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emails with “contact me if you have questions.”

Coomes countered, “It’s the working relationship.” She added, she wants “All of us to get along, and she feels Harrell “has acted arrogantly to me.” Something Rakestraw said he has never heard anyone else say.

Rakestraw reiterated that he now has four children in the school system and reminded Coomes that she should be able to articulate what she wants out of the next superintendent. “You have to look at that next candidate and be able to say ‘we want this, we want that.’”

The discussion then drifted to an initiative introduced to teachers a few years ago—TNTT. Coomes said she has had many complaints about that program that was established to help strengthen curriculum and give teachers guidance. When some mumbles came from the audience about that comment, she said, “This is the reason no one wants to answer because people in the crowd want to be hateful.” She also cited what she called Rakestraw’s similar questioning of board member Melony Hobgood at a previous meetin as, “an attack, and I was not going to respond after that.”

Rakestraw then moved to an agenda item regarding board members discussing a social media policy, noting Asher is upset with some comments made on social media. Asher responded that he was unaware of a recent school bus incident until he got a call from someone several hours after the incident was reported and during the call received nasty comments. “I’ve asked from the get go that we know when there is an issue.” He added that this has happened 20 to 30 times. “We should have a clue (about an incident) within 15 to 20 minutes,”

Board chair McCormick interjected that he knew about the incident but did not share information with the rest of the board until confirmations of exactly what happened had been made. “This man (Harrell) has been more than competent about providing information,” McCormick said.

Harrell, who has remained quiet throughout the public outcry of his non-renewal, then told Asher, “My priority (during the bus incident) was with the principal, the faculty members and the children; then coordinating getting the kids home, then calling parents of 20 children. My priority is always going to be the parents, kids and faculty members impacted. I’m sorry if you got a nasty phone call.”

Asher responded, saying

he is very involved in Sebree (School), and “I’ve never understood why in three and a half hours a text wasn’t sent.”

McCormick responded that Asher has to trust the administration to take care of what’s going on in the district, and reminded him that receiving accurate information is important, to which Asher replied, “We’re wanting better communication.”

McCormick asked, “When a new superintendent come in are you going to stress you want quick communication?” Asher said it was on his list.

Kayla Shelton and Amy Wright briefly addressed the board regarding how a board member would respond to a parent and why a board member wouldn’t just direct the parent to call the central office for information. Wright addressed the curriculum issues Coomes said teachers had complained about, noting the program was a tool, not a directive. She also noted that while the board is concerning about what they see as issues, Harrell has been trying to address those issues. Asher raised questions about \$480,000 that he says was spent on new curriculum, saying although he wasn’t on the board at the time “I would have never voted to spend \$480,000 for curriculum. I would have spent that money somewhere else.”

Kim Saalwaechter made it clear that those grant funds spent on the curriculum had strict guidelines as to how the money could be spent—guidelines that would give the board very little say in how funds were used. She added that “a lot of thing have gone on in the last six to eight months that drive me crazy.” She noted that for the last 12 years Webster County has been a progressive school district. “We have grown.” She added that for several years the district has zero leadership, but in the last 12 years “we have had a growth mindset district. We have had that vision for the last 12 years. When I was a principal I had no support from the Central Office, and I’ve seen the worst to the best in leadership. We need to be sure we are doing our part as a team.” Saalwaechter cited the negativity that has plagued the district for the past several months noting it impacts the children, and “we have to be sure children are our first priority. The children are the losers in (the present) situation.”

At that point in the meeting Asher publicly apologized for a statement he made in board meeting two months ago when community residents were pleading with the board for their reasoning

behind non-renewal of Harrell’s contract. At that time Asher told the public, that after talking with the board attorney, “I don’t have to give your jack squat.” “I apologize for saying that, it came out wrong,” Asher said.

Before the public comment sessions ended, Amy Wright asked if the board had given any more consideration to changing the start time for meetings back to 5:30 so parents and others interested in the school district can attend meetings, and Samantha Winebarger gave a shout out to the middle school boys soccer team that has advanced to the regional tournament being played this week.

