

Murray City Municipal Council Chambers Murray City, Utah

The Municipal Council of Murray City, Utah, met on Wednesday, the 27th day of June, 2007 at 6:00 p.m., for a meeting held at Murray High School, Choral Room, 5440 South State Street, Murray, Utah.

Roll Call consisted of the following:

Krista Dunn,	Council Chair
Pat Griffiths,	Council Member
Robbie Robertson,	Council Member
Jim Brass,	Council Member
Jeff Dredge,	Council Member

Others who attended:

Daniel Snarr,	Mayor
Jan Wells,	Chief of Staff
Michael Wagstaff,	Deputy for Legislation
Carol Heales,	Recorder
Shannon Jacobs,	Council Director
Gil Rodriguez,	Fire Chief
Steve Hirase,	Murray School Board
Mitzie Huff,	Murray School Board
Laura Baker,	Murray School Board
Darrell Pehrson,	Murray School District
Lloyd Naylor,	Murray School District
Tim Cosgrove,	Utah State Representative, District 44
Pat Jones,	Utah State Senator, District 4
Council Citizens	

The purpose of these Neighborhood Council Meetings is to:

Discuss Smaller School Districts Legislation and how it affects Murray City residents living in the annexed area and attending Granite School District Schools.

There was no action taken at this meeting.

Meeting Presentation: Krista Dunn, Council Member

Ms. Dunn stated that this meeting is a result of Senate Bill 30, a bill that was passed by the legislatures this year, and opened the door for the creation of smaller school districts. She said this came as a result of many people pushing for better representation in the school districts. These people felt that they did not get the representation needed from their school boards to stop certain school closures. The bill was sponsored by Carleen Walker of Cottonwood Heights. The City has stayed involved in this issue, knowing that with the annexation, the City would be affected by this bill and the City has worked closely with several of the other cities and their councils.

Ms. Dunn said the Power Point presentation will go through the two options the Council has been given, take public opinion on the issues, and then take an informal vote at the end of the meeting.

Ms. Dunn explained that because the eastern portion of the City is not a part of Murray School District, there is an issue with the City Council representing that area as its governing body, but Granite School District cannot represent that area because of the legislation of Senate Bill 30. The bill gives the City Council the authority to choose one of two options for that area.

As a result of Senate Bill 30, Ms. Dunn said the participants of an interlocal agreement have asked the City if it wants to participate in the decision to form a smaller school district. The participants involved are Holladay City, South Salt Lake, the unincorporated area of Salt Lake County known as Millcreek Township, and the eastern portion of Murray City. All affected areas within the specified boundaries of this agreement must choose to participate, or not to participate.. If Murray opts out of it, the other three areas must participate to meet the population minimum requirements of 65,000 residents and 3,000 students. Ms. Dunn went on to explain the two options that the Council must consider.

Option #1: Murray City decides to participate in the interlocal agreement. The East Murray residents of Granite School District would be given the opportunity to vote on whether they want the new school district created. This vote would take place on the November ballot.

If the vote is positive, with all the groups voting together, then the East Murray area would be assimilated into the new school district. Then, any discussions regarding the fate of the schools in that area, would be left with the new school district. They would have one year to put in a governing body, elect a school board and to get everything up and running. The students would start in that school district in 2009. If the vote is negative, the east side would remain in the schools and district they have been in.

Murray's traditional east side, from 900 East going west would not have a vote either way. The Murray school board who represents this district, has no vote. Only the City Council has a vote in this part of the issue.

Option #2: Murray City declines the offer to join the interlocal agreement. If the City declines, then those residents will not vote. The vote takes place with the other cities only. If that vote ends up negative after the other entities cast their ballots, then everything will remain the same. If the vote is positive, and the new school district is formed, then the remaining east side residents of Murray that attended Granite schools would become part of the Murray School District.

Once this vote is taken, whether we have chosen to participate or decline, we would have no more decision in the matter. All decisions from that time forward would be made by the school boards.

Ms. Dunn reiterated that the law was written with a population threshold of 65,000 residents; this was originally done so that the individual cities could have their own school districts. As many cities do not meet that threshold, this law allows municipalities to come together to meet the minimum requirement. The future in Murray School District with or without the east side included, is very little in terms of growth over the next 20 years. The study they have been looking at, a Karen Wickstrom study, done on this area states that the growth over the next 20 years will be approximately 21 students; so they are not looking at a large population growth for the City.

