

## **Murray City Municipal Council Chambers Murray City, Utah**

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**T**he Municipal Council of Murray City, Utah, met on Tuesday, the 26<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2007 at 6:00 p.m., for a meeting held at Twin Peaks Elementary School, Multipurpose Room, 5325 South Revere Drive ( 1045 East), Murray, Utah.

Roll Call consisted of the following:

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

Others who attended:

Jan Wells,	Chief of Staff
Michael Wagstaff,	Deputy for Legislation
Carol Heales,	Recorder
Shannon Jacobs,	Director, City Council
Tim Leffel,	Murray School District Administrator
Amelia Nielson-Stowell,	Deseret News
Citizens	

Ms. Dunn introduced the Council Members.

**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: Ms. Dunn said the neighborhood meetings were being held to explain the adoption of State legislation that allows for the creation of smaller school districts, if they meet the qualifications of: city of 65,000 residents or more, or a combination of cities with a combined population of 65,000 or more, and 3,000 students. Ms. Dunn said if the population is less than 65,000, a smaller district cannot happen. She said the proposal for a new school district includes Murray's northeast district, Holladay, South Salt Lake, and the unincorporated area of Salt Lake County known as the Millcreek

Township.

Ms Dunn stated that the Council needs to decide what the Murray portion will do based on what the legislation allows. Ms. Dunn explained that the City has two choices, and that neither choice has to do with closing schools. The outcome of these choices are absolute.

Ms. Dunn gave a power point presentation summarizing the two choices. She reviewed that the Council received an invitation from the above mentioned interlocal participants in April of 2007. This requires action from the City within 90 days, deciding whether or not to participate in the interlocal agreement. This agreement joins all the parties who have decided to participate, and in the November elections it will be on the ballot to vote whether to create a smaller school district, or to defeat that vote.

Ms. Dunn explained that with Option #1, the City Council can resolve to participate with the interlocal partners. This would allow the east side residents to vote whether they would like to become part of a new district, or to stay the same. Ms. Dunn said the problem is that you are lumped together with the other three areas. It is not whether Murray decides to participate, but whether all of the other areas participate. If it does go to the ballot in November, all of those residents will be allowed to vote on the matter. If that vote succeeds for option one, to create the smaller district, East Murray students will be assimilated into the new school district. Once they are assimilated into that district, that district will create a governing board, who will make all the decisions from there on: what schools stay open, which ones will close, and how that district is run.

Ms. Dunn continued by saying that there will be representation from most of the areas, likely being based on population, but they are not going to say right now what schools may be closed. The only thing that is known for certain is that there are not enough students for two high schools. Once the vote is passed, the discussion regarding the schools will be taken over by that new district, and we will have no say in the matter. Still on option #1, she continued, if the vote is defeated, then the existing Granite School District will remain as it is, with no changes occurring.

Ms. Dunn said if the Murray City Council chooses Option #2, they would be declining the invitation to participate with the interlocal partners. She said if the City declines to participate, then people in this area do not get to vote. Then, the people from the other areas mentioned would vote on the issue and whatever happens, happens. If you are assimilated by Murray School District in Option #2, the school board would be the governing body, making all decisions on school closures.

Ms. Dunn said, as a Council, they are aware that there are not enough students to have two high schools. In either direction, it is a possibility that the school that your children attend, could be closed. But, we would not be making that decision. Our decision here is simply whether or not to participate in the interlocal agreement to form smaller school districts. If we do not participate, and the vote fails, you will remain as you are within

Granite School District.

Ms. Dunn explained the importance of the population threshold. She said with Holladay, South Salt Lake, and the Millcreek Township of the County being the size that they are, a negative vote to participate in this interlocal agreement would then kill the deal, at least temporarily. If one of the other cities vote not to participate, they would no longer meet the population requirements. Those decisions have not yet been made. She said the Council has until July 26, 2007 to make our decision. The Council's decision will be made on July 17, 2007. The reason we are here is to get input from the citizens to see what they would like the Council to do.

Michael Wagstaff, Deputy for Legislation

Mr. Wagstaff stated that currently on the Hill, there is a special committee that came out of these issues, called a Local Issues Task Force. One of their main objectives is to look at the capital funding for schools. In looking at the funding, they are weighing whether to pool capital funding at the State level, or at the County level. Right now, the State pooling level is winning. He said there are at least two meetings still scheduled by the State legislators regarding the County vs. State on the pooling funds issue. How the money would be pooled, and how it would be distributed if a smaller school district is created, is still a big unknown at this point.

Mr. Wagstaff stated that whether they would hold the Murray City School District harmless is another issue being addressed.

