgin Area School District U-46 has made an offer to buy about 5.4 acres at the former Sherman Hospital site, 901 Center St. in Elgin. (Brian Hill | Staff Photographer, 2020)

Elgin Area **School District U-46** officials are one step closer to buying land for new schools.

District officials Monday said their offers to buy two properties were accepted by the sellers. No closing date has been set, and district officials could not yet disclose what the district offered for the property.

The district made offers on about 5.4 acres at the former Sherman Hospital site, 901 Center St. in Elgin, and 12.4 acres of undeveloped land off Rohrssen Road, adjacent to Hilltop Elementary School in Elgin. The latter property is owned by the Chicago Archdiocese.

In April, voters approved a U-46 request to borrow \$179 million to help rebuild five elementary schools, two of which date back to the 1800s.

The hospital property is near McKinley Elementary School, one of two schools that date back to the 1800s and is targeted for a rebuild. The hospital property would allow students to remain at the existing school while a new McKinley Elementary School is built, U-46 Chief of Staff Brian Lindholm said.

The 12.3 acres at 2604 Rohrssen Road would be ideal for a new middle school, Lindholm said.

The district plans to switch to a full middle school model. Currently, sixth-grade students attend elementary schools, but U-46 plans to move them to middle schools.

A new middle school would be needed to deal with the approximately 2,500 sixth-graders who would switch from elementary to middle schools.

Lindholm said the district has time to complete a review of the property and to work with Elgin officials on zoning issues before finalizing the sale.

- The Daily Herald -

'Hazing defeats the purpose of the team': What some schools are doing to ensure it doesn't happen

By: John Radtke

8/22/2023



Coach Dragan Teonic at South Elgin High School football practice on Monday. (*John Starks | Staff Photographer*)

Dragan Teonic has been a football coach at both the college and high school level during his 20-plus years on the gridiron. He's also been educated by at least four universities. He holds a Master of Education from the University of Missouri in school and counseling psychology with an emphasis on positive coaching.

Suffice to say Teonic, **South Elgin's** head coach since 2018, has the necessary experience, both on and off the field, to speak on the subject of hazing.

As the 2023 high school football season gets ready to kick off on Friday night, coaches, administrators, parents and student-athletes, can't ignore the subject -- as much as some would surely like to.

The recent hazing scandal at Northwestern University has brought the subject front and center.

First, let's define hazing. By definition, hazing is: To persecute or harass with meaningless, difficult, or humiliating tasks. It's also defined as an initiation process.

Hazing, according to insider.com, has been around since at least 387 B.C., when Plato saw boys playing "practical jokes."

It's no longer 387 B.C. and "practical jokes" are no longer acceptable.

And, the NU scandal has forced schools to address the issue once again.

"We've actually had multiple conversations as a football staff addressing this situation and making sure we have a culture that kids want to be a part of and are proud to be in," said Teonic, who is 42-7 in his five years at South Elgin, and who has also been the head coach at Larkin and Hersey High schools and Harper College.

Creating a culture kids want to be in is sometimes easier said than done. The "done" part is the challenge.

"We at South Elgin have started a 'Big Brother' program," Teonic said. "We group the entire program into small groups made up of seniors, juniors, sophomores and freshmen. We discuss proper behavior, effort, commitment, and discipline daily. The groups discuss fundraising, hazing, school procedures, getting help in classes, conditioning, lifting, multiple sports, etc. Everything we can think of gets discussed. We plan on meeting multiple times in the preseason and on Mondays during the season."

All around the suburbs, school administrators will be watched closely this school year and their communication will be a big key, especially early in the school year.

Zero tolerance

Zero tolerance is being practiced pretty much everywhere.

"The main thing our district is doing is a lot of communication and reinforcement of the expectations we have for our athletes (behaviors) and coaches (supervision)," said Schaumburg athletic director Marty Manning, now one of the longest tenured ADs in the iconic Mid-Suburban League.

"(Recently) I held our fall preseason student-athlete information night for our fall athletes and parents and reiterated that we have a zero-tolerance policy for hazing. I specifically told our athletes they need to notify their coaches or myself if they feel there is inappropriate behavior of ANY kind that is happening within their team.

Manning also last week held 'All Coaches' and 'Fall Coaches' preseason meetings with slides specifically dedicated to the expectations that we have of our coaches to be supervising their athletes at all times and to have a great 'pulse' of what is going on with their program. I have a Student-Athlete Leadership Team made up of captains from each team at the sophomore, junior, and senior levels. When I meet with these athletes I let them know that it is their responsibility as well to make sure that hazing has no place in any of our athletic programs."

"Our school has a zero-tolerance policy for hazing of any sort," added Warren football coach Bryan McNulty. "As coaches we are guided by our athletic director, who keeps a close eye on all that is going on in each sport. Part of her mission is to ensure each student-athlete belongs and hazing does not fit into that mission."

Is there a fine line?

With solid systems in place, hazing shouldn't be an issue, right? Well, kids will be kids and there's surely going to be some who think "innocent" initiations to their teams will be acceptable.