Ms. Dunn said people in the east side area have been asking if Murray is able to take on the additional student population, and what affect will it have on Murray. She asked Mr. Hirase to respond.

Steve Hirase, Murray School District:

Mr. Hirase explained that they would welcome that area in. Right now, with the number of students attending Cottonwood High School that are residents of that area, it would be a little challenging to have them all attend Murray High School, but they do know that there are a number of students attending Murray High that are not Murray residents, and they may phase out those students, no longer accepting non-resident students, allowing them more room for these other students.

Ms. Dunn went on to say that with this legislation, the buildings, property and staff go with the district. She said there are 800 to 850 Taylorsville residents that are bused to Cottonwood High School. There are also 300 to 350 Murray residents and approximately 200 South Salt Lake residents attending Cottonwood. There is also the Academy for Math Engineering and Science (AMES) charter school within the high school which has approximately 400 students. This means, without the students coming

from the Taylorsville area, the district would be very hard pressed to keep the high school open with that number of students. What we do know, with both results, is that in creating a new school district, we will have fewer students than we need to keep schools open at the high school level. Murray would have two high schools and enough students for one. In the new school district, there would be four high schools and enough students for two of them. Either way, there will be school closures, but we can not tell you what schools may close. This would need to be studied at a later time. The groups that pushed this bill said, we had schools close but did not have the representation needed. At least now, when schools close, there will be representation for those areas.

Peter Klinge, 602 E Lincoln

Mr. Kinge raised the question on how many students from Cottonwood might end up in the Murray School District.

Mr. Hirase stated that Murray High School currently has a population of 1,450. The estimate of high school students on the east side of Murray attending Cottonwood is about 350. Murray High School was built for approximately 1,700 students.

Ken Benson, 537 Holstein Way

Mr. Benson asked how many students would be coming into Murray right away.

Mr. Hirase stated that the estimate given to them by Cottonwood on enrolled students was between 150 to 300 students. He said if a student is accepted under open enrollment as an elementary age student, they are entitled to go to the junior high and senior high schools in Murray. They cannot tell those students they are no longer welcome.

Mr. Hirase also noted that there are a number of unknowns being dealt with in this issue. For the past six school years, there has been a decline in enrollment for five of those six years. There is also new development in the City, and it is unknown how many students this new development could bring to the area.

Ms. Dunn mentioned that Murray High School has the option of adding a wing to it if needed.

Mr. Hirase added that Hillcrest is getting old, and they may have to look at what to do with that school. These are all items that will need to be looked at down the line.

Natalie Peterson, 6301 Vintage Oak Lane

Ms. Peterson asked for the status of the children living on the east side of Murray, that currently attend Oakwood Elementary School. She wondered if Option #2 were chosen, would those children have a school to attend as Oakwood is located within Holladay City

and would fall into the new district. She also asked if the parents of Oakwood students have been made aware of this situation.

Mr. Hirase stated he did not know if those students had been made aware of this issue. With Utah's Open Enrollment law, it would be his understanding that those students would be allowed to continue at that school in the new district since they were accepted under the Open Enrollment law. They would be part of that student body.

Ms. Peterson stated that they are not actually part of the Open Enrollment. Oakwood's boundaries include portions of east Murray. She stated that there are a fair amount of students, both north and south of 6400 South, who attend Oakwood. The boundary includes residents from Vine Street and 6400 South, East of Shannondoah.

Ms. Dunn stated that she would look into this, and contact Ms. Peterson on the matter.

Mr. Hirase said that as Murray residents, they would be part of the Murray School District, and they would need to determine what school they would attend. However, if the schools enrollment was down, they may have the option to apply for Open Enrollment at that school.

Ms. Dunn noted that that area, the Cottonwood Heights group, is also looking at the possibility of a new school district. If they keep it as Granite school district, they would remain. Depending on what happens here, the students east of 2000 East would become part of the new school district, and if we did not participate, the ones in Murray would be part of the Murray School District.

Barbara Lozano, 5918 South Main St.

Ms. Lozano asked why are they bringing in new students if we do not have enough classrooms and room for the kids to eat lunch at Murray High School.

Mr. Hirase stated that it would not be the district bringing in the students, but they would welcome them either way. With respect to lunches, they currently have only one lunch period, and if more students were brought in they would consider the option of adding another lunch period if necessary. Depending on the impact, they would look at options such as building on, or using the other campus. The vote would happen in the next school year, in November, and they have until 2009.

