

Board sees option as way to cut costs, set goals for administrator

The Northern Ozaukee School Board has decided to take a close look at hiring an outside firm to handle the administrative duties of departing Supt. Bill Harbron.

The board voted to explore contracting for services following a closed session last week. Board members were to address what duties a contract could cover during a special session at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 5.

School Board President Paul Krause said the vote gives the board the option to forego hiring a new superintendent.

“At this point, it is something we want to explore. It would be no different than the way we contract with outside companies for food service or bus service,” Krause said.

A more direct example, he said, is the district’s ongoing relationship with the National Network of Digital Schools, a Pennsylvania company that has collaborated with Northern Ozaukee this year in the operation of the Wisconsin Virtual Learning charter school.

Krause said NNDS would be one of the companies approached about providing administrative services.

There are a limited number of firms that offer administrative services in educational environments, he said. Most operate private charter schools.

If a contract with an outside administrative firm is approved, Krause said, the goal would be for the average district resident to have no idea the acting administrator wasn’t a district employee.

“This is a person who would be in our schools every day and attending things like basketball games, just like now,” Krause said.

The difference for the district is the way the position is paid and how performance is evaluated.

“The thought is there would be some financial savings,” Krause said.

More importantly, he said, a service agreement would allow the School Board to focus on results, rather than policies and procedures.

“Bill has been great at providing the board direction, but I think the board felt the one area we have been lacking in is execution. A contract would allow us to identify what kinds of results we expect,” Krause said.

Another advantage of contracting is that the district would have an opportunity for a “trial run” at the approach before making a long-term commitment to the arrangement.

NOSD mulls contracting for services

Written by Mark Jaeger

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While the parameters of an administrative service contract were to be discussed Wednesday, two closed board sessions are scheduled for Jan. 12 and 19 to meet with potential vendors and to negotiate prices.

Sometime in February, Krause said, the board will hold a public meeting to get input from residents and staff on contracting for administrative services.

Harbron is not involved in screening the firms, but he is working with the board in reviewing services they might want covered in a contract, Krause said.

“This is really a process the board needs to take ownership in,” he said.