

Meeting Minutes: Governmental Affairs Committee**Date/Time:** March 7, 2023 – 7:30 a.m.**Location:** District Office Board Room**Start:** 7:30 a.m.**End:** 8:38 a.m.**Committee Members Present:** Robin Nelson, Melissa Burkland, Katie Christensen, Greg Clark, Nyamal Dei**Committee Members Absent:****Board Members Present:** None**Staff Members Present:** Dr. Rupak Gandhi, Tara Brandner, Jackie Gapp**Recorder:** Amy Patterson

Agenda Item	Discussion – Conclusion	Recommendations/Actions
Approval of February 14, 2023 Meeting Minutes	The Committee reviewed and approved the minutes of the February 14, 2023 meeting.	Minutes will be posted on the Board's section of the public website.
Debrief committee efforts prior to crossover	Chair Robin Nelson requested feedback from the Committee on how things are going. The Committee discussed how well things have been going this cycle and consensus was that things are really working well. There was also consensus that the end result of legislation this session has been better than expected, with amendments, etc. Robin is doing a great job keeping up with the steady flow of legislative changes and updates. It was confirmed that all steps taken thus far represent the wishes of this committee.	
Cross-over meeting cancellation, future information session considerations	<p>Crossover was cancelled this year due to inclement weather and transitioned to a virtual meeting. Ultimately, the virtual meeting was also cancelled due to inability of the legislators to attend. Committee discussion was had about how busy this time of year is for the legislators. It was agreed that it will continue to be a busy time for them and scheduling an event will be challenging.</p> <p>A question was raised about the best timing for a Crossover or legislative event in Bismarck. The committee discussed timing and various alternative options. Various suggestions were made by Committee members. One suggestion was for the first couple days after Crossover. Legislators are not as busy then.</p> <p>It was agreed that as a District, it is important to show up and have face to face time and build relationships. As such, another suggestion was to send Board members (a couple at a time) during each of the 4 periods--versus hosting one big event. We would have to be strategic and flexible and have people ready to go. We generally have 4-6 bills that are very important to us. If we are on alert to head out when the important bills for us hit, armed with information and amendments, this could work well. Another suggestion was made to have a crossover work session here during Crossover, where we are watching and strategizing and we could bring in experts on the bills.</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion – Conclusion	Recommendations/Actions
	<p>Discussion was had around the idea that we need to become more strategic and targeted. Consensus was reached that after Crossover is the best timing, but that it is also important that it is held during the session not after. The committee left this as a placeholder to percolate on and possibly poll the legislators on their preference at a later date.</p>	
<p>Remaining legislation and next steps</p>	<p>Chair Robin Nelson updated the Committee on remaining legislation and next steps. Committee discussion ensued, generally and specifically, about bills that are important to us.</p> <p><u>HB 1491: School Meals.</u> This was amended and is now just free lunches; reduced is not mentioned anymore. Consensus was reached that this is very important to this Committee. There is an upcoming press conference on this, led by the Food Bank, on Thursday at 10:00 a.m. West Fargo's Levi Bachmeier will speak, along with the YWCA. The YWCA actually serves more children than adults. Chair Robin Nelson will also speak and will paint a picture for the public on how this will work and how it affects our students and the district. Committee consensus was reached that Chair Nelson is on track with this one.</p> <p><u>2284: Big Funding Bill</u> The Special Education Assessments bill was rolled into 2284. The revenue forecast should come out soon. This is the funding formula – with the per pupil payment in there and some special education as well. We do support this and consensus was that perhaps this would be a good one to advocate for and make some calls on.</p> <p><u>1532: School Voucher Bill.</u> This passed the house and now it goes to the Senate side. \$24 Million per biennium put into it. We opposed it. There is talk of an amendment that would force locals to levy up to 3 Mills to use for private schools. Conceptually we oppose it because there is no accountability and although they say it doesn't take money away from public schools, it does. Consensus was that we will continue to oppose this--unless there is an amendment. Katie Christensen will revise and resubmit our testimony on this.</p> <p><u>2239:</u> This keeps defined benefits plan. This is good for the people who benefit from it, but it is not sustainable. Those currently in a defined benefits plan would get a pretty good deal if they switch over to a defined contribution plan.</p> <p><u>1040:</u> This would end defined benefits for employees going forward. We want to support something that is sustainable. These will come together eventually and merge when they come to conference committee. Discussion was had on the many nuances to this and the fact that sustainability is a big issue. We should take a position on these bills but can wait until these two bills merge. This doesn't affect current employees but is not sustainable.</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion – Conclusion	Recommendations/Actions
	<p>General discussion was had on a variety of policy bills such as the library bill, transgender in sports and pronoun usage. A lot of these bills have been cleaned up and appear to be culture bills. Consensus was that the best way to lobby on these bills is to explain how each would affect our students, our schools and our employees. When we reach out to legislators, we can say “This is what it would do to us, and this is the amount of time and money it would cost.”</p> <p><u>2231: Preferred Pronoun Discriminatory Practices & School Policies on Expressed Gender:</u> This one has a big impact on our school district. Committee discussion ensued on our position and the potential impacts of this bill. We are fighting for non-discriminatory practices.</p> <p>Dr. Gandhi expressed his desire to support the trans community and make them feel safe. Chair Nelson expressed that we should oppose it on the merits. It is most important to show support for our students. It was agreed that we should submit written testimony Melissa Burkland will draft testimony on this and will work with Dr. Gandhi and Tara Brandner to finalize the testimony.</p> <p>Committee discussion was had on the different ways to show our support for or opposition to the bills that are important to students. Discussion was had about setting up an interview with a local reporter to discuss our positions on some of the big bills and get our positions out there publicly. There was consensus to move forward with this plan.</p>	
Next Meeting Date	The committee will meet next on March 21 at noon in the Executive Conference Room.	
Next Meeting: March 21, 2023 at 12:00 p.m.		