Ms. Lozano asked if the district would build on to the school by that 2009 date if the students were coming into the district.

Mr. Hirase remarked that with the number of unknowns involved, they cannot make any decisions at this time. They have not studied it well enough to know what options they will have.

Ms. Dunn stated that part of the problem is that the legislature passed this law, and they put the responsibility on Murray City Council. The first thing that has to be done

is to decide whether or not to participate. Through these meetings, they have learned a number of things that the legislature did not take into account. One being that we have a governing body in the district that does not get a decision in taking new students or not. Luckily, there is a great relationship between the school board and the City Council, which has helped in these meetings to work through the issues. These meetings are beneficial to the Council in finding out what the people of Murray want and need, and to help the council in making the decision on what is best for *all* of the residents in Murray.

Once the decisions are finalized, the district is going to have to really study these issues; they have not had the opportunity to really study what will happen; that will have to be studied once this issue has been decided. If we take Option #1, they will have no decision to make, it will be out of their hands. If we go with Option #2, they will have a lot of decisions to make. There are new things that are being learned every day such as Oakwood Elementary, which they had not known was involved. Ms. Dunn asked that the residents bear with them on this, as they are doing the best they can.

Ms. Lozano asked if during this process if the residents will receive additional information.

Mr. Brass explained that there is not a lot of time to make this decision. The decision to participate must be submitted by July 26, 2007. The law has passed and the clock is ticking, the Council must decide to participate or not by that date.

Mr. Robertson stated that even after turning in the vote this month, we still will not know what is going to happen until later on. There are many questions that cannot be answered until this is done.

Ms. Dunn noted that the Council will make their decision by July 17, 2007; at which time there will be a public hearing on the matter, where residents will be allowed to make their comments.

Mr. Dredge explained that at that public hearing, it will not be a forum to discuss the merits of the issue, as the law is already in place. This decision will be *only* on the option of participating or not participating.

Ms. Dunn noted that they are representing all of the residents of Murray, and that they understand that this is an emotional issue for everyone.

Senator Pat Jones, District 4

Senator Jones remarked that it is wonderful to work with a school board and council who work well together, and residents that are willing to get involved. She said she had voted against this bill, and that there have been some severe, unintended consequences with this bill, and she is in a precarious position as her senate district is Skyline, Olympus Murray and Cottonwood. She said she will look at the ramifications of this bill to the best of her ability, and thanked everyone for working so well with the school board.

Senator Jones added that anyone with questions or concerns may contact either herself, or Representative Tim Cosgrove.

Mary Ann Kirk, 825 Southwood

Ms. Kirk wanted to go on record saying that she would love to welcome these east side people to Murray, but also wants them to have what is best for them.

Pam Benson, 537 Holstein Way

Ms. Benson stated that they chose to move to Murray because of the City and the schools here; and she thinks that this has all come about due to the fact that Murray has the best school district, and now everyone wants one like ours.

Mr. Hirase stated that if those students were to come into our district, the responsiveness and receptiveness of the district would not change. These are core values of the school board and superintendent. They believe parent involvement and input is important.

Ms. Dunn stated that the most positive thing that has come from these meetings is after every one of them, the residents stated that they had had no idea that Murray would welcome them into the district. This is something that has really been great, to resolve some of those fears.

Deborah Ng, 5330 Majestic Villa Cir

Ms. Ng asked what the potential impact of 350 more students would be if the new district is formed and would their area be represented by the school board.

Ms. Dunn answered that she did not know at this point. If a new school district is formed, they will decide how that is handled. They may have a representative, or they could have at-large members.

Mr. Hirase stated that, currently, they do have representation through Granite District. The problem is that the decisions are being made where the majority of the population is, which is more towards the west side. That is one reason the east side is interested in this issue, to achieve representation on the east side.

Carolyn Gough, 6732 S Balfour Ln

Ms. Gough is an employee of the Jordan School District, and they have been going through similar issues. She would like to have someone address the issue of fairness with the voting on this issue, and what would happen to tax issues.

Ms. Dunn stated that they had not discussed this, as the *only* option they have is to choose

between the two options presented. Currently, the west side has no representation at this time. They are not considered a part of any of the proposed school districts, and have no vote. If the vote is favorable, those students will lose their high school. They will be farmed out to the west side high schools, and will be separated as no school can take them all. No, it isn't fair. But all we can do is deal with what we have been handed. As for traditional Murray, you as citizens do not get a vote, because you are not proposed as potential members of a new school district. Our vote is strictly about the east side residents, even though it impacts all of us in the Murray District. She said it is not fair in a lot of places, in fact she has not really found where it is fair.

