



**Minutes  
State Board of Education  
February 20, 2020**

Brooke Axiotis  
President  
Des Moines

Michael Bearden  
Vice President  
Gladbrook

Bettie Bolar  
Marshalltown

Joshua Byrnes  
Osage

Angela English  
Dyersville

Michael L. Knedler  
Council Bluffs

Mike May  
Spirit Lake

Mary Ellen Miller  
Wayne County

Kimberly Wayne  
Des Moines

Fez Zafar  
Student Member  
Clive

Ryan M. Wise  
Director and  
Executive Officer

The State Board of Education meeting was held on Thursday, February, 20, 2020, at the Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines. State Board members present were Brooke Axiotis, Mike Bearden, Bettie Bolar, Joshua Byrnes, Angela English, and Mike Knedler. Kimberly Wayne, Mary Ellen Miller and Mike May joined the meeting via Zoom. Iowa Department of Education staff members present were Ryan Wise, David Tilly, Matthew Coulter, Shan Seivert, Staci Hupp, Bill Roederer, Rob Olsen, Cassandra Cline, Denise Ragias, Hannah Walsh, Janet Boyd, Amy Williamson, Eric Heitz, Thomas Mayes, David Canaday, Holly Barnes, Carol McMains and Jody Crane. Also in attendance were Alex Yakobson; Mike Wells, Hamburg Community School District; Tanner Holmes, Paycee Holmes, Hailee Barrett, Emmalee Barrett, Ian Thompson, Nick Matheson, Nicole Matheson, Kyla Tiemeyer, Melissa Beyer, Jacqueline Barrett, Dylan Barrett, Hallie Ferguson, John Ferguson, Alisha Thompson, Gracee Thompson, Kim Ashlock, and Stacy Ebert, Hamburg school; Earl Hendrickson, Hamburg City Council; LeDarla Haws, Green Hills Area Education Agency; Shannon Wehling and Nancy Rocker, Sidney Community School District; and Tim Hood, Sidney, South Page, and East Mills Community School Districts.

### **STATE BOARD BUSINESS MEETING**

Brooke Axiotis called the meeting to order at 10 a.m.

Angela English made a motion and Mike Knedler seconded to approve the agenda. The motion carried.

### **COMMUNICATION**

#### **Public Comment**

Dylan Barrett, Earl Hendrickson and Kim Ashlock provided public comment regarding Hamburg high school.

Alex Yakobson provided public comment regarding Iowa Code chapter 22 and his child's 504 plan in the Ames Community School District (CSD).

Mike Knedler made a statement regarding correspondence from Alicia Ettleman, his connection to Iowa Western Community College, and the facts that will determine his decision regarding granting a high school in Hamburg.

## **BOARD ACTION/DISCUSSION AGENDA**

### **High School Program at Hamburg Community School District**

Mike Wells, shared Superintendent for Hamburg CSD and Essex CSD, spoke about Hamburg's plan to share teachers with Essex and to have a career academy. He responded to information contained in the Hamburg Community School District High School Feasibility Study. Specifically, he addressed prior feasibility studies, noncompliance issues for Hamburg, certificate of need, lack of a contract with Iowa Western Community College, declining enrollment, educational programs, limits on online classes, incomplete information in Table 8, career academies, career and technical education areas, board policies, Iowa School Performance Profiles, and other misinformation.

Tim Hood, shared Superintendent for the Sidney, South Page, and East Mills CSDs, provided comments and shared information regarding the effects on Sidney if Hamburg is allowed to bring back a high school. He thanked the Department for completing the Hamburg feasibility study, and explained that the State Board's decision will have long-lasting effects on student learning. He stated that it is his job to keep Sidney financially stable and to provide quality education for all students in both Hamburg and Sidney.

On behalf of his school board and community, Hood requested that the State Board not allow Hamburg to operate a high school after 10 years of not having one, stating that it would be damaging to both Sidney and Hamburg in terms of school finances, learning and long-term viability.

Regarding Hamburg, Hood addressed flooding, decline in population and student enrollment, lack of long-term financial viability, history of noncompliance and lack of accreditation, which prompted sharing with Sidney.

Hood spoke about Sidney's efforts for the sake of students and information contained in the feasibility study. He talked in detail about information contained in a document titled "Supporting Information for Sidney Response to Hamburg HS Request."

Amy Williamson, Chief, Bureau of School Improvement, clarified errors contained on page 19 of the feasibility report. She recapped the State Board's directive to the Department, which was to do a study that would explain the impact a high school in Hamburg would have on Hamburg and neighboring communities. Williamson shared information regarding interviews that were conducted for the feasibility study.

Williamson stated that she did not disagree with any of Dr. Well's comments regarding the feasibility study. The Department has a single goal, which is to make good decisions for students. She talked about the intent of the information included in the study.

Tom Cooley, Chief, Bureau of School Business Operations, spoke about challenges in determining comparison data and the potential for long-term viability of a high school. He talked about the process used to determine the cost of re-implementing a high school. Another challenge was not being able to verify assumptions or a costing mechanism.

Information contained in the study was based on the ability to provide the best estimates possible given the data available.

Janet Boyd, Consultant, Bureau of School Improvement, introduced herself. She has worked in the Department for 10 years and has worked with several districts in the Green Hills area.

Joshua Byrnes responded to comments around rural schools and teacher requirements. He also spoke about the State Board's responsibility and a high school in Hamburg not being sustainable.

There was discussion regarding the role of AEAs in reorganization and feasibility studies.

Williamson, Wells and Hood responded to a question regarding the history of restructuring and why the districts have not pursued consolidation.

There was discussion regarding the risk to Hamburg if the high school fails and whether research is available on minimum class size.

Mike Bearden spoke about his visit to Hamburg, how impressed he was with the K-8 system, the risk of adding a high school, his personal experience in a shared/consolidated school district, and he recommended that the districts consider whole grade sharing.

There was discussion regarding the increase in Hamburg's taxable valuation, start-up costs for a high school and online course offerings and waivers.

Mary Ellen Miller commented that she is a strong advocate for rural schools. She addressed the emotion and passion that communities have around their schools. She shared a story regarding a community that supported building a new high school, which now sits empty with taxpayers still paying for it. She also talked about the risk in Hamburg.

Kimberly Wayne concurred with Miller's comments and thanked the Department for conducting the feasibility study.

Mike May expressed appreciation for the information presented, the Legislature/state's struggle with the issue of small schools, the State Board's responsibility and concern with viability of a high school in Hamburg.

Bettie Bolar stated that nothing is being taken away from the community. Hamburg hasn't had a high school in 10 years. The State Board is trying to save what the community currently has.

Brooke Axiotis stated that she loves what Hamburg is doing with its K-8 program, and how it should be a model for other rural schools. Even though the district is willing to gamble and risk losing everything on a high school, she doesn't think the State Board is willing to take that risk. She encouraged Hamburg to continue talks with Sidney.

Fez Zafar thanked the parents and students who attended the meeting, and stated that it reflects the great passion the community has toward this initiative.

**Motion:** Mike Bearden made a motion and Mike Knedler seconded that the State Board move to allow Hamburg to proceed with a high school.

**Vote:** A roll call vote was taken: Aye: None. Nay: Brooke Axiotis, Mike Bearden, Bettie Bolar, Joshua Byrnes, Angela English, Mike Knedler, Mike May, Mary Ellen Miller, and Kimberly Wayne. The motion failed.

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

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Brooke Axiotis  
President

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Ryan M. Wise  
Director