Kayla Shelton asked about school board districts and whether board members are required to live in the district they represent. Asher quickly responded, “I know where you’re going with that and I’ll address it to your face. Number one, it’s none of your business and number 2, I live in the Sebree district.”

At 5:20, McCormick ended the comment section of the meeting and called for the business session to start. He began the session by appointing Venita Murphy to serve as the board representative on the superintendent search committee.

The next business to come before the board was the financial report for April followed by a presentation of the 2027 budget which reflects a total budget of \$27,515,021.73 with a contingency of 4.14 percent. In her report Brandi Burnett. The present budget does not include salary increases or change requests, the additional positions requested by principals or a digital learning coach position.

According to Burnett, the budget includes only \$228,000 that can be spent toward additional personnel at schools, staff raises or assistant principal positions. The board will have to determine how the funds will be allocated. Presently, a one percent salary increase would cost \$133,000, with a 1.5 percent increase set at \$199,500 and a two percent increase costing \$266,000. To add an elementary assistant principal \$70,000 to \$80,000 would be needed dependent on rank and years’ experience. Any teaching position would range from \$44,000 to \$75,000 dependent on rank and years’ experience and an instructional assistant salary could range from \$19,000 to \$30,000. “We don’t have enough funds to cover everything requested,” Burnett told the board. Among the requests are a certified teacher for Dixon Elementary, a certified teacher for

Webster County High, an assistant principal at Sebree, a certified teacher at WCMS, an instructional assistant at Providence, and an assistant principal at Providence.

Also included in staffing funding allocations are a change to a transportation position adjusting the dispatcher position to include more job responsibilities with a reduction of days worked moving from 240 to 200 and raising the pay scale to \$17.09 from \$15.50.

Another change includes a proposed Nurse/Local District Health Coordinator position that Saalwaechter asked be added as a line item in the budget. That would be a 200-day position for eight hours a day with a \$2.50 hourly increase due to the additional responsibilities placed on that individual. Saalwaechter proposed \$10,000 of school safety funds be used to help offset the salary increase. The nurse will provide CPR, first aid and ADE training for coaches and other staff; 20 percent will come from special education funds.

Saalwaechter also proposed a district-wide special education consultant noting that with her impending retirement she would like to see the transition being with a district wide consultant. The position would be funded out of IDEA money, and would relieve special education teachers from some of their present duties,

Saalwaechter also asked that the pay scale for Instructional Assistant II positions be aligned with other instructional positions due to the responsibilities that are required and the handling of bodily fluids.

The budget is expected to finalized in May, but until decisions are made on requested positions and whether or not raises for employees will be in the mix, no final budget can be put in place. In his superintendent’s report, Harrell addressed the fact that board must decide how they will handle the requests for additional personnel and other changes to the budget, noting that a decision needs to be made this month.

Asher asked about reducing the number of instructional coaches and having them work at two schools rather than one; however, Harrell said while that is doable, it is also not as effective as having a fulltime coach at each school. Harrell added that he will not make a recommendation on the matter. “Every position is going to matter,” the superintendent said. Asher then asked if the board could go below the four percent contingency to

free up funds, but Harrell responded, “that’s risky.”

During the discussion, McCormick told his fellow board members, that he won’t vote on budget allocations without a superintendent. Asher replied, “We’re not shooting from the hip,” but McCormick was firm, noting “You’re doing it without a leader.”

Harrell interjected, “I have an ethical issue of saddling a new superintendent with a budget that came from me,” a clear indication that any budget decisions made before a new superintendent is hired will be the sole responsibility of the board. The superintendent added that reduction in enrollment in Webster County Schools nullifies the \$40 per student increase in SEEK funds.

In his report to the board Greg Bowles told the board the greenhouse foundation is laid out and the greenhouse will be installed next week. He also provided an LPC update. The next meeting of that group is May 21. LPC reviews the district facility plans and determines the unmet needs of the district.