Mr. Hirase stated that they do not yet know what the affect will be in the future in regards to taxes. They do know that the assessed tax values of the areas are very close. The City is not growing, and not building much, so the tax base should stay fairly close to what it is.

Jack DeMann, 6086 Glen Oaks

Mr. DeMann remarked that he feels sorry for the Council and School Board to have to face this huge task. He asked the School Board, based on the limited choices they have, and the options available to them, if they had reached a consensus of what they feel is the best option, and why? And if not, what are the convergent opinions and why?

Mitzie Huff, Murray School Board President, answered that they chose not to take a stand on the matter, and to be neutral in the matter. They will deal with what ever happens, and take opinions and hold meetings once this has been resolved. They felt that it is the choice of the residents, not the board.

Kurtis Aoki, 6234 Rodeo Ln

Mr. Aoki stated, as a Cottonwood area resident who was annexed into Murray, Salt Lake County had never done anything for the residents, and he has been very happy with the way they have been treated here. He understands that he cannot utilize all of the City's services, such as power, but he wants to remain in as much of Murray as possible.

He said the east side residents have been told that they did not have enough students to keep schools open, therefore programs such as AMES and open enrollment have been created to keep the target goal above the required 80%. People living in the area, such as Olympus, are fighting to keep their school open by creating their matter of a "land grab", and he hopes that Murray ends up with the property.

Another east side resident stated that with either scenario, the east side faces some sort of consolidation process. The legislature has been looking at this, not Murray Council or Murray School District. His question was, what is the sentiment of the group?

Mr. Aoki stated that in the two meetings that have been held, there are only 350

people in the Cottonwood School area that are able to vote, which is not going to make an impact either way. He wants to see the money from the land go to the area where he lives.

Ms. Dunn corrected Mr. Aoki, stating that everyone who is registered to vote in that area will be able to vote on this issue.

Peter Klinge, 602 Lincoln

Mr. Klinge stated that it almost seems like a false choice given to the community. If Murray declines to participate, the consequences of a district being formed, we would be dealing with anyway. Morally, these people are now residents of Murray City, so the decision should be to participate, no matter what the outcome would be, and he asked what the direction the Council was leaning towards.

Mr. Brass stated if they were to participate, no one east of 900 East comes into Murray. If there is a new district formed, they would go to the new district. The question then is, do you want to go to the new district or to Murray?

Mr. Aoki noted that this would split our residents into two districts.

Ms. Dunn restated the difference between the two options. The choice comes down to *if* it passes. If it fails, we are the same either way. As a resident in a prior meeting noted, If you can't be in the school you are in now, you need a second choice: either the new school district, or in Murray. If you want to be in Murray, option out. If you want a new school district, opt to vote. Another resident stated that they feel like they want to vote, even if it may not influence the vote. Both sentiments have been stated. In the first meeting, all but 2 people chose option 2, last night it was a 44-22 vote towards option #2.

Ms. Griffiths clarified that there are 12,000 new residents, but not all of those are registered voters, and some are children.

Ms. Dunn said that if the County Council, South Salt Lake, or Holladay choose not to participate, the options die and Granite remains intact. It was discussed in the previous meeting about wanting the Council to not participate, and the residents would contact their County Council representatives and tell them to vote no. That way, residents would feel that they have some influence on the rest, but won't go into a new district. There have been a lot of pleas from the residents.

Dan Jessop, 4707 S Shamrock Dr.

Mr. Jessop stated that his assumption is that the primary decision falls with the City Council due to the financial and tax considerations. He stated that one way or the other there are tax issues involved, and asked if one option mitigates some of the taxing implications. He also stated that it feels somewhat like taxation without representation

with the west side having to carry the burden of what the east side decides, and schools that are not in our community.

Mr. Brass said that they do not tax the school district.

Mr. Robertson said that it is because the legislature gave it to the Council.

Ms. Dunn stated that it would not be surprising if, down the line, there were some sort of litigation in this matter. She noted that in Murray, about 12% of your taxes go to the City, 60% go to the school districts, and 22% goes to the County. If you look at other cities, most of the school districts are receiving anywhere from 60 to 75% of the property taxes. They are very close, and it would probably not be enough to notice. She also believed that where we may see some changes, is down the line when the legislature decides how to make this more fair on east vs. west.

