

ISD ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY  
July 24, 2015

Present: Paula Chance; Jerry Covell; John Miller; Susan Dramin-Weiss; Angela Botz; Sheri Cook; Ben Lachman.

Absent: Juan Bernal; Gwenn Eyer; Matt Fraas.

Visitors: Angie Kuhn, PK-8 Principal; Kathryn Surbeck, Evaluation Center Director; Marilyn Harbison

Paula Chance opened the meeting by asking Jerry Covell to go ahead and start his presentation regarding House Bill 2657 and Senate Bill 220.

Jerry explained that he and Paula had been traveling to various areas presenting the PowerPoint and speaking about the governance of ISD. John Miller pointed out that the E-PAR process has been removed by executive order. Jerry explained that if ISD was regarded as a school rather than a state facility, the money appropriation would be such that the student enrollment would impact how many dollars the school received.

Jerry further explained that this discussion has been on-going since 2009 and several suggestions have been made regarding the governance of ISD. One suggestion was to move to the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Another suggestion was to make ISD a separate school district within DHS. Also suggested was to remain under governance of DRS and DHS, making a stand-alone agency. So far, that is what has been done. ISD has remained under the governance of DRS/DHS.

Jerry further explained that the Governor's Office now appoints superintendents for ISD and ISVI. However, all personnel decisions still go through DHS. Jerry explained that interpretation of this law is confusing and with the change of governance nothing has been resolved. Jerry stated that the focused turned to two options: staying with DHS, making it an educational division; or making it a separate state agency. It was also suggested to tie the student enrollment with the funds appropriated to school districts. Jerry pointed out that several laws would need to be changed to make that happen.

Jerry stated the reasons behind this process and the ultimate goals. He said that we want to be autonomous, we want the ability to directly hire personnel, and we want to focus on the needs of the students rather than the needs of the bureaucracy.

A question was asked about ISD ever being independent. Jerry explained that ISD has always been under a larger state agency and has never been independent.

Paula explained that the proposal is a draft and is in the hands of the legislative staff. The hope is to have a final draft possibly by November.

Jerry explained that as far as their proposal is concerned, they are not looking to relocate ISD. He also mentioned the Illinois Administrative Procedure Act and how this will still have to be followed. He explained that when creating a proposal with the hope it will become law, you have to establish the point of the law. He stated that the purpose of their proposal is showing who has the power and duties at ISD. They would like to transfer the power from DHS to ISD itself. They would like for ISD to be run by a board of trustees with two primary roles. The first is to educate deaf and hard of hearing students and the second is to provide evaluations and assessments through outreach services, early intervention, counseling, et cetera, to students, parents and professionals involved in the field of education.

Jerry then explained that the proposal is asking for ISD to be given the power to run its programs, with funding still coming from the state. He explained that this means that ISD would still be a state agency, and that ISD would submit a budget request to DHS annually.

Jerry went on to talk about the board of trustees in regard to the proposal. He stressed the importance of having a board that is well represented. Discussions have included representative components such as ISD alumni, retired ISD educators, college representative, parents, and professionals who work with the deaf/hard of hearing.

Jerry then discussed possible terms limits, such as three year terms with a two consecutive term limit. He went on to talk about the duties and responsibilities of the board. He explained that the board would function as a responsible entity with laws to define duties and responsibilities.

Jerry further explained that you can't just provide an enrollment number and ask for a certain amount of money based on that enrollment. Legislation would require that you prove how that money will work towards making that student a successful graduated and productive citizen.

Ben Lachman questioned the independent economic support provided to IMSA (Illinois Math and Science Academy), enabling them the ability to still function if they were to lose state funds. Jerry feels the board could lobby for the school in order to obtain additional support, but right now they have no marketing plan in place and are dependent on DHS to represent them.

Ben Lachman wondered if there was a plan in place to show how the board will accomplish providing a higher level of learning and success at the school. Jerry answered that they do not have a plan in place at this time.

The council continued with a discussion of donations in regards to funding. They discussed the different types of donations and fundraising that can occur and Jerry stated that the board would want to be in control of how that money is used.

Marilyn Harbison addressed the issue of recruitment if this law was to pass and ISD becomes an independent school. Jerry stated that providing information and promoting ISD as an option might be okay, but recruitment would probably not be tolerated. Angie Kuhn informed the group that there is already a law in place that requires school districts to mention state schools for the deaf and visually impaired.

Kathryn Surbeck further explained that ISD already provides many of the services the group is talking about wanting to use to promote ISD. Kathryn explained that ISD does promote the many services we provide on our website as well as through our outreach program, and that this information is provided to all schools and deaf/hard of hearing students throughout the state of Illinois. She explained that you cannot make other

schools stop providing services or evaluations of their own. However, many schools do recognize that they are not able to provide evaluations to deaf/hard of hearing students and they send them to us for evaluations.

Angela Botz pointed out that through her own experiences she has seen school districts not mention ISD as an option. Kathryn stated that there is no doubt that that occurs, but passing this law is not going to change anything. The same things will still occur, some school districts will mention ISD as an option and others will not. Jerry commented that if the new law does not list the services ISD wants to provide, even though they are already being provided, that those services could cease to exist.

Kathryn said that she was not questioning the proposal to provide services, but the entire proposal itself. She wonders how passing this law will really make a difference. Discussion continued about the state of Illinois and it being in bad shape right now and that until the state has some improvements as a whole, it will be difficult for any agencies to show improvements.

Paula commented that she thinks there is an opportunity for improvement with this law. She feels that having ISD run itself and be able to hire its own personnel will be a positive change.

Angie Kuhn pointed out that many people are fearful of the change for their own survival as well. What happens if the change of governance is not successful and people lose their jobs and are no longer receiving paychecks?

Paula and Jerry both commented that the closure of ISD is not their intention and that they want ISD to succeed.

Paula ended the meeting by reminding everyone that there would be another special meeting on August 20<sup>th</sup>.