

Webster Board of Education Moves Ahead with New Energy Contract

Dennis Beard

Feb 15 | 10:16 AM



WEBSTER COUNTY, KY (2/15/12) – The **Webster County Board of Education** took its first official step in an ongoing process to lower utility costs through an energy performance contract with Trane at the board's meeting Thursday night, **Feb. 9**, in Sebree.

The school board has been working with Trane and other energy experts over the last several months as they studied a proposal to reduce the district's utility costs. The performance contract is set up through a program that would allow the district to utilize the savings from its energy bill to pay off the bonds required to cover the initial construction costs.

Board member **Jeff Pettit** expressed concern about a lack of details in the proposal Trane presented during Thursday's meeting, but joined the other board members at the meeting in voting in favor of moving ahead with the project after Trane officials told Pettit the company is "taking the risk" and covering the cost at this stage. They also told the board that the company is guaranteeing the savings amount after the work is completed, and that if the district doesn't save money based on alternative projections of traditional costs, the company would have to write a check to the school district to make up the difference.

The board then approved a motion to allow **Trane** to prepare and send a BG-1 blueprint to the Kentucky Department of Education for its review.

Earlier in the meeting, the Webster County Board of Education approved its consent agenda, including a field trip request and grant requests from the district's **Family Resource and Youth Service Centers**. It also met in a joint dialogue session with the Sebree Elementary Site Based Decision Making Council. Sebree Elementary Principal Aaron Collins told the board of changes being made at the school in anticipation of upcoming testing changes, including the decision to divide first and second grades by subject instead of age group, and to combine those two groups into a single class. Teachers at the meeting assigned to those grades said they preferred the new format once they adapted to it.

Collins also pointed out what he described as a unique distinction for **Sebree Elementary**.

"Seventy-six percent of our students are on the free or reduced lunch program, 36 percent are Hispanic, and 34 percent have a language problem, but Sebree Elementary has made (state mandated) Adequate Yearly Progress every year since AYP was implemented," he said.

He also told the board he supports a middle school in the district, and board members quickly said they hope to build one within the next few years.

Overcrowding remains a concern at Sebree Elementary as well, and board members said they were looking into a solution to the problem.

Before concluding the discussion, Collins told the board the school may need help to keep Americorps support staff in place if the state cuts funding for the program.

The board also spent a portion of its meeting in closed session to discuss pending litigation regarding a court case the board filed against Webster County Clerk Valerie (Franklin) Newell over the petition of a six-cent construction tax late last year. Board members allege Newell and the petition committee didn't follow correct procedures for challenging the tax, and dispute whether the challenge was successful. Newell has filed a motion to dismiss the case due to the fact the board didn't vote in open session to sue her prior to the filing of the claim, and school board attorney Amelia Zachary has filed a challenge against Newell's attorney, Clint Prow, claiming he doesn't have Webster County Fiscal Court authority to represent Newell. A summary judgment ruling could come at any time.

The Webster County Board of Education's next meeting is set for Monday, Feb. 28, at the Webster County Board of Education conference room in Dixon. Webster County School District Superintendent James Kemp told the board on Thursday that he expects discussion of the district's budget for the coming school year to be the main topic of that meeting.

Dennis Beard
Journal Enterprise

Copyright © 2012 **SurfKY** News Group, Inc. all rights reserved. **SurfKY.com** is an eNewspaper providing local news FREE to Kentucky 24/7. Read Statewide Kentucky News, Sports, Obituaries and more for Kentucky covering: **Christian, Daviess, Henderson, Hopkins, McCracken, Muhlenberg, Warren**, and **Webster** Counties as well as the **Kentucky Lakes Area**.