Mr. Brass said it may end up with East Granite vs. West Granite district.

Ms. Dunn stated that her opinion is, that if they went strictly by what was said in the meetings, they would probably lean towards bringing them into Murray, under Option #2, but they are speaking of a very small representation here, they are trying to get people educated and hear what they want. This is the option most residents are leaning towards.

Richard Clark, 5957 Sanford Lane

Mr. Clark asked for clarification on Option #1: if the council votes to participate, would this guarantee, under the current law, that the Murray District boundaries would remain the same? Choosing Option #1 would then settle that issue. Also, would it allow the residents on the east side to vote.

The Council answered yes, it would remain the same and give the residents the chance to vote.

Kim Anderson, 1144 Chevy Chase Drive

Mr. Anderson had attended last night's meeting, and stated that there were a lot of people who really want to keep Cottonwood High School. They had spoken about options to keep the school open. He also stated that if the students come to Murray, the students will do fine, but feels the parents are the ones that will have difficulties with the change.

Mr. Anderson pointed out that if it goes to a vote, and they become part of Murray, Cottonwood High School would become the property of Murray. He said the property is worth \$54 million. He said they could make it into another junior high or senior high school. His understanding was that Hillcrest is older and there has been talk of doing something with that school. There are many options available for the property. There may even be the option of inviting students from other schools over and keeping

Cottonwood open.

Ms. Dunn stated that the majority of people they have spoken with lean towards Option #2, but if there must be a change, this is what they want.

Charlie Burnstein, 5849 Forestside

Mr. Burnstein asked if Granite stays the same, does it affect only east side Granite or will both sides remain the same. He wanted to know the pros and cons of the two options.

Ms. Dunn stated that all of our east side residents, if the vote fails, will remain in the Granite district. Other areas, such as the west side, are looking at these same issues, but are having their own votes. Ms. Dunn explained that they cannot really say what the advantages and disadvantages are at this point. If they opt in, then the east residents get to vote. If they opt out, we are not allowing the east side to vote. This may or may not be to their advantage. They do not know what the turnout will be, or what the other areas will do. She said if the new district is formed, all the schools that were in Granite School District in the affected areas will become their own district. It is unknown if and which schools would remain open or close.

Lisa Milkavich, 534 E 4800 S

Ms. Milkavich stated that this is the second meeting she has been to, but still feels that they do not have enough information to make an informed decision on the matter.

Ms. Dunn stated that there are still a lot of unknowns, and they have been asked to make a decision based on what is known.

Mr. Dredge stated that a determining factor has been, by those wanting to opt out, that if we cannot have the status quo that we have now, then we do not want to take the chance on not being in the Murray School District.

Jack DeMann, 6086 Glen Oaks

Mr. DeMann said there was a historical perspective that the residents should keep in mind, it has always been the desire of Murray City and Murray School Board to have co-terminus boundaries that everyone that lived in Murray would attend Murray City schools, and all be affected by Murray City government. Sometimes it created significant disagreement between City Commission and City Council, and the School Board, but the agreement was to do all they could to maintain that. Then came the change in the annexation laws, and all the desires to have a single school district went out the window. He said one other danger in this, if the vote goes and we allow the citizens to vote on it: whatever that decision is, will then be sanctioned by a vote. Whether it is an overall vote, or a small vote it has been supported by a vote. If you select option #2, keeping those people out of a vote, and says it fails, then you come to Murray, which is what we

have wanted for 40 years. Mr. DeMann felt that it would be prudent, if someone wants to challenge it, it will be on a vote based on *that* issue, and you will have the answer.

Ms. Dunn summed up the two options again, explaining that these are the only options available at this time, and took an informal vote.

Option #1: (participate)

Option #2" (decline to participate)

The majority chose Option #2.

Mr. Brass explained that they do not take the issue of voting lightly. The problem with voting, with the east side residents, is if they vote they would probably vote not to form the new school district. But, if they loose in that vote, they will not be able to come into the Murray School District. If they don't vote, they could still come into the Murray School District. If they want to stay the same, the best option is to lobby the County Council and get them to withdraw. With option one, they are guaranteed never to be part of Murray. These are Murray Students, Murray residents, whether they are in the Granite District or not.

The meeting was adjourned, with the understanding that the Council would remain to answer any additional questions and concerns.