"I personally don't feel that any type of hazing/initiation is acceptable at any level," Manning said. "Even if it's done in public and with good intentions, what might be deemed ok by one person, is not going to be ok with another person."

"On the other hand, I do believe that having team-building activities under the direct supervision of coaches that help assimilate new players into the culture of the program can be a good thing. Obviously, those activities need to be positive in nature and supervised/run by the coaching staff. I know simple things like singing the school fight song in public could be viewed as a fun initiation rite, but especially with the age of student-athletes we are dealing with, anything that could be viewed as traumatic/embarrassing for them should not be done."

Teonic and McNulty stick with zero tolerance, but admit it's a challenge at times.

"Hazing defeats the purpose of the team," Teonic said "WE over ME is one of our most important mottos. WE over ME is on T-shirts, hoodies, celebrated as part of our football culture throughout the school."

"Hazing is not tolerated between football players or between football players and other sports. Older kids hazing younger kids hurts the program in the long run and defeats the purpose of our mission: to create a culture everyone can be proud of."

- The Examiner -

IGA pact, varied expenses approved by U-46 board

By: Seth Hancock

The Board of Education in **School District U-46** unanimously approved, with a 7-0 vote, of an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the Village of Bartlett as well as \$6.5 million in expenditure items at its meeting on Monday, Aug 7.

The IGA pertains to the districts plan to convert Hawk Hollow, off of Jacaranda Drive, from an elementary to a middle school. The plan is to open the middle school by the 2025- 2026 school year, and it is expected to increase enrollment from just under 300 students currently to up to 750.

Traffic concerns were raised by the village which are addressed in the IGA, which is in effect for 10 years. U-46 “will collaborate with the Village” on traffic studies, the IGA states, and “will contribute costs to an intersection improvement project proportional to the School District’s overall use as documented in the Traffic Study or any Additional Study.”

On expenditures, the largest item is a \$3.4 million (education fund) amendment to a service agreement split between Right at School (\$1.9 million) and the Boys and Girls Club of Elgin (\$1.5 million) for before and after school programs for students at 12 elementary schools.

A bid for 8,500 Chromebooks was approved with a price tag of \$2.9 million (operations and maintenance fund) from Vivacity Technologies.

A contract with American Association of School Administrators was approved costing \$76,000 (education fund). It is for participation in the National Principal Supervisor’s Academy which “is in-person and convenes for two days, three times per year (6 total days) in Mesa, Arizona. Seven Executive Directors and the Assistant Superintendent of Schools will attend these sessions,” the proposal states.

Costing \$70,000 (education fund), the board approved a contract with Dr. Michelle Thompson of MQDI4Kids, LLC “to provide continuity of curriculum and instruction work as the Language and Libraries goes through a leadership transition,” the proposal states.

A \$55,220 (education fund) contract with Baragar Systems was approved to provide software for “enrollment projections and prepare boundary proposals,” the proposal states. “The suite also includes tools to assist with teacher staffing, as well as determine capital and functional space needs across all locations.”

The board also unanimously approved \$15.9 million in itemized bills.

- The Examiner -

District U-46 planning to reduce school bus fleet

By: Seth Hancock

School District U-46 plans to reduce its bus fleet by 24 buses, 14 large and 10 small, in the 2023-2024 school year.

That’s according to an age and obsolescence plan for bus replacement plan presented to the Board of Education over the summer by Marcy Murphy, director of transportation.

“The replacement plan takes the entire existing fleet through a twelveyear cycle for all buses,” Murphy wrote in a memo. “Buses scheduled for replacement may be retained

longer based on operating condition and mileage as deemed appropriate by the Director of Transportation.”

The plans for this year include the reduction in fleet but no purchases.

“We are researching options for these units for disposal, salvage, or resale,” Murphy wrote. “This will right size the fleet based on our current route conditions.”

The district will continue to evaluate fleet needs based on enrollment and boundary considerations, according to Murphy, and four buses will be donated to local fire departments to be used for training.

There is no action, purchases or reductions, planned for the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years. In 2026- 2027, the district expects to replace 46 large buses and 40 small buses.

Considering supply chain issues, board member Veronica Noland asked if problems may be anticipated to replace a large number of buses in one year. Murphy said the district will evaluate, and it is possible to see some of those replacements earlier.

As for long term needs, Murphy wrote that the district is looking at buses “with seatbelts and/or integrated car seats” and expanding the small bus fleet for special education and homeless students.

Additionally, the district is exploring “grants and funding available to purchase electric school buses,” Murphy wrote. Those buses cost three to four times more than diesel, according to Murphy, and grants would not cover the costs of charging stations, estimated at \$40,000, or facility adjustments needed.

The Washington Examiner reported earlier this year on the experience of Ann Arbor Public Schools in Michigan which has used electric buses for over two years. Emile Lauzzana, the district’s environmental sustainability director, said “it’s been a tough two and a half years with this program” with “a lot of downtime and performance issues” with the buses being “five times more expensive” and the infrastructure costing four times more than originally estimated.