

July 15, 2020, Press Release

## Middleton trustees table pay-to-play proposal, seeking options to consider; adopt reopening plan



After a long and anguished discussion, fed by more than 70 emails from Middleton patrons, the Board of Trustees delayed a decision on a pay-to-play proposal for student athletes.

The plan, that would cost \$250 to \$550 per child, per sport played, is the last element of a \$2.3 million budget reduction for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. The cuts are a result of two state mandated holdbacks, prompted by COVID-19, and the failure to pass an ongoing \$1.5 million supplemental levy. The levy question is on the August 25 ballot. [Other budget cuts](#) were previously identified and are listed on the web.

Before the pay-to-play discussion for high school and middle school athletes, Superintendent Kristin Beck reviewed the dismal financial picture for the trustees and those listening to the Tuesday night meeting, [via the streamed YouTube video](#).

“We simply don’t have the funds necessary to support athletics without further negatively impacting academics,” Beck said.

Passage of the two-year, \$1.5 million levy, proposed to voters for the third time on August 25, could reduce the pay-to-play fees, but the school district is no longer in the position that it can subsidize sports 100 percent.

The proposed fees would cover the cost for coaches, transportation and the athletic director. The fees do not cover all related costs, including maintenance and utilities of sports facilities.

Trustees directed Beck and staff to come back with a plan that would more closely mirror West Ada’s pay-to-play policy that charges students \$110 per sport, but waives the fee for the third sport if students are three-sport athletes.

Trustee Derek Moore agreed there needs to be a pay-to-play program, but the district also needs to find balance, to keep the majority of student athletes involved, but also maintain academics.

Moore asked the staff to draft a plan that would charge \$125 per sport at the high school level, again charging students only twice, if they participate in three sports during a school year. He also recommends the district discontinue transportation to sports events and that the district absorb the athletic director's salary.

Trustee Aleisha McConkie said she's nervous about the cost being so high that athletes might move to other districts, creating a new consequence for the Middleton School District with less state funding on a per-pupil basis.

Trustee Kirk Adams noted that no matter the pay-to-play cost, the district would likely lose some student athletes.

Ultimately that hurts the athletic program, Athletic Director Andy Ankeny said. To this point, the district has had strong and successful athletic programs.

"Because of loyal fans and high attendance, we are able to do some things for our programs that not everyone can," Ankeny told the board.

"We've gone over the numbers," Moore said. We have to cut \$2 million because we could not pass a levy. That is what it boils down to. We are forced to make these hard decisions."

District officials noted that Caldwell, Vallivue and Nampa, have supplemental levies in place, and don't charge athletes to pay.

"I struggle with this every single day," Moore said. "We can't seem to get people on board to pass something to help our students get the education they deserve."

Adams and Beck encouraged district patrons to contact the district with questions regarding the budget and specific financial questions.

## **Trustees adopt reopening plan**

The Middleton School Board adopted the [district's reopening plan](#) amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Depending on the circumstances in August, the district plans to

reopen with limited face-to-face student instruction, with CDC and Southwest District Health Department precautions in place.

The district is working to complete a 1:1 technology initiative to equip all students with technology for remote learning to prepare for worsening conditions throughout the winter season.

The district will also provide an Optional Online School for those families who are uncomfortable with students returning in the fall. The full-time schooling option would be available to all students.

“Whatever the circumstances may be in 2020-2021, MSD is committed to offering a high quality education to all students regardless of the delivery method required,” the plan states.

The board-adopted reopening plan will be shared with both staff and parents today.

Superintendent Beck told trustees that surveys will be deployed to staff, parents, and substitute teachers to glean information to better prepare for this fall. The staff survey will be sent out Thursday, and the parent survey will be sent out Friday.