Bowles also reported that the Green River Wellness Innovative Readiness Training will take place June 15-19 in Webster County. That program brings the National Guard to the county to provide free health care for county residents ages three and up. Residents can have wellness checks, physicals, hearing tests, eye exams, dental exams including fillings and extractions and receive nutrition information. More information on that program will be available in coming weeks as transportation arrangements are completed.

Mike Hazelwood of EM Ford was also present at the board meeting to present information on the board’s worker’s comp and commercial insurance.

The board agenda called for a discussion on a social media policy. That item was addressed by board attorney Roy Massey who told the board that he doesn’t know of any board of education that has a social media policy, and while he’s not aware of any such policy, he said “I will be glad to look into it if the board wants me to.”

McCormick said he feels the incoming superintendent should have a say in the issue, and Coomes added that she spoke to someone at KSBA who says social media policies through KSBA are being changed. No action was taken and no directive was given for Massey to research the matter.

The meeting adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

Dixon City Commission Discusses Water Loss Solution; Approves 2026-2027 Budget

The Dixon City Commission met in regular session on Monday night with Mayor Terry Webb presiding and all commissioners in attendance. Also present were City Clerk Barbara Goff and City Attorney Bobby Murray.

Prior to the business session, a public hearing was held to hear public comments concerning the use of Municipal Road Aid and Local Government Economic Assistance funds. There were no comments, and that session was quickly adjourned.

Following approval of the minutes from the April meeting and the bills and claims, the commission discussed several items of business, including a likely solution to the city’s water loss problems and the passage of the first reading of the 2026-2027 budget ordinance.

Commissioner Randy Norman reported the city purchased 2,370,000 gallons of water in April, and of

that, 1,576,940 gallons were sold to water utility customers. The water loss for April was 25%. Norman reported most of the water loss is apparently coming from the water usage at the football field on the campus of Webster County High School. He noted that new pumps installed when the football field and stadium were renovated are apparently pumping water for the field faster than the current meter can read the usage. He recommended the purchase and installation of a new meter, which will read usage more accurately. According Mayor Webb, that meter, accessory equipment, and installation will cost approximately \$4,500.

The mayor also noted he and Norman had met with school officials concerning the matter and informed them the new meter will be installed. The school district will be responsible for running their waterline to the

meter location.

The commissioners approved the purchase of the new meter with a 5-0 vote.

In other business, the commission approved the budget for fiscal year 2026-2027 in the amount of \$1,329,400. Second reading of the budget will be held at the June meeting.

The city attorney updated commissioners concerning a lien on a lot located at 118 North Stegal Street. The property has been cited for nuisance violations, and fines and back taxes are currently owed by the property owner. The city has proposed paying those back taxes and forfeiting the indebtedness for upkeep of the property in exchange for the property being deeded to the city. Attorney Murray will draft an agreement to that effect for the property owner to sign. The matter will be discussed again in June.

The Dixon Volunteer Fire

Department and Rescue Squad members responded to 20 calls in April.

Commissioner Robert Brown told members that a pothole on Lakeview is in need of repair. He also mentioned an area on South College Street that needs attention. Mayor Webb told the commissioners the city intends to apply for additional funding from the Local Assistance Road Project (LARP) to help pay for street repairs. The City of Dixon already has two projects targeted for repairs using LARP funds.

Commissioners approved the use of Baker Park for the summer feeding program which will begin on May 26 and continue through July. Commissioner Mande O’Leary told members that new mulch has been donated to the park board and will be used at Baker Park. Additionally, a Safety Day at the park is scheduled June 9 at

5:00 P.M. That event is sponsored by the Webster County Public Library. A cruise-in is planned for June 13, and summer family night will be held on July 18.

Code Enforcement Officer Kim Turner reported that four letters are ready to be sent to property owners in violation of the city’s nuisance ordinance.

In final business, Mayor Webb told commissioners it may be necessary to hire an additional temporary employee for the summer. Commissioners authorized Mayor Webb to make that hire, should the need arise.

No further business came before the commission, and the meeting adjourned after a 40 minute session.

The next regular meeting of the Dixon City Commission will be Monday, June 8, 6:00 P.M.