Ms. Dunn readdressed the issue of Murray City not being included in those options. If Murray City chose not to participate, we would be unaffected by the new school districts, and being unaffected, we would ask them to consider holding the City harmless, as well as the Salt Lake City School District, who would also be unaffected in this. She said the other concern with this is the impact on property, school buildings and their employees. Would they go with the students? Cottonwood, Twin Peaks, and Woodstock would go to the new school district if created. If they end up in Murray, all three would be part of the Murray School District, with their employees, buildings and property.

Ms. Dunn said the question was raised about why are they looking at making smaller school districts? Ms. Dunn reiterated that the law is already in place, and nothing can be done to change that. The reason that it is being pushed is people in areas where schools have been closed in the past, have felt unrepresented. The majority of the students in this valley are west of Redwood Road; the representation on the Granite School Board is also on the west side. The families on the east side felt that they did not get the required representation, and their schools were closed.

Ms. Dunn said the largest representation of Cottonwood High School is from Taylorsville.

She said those young people and their families are not represented at all. If a new district is created, they are out of their high school.

Noel Anderson, 9 West Washington Ave

Mr. Anderson asked what would happen to the contracts of the teachers and employees, since each school district has different pension plans, wage scales, etc.

Ms. Dunn replied that she does not believe that the law addresses this issue. The hope would be that the new school district would pick up those people.

Mr. John Hagland, 1391 Stillwood Dr, Cottonwood Community Council

Mr. Hagland stated that the law does address this issue, and that the new district would be obligated to pick up those employees and teachers. The new district is required to take all employees and teachers and transfer those existing contracts. What is unique about Cottonwood is that they have a staff prepared to teach 1,500 kids, but would only have 700-800 kids left at Cottonwood, so they would have excess staff. The law is unclear how that would be handled, and also how non-teaching staff would be handled.

Ms. Dunn noted that if the new district is created, there would not be 700-800, there would be only about 350 students, if we choose not to participate. If they go to a new district, there would be more.

Darrell Simmons, Castle Creek Drive

Mr. Simmons raised the question on whether there is enough population in Option #2 to stop the deal, at least temporarily.

Ms. Dunn stated that under Option #2, if we choose not to participate, and the vote is positive, there will not be enough students to populate two high schools. But it would not stop the deal. Only one of the three larger participants would be able to.

Elizabeth Chipman, 6162 Wesley Rd

Ms. Chipman asked for clarification: if the people vote, the law is there to create smaller school districts. She understands the need for representation, but is confused on the issue of fairness, and how creating smaller districts would make the whole issue go away. She also wanted to know what the benefit is in closing *any* school .

Ms. Dunn stated that the people felt that giving more people representation would help in terms of fairness. As far as the benefit, there are advantages to both larger and smaller districts. Murray School District has been a model district to many. They may lose a lot of programs with this, but they will gain representation in their areas. There is no doubt that there will be school closures, but at least the district will have some

representation in these matters.

Myrna Marsh, 5476 Dunbarton Drive

Ms. Marsh stated that she is against the smaller school districts because it would cause competition problems with the east side vs. the west side.

Ms. Dunn stated that they too are against the smaller school districts, but at this time, they have the two options as presented. They would like to hear what the citizens thoughts are, and only hope that at the end the people realize that they have to go one way or the other with these options before them.

Yvonne Parker, 1103 E 5190 S

Ms. Parker asked if the retirement programs are addressed in the new law, as well as the salary contracts.

Tim Leffel, Murray School District, answered that every teacher being part of the Utah State Retirement System will remain in the same system, and will not change. As far as individual districts, benefit structure should not be affected.

It was asked what happens to the junior high schools, as this had not been addressed.

Ms. Dunn stated that with the make up on the east side, they currently have the high school and two elementary schools, but no junior high there. In speaking with the school superintendent, Ms. Dunn said the junior high students would be fairly easily accommodated by Murray School District, if it stays as it is now. They would, however, be bussed to one of the two existing Murray junior. high schools instead of Bonneville, so they would be changing schools.

Mr. Simmons asked if Murray High School has the capacity to take the 350 students from Cottonwood, and what affect would it have on the school.

Mr. Leffel answered that the high school was made to accommodate 1,700 students and currently has around 1,500. They also have several hundred students from other districts, which, in time, would be phased out. They also built the school with the capability of adding on a wing if needed. Mr. Leffel stated that they would accommodate the students, they currently have room for and an additional 200. He said it would be looked into further if this were to be the case and they would look at all of their options.

Bill Finch, 1055 Chevy Chase Drive

Mr. Finch asked that people recycle their newspapers. When two to three bundles are accumulated, they should bring them to the Twin Peaks recycling bins. The school

receives several thousand dollars each year from the recycling bins. He also stated that in forming a new school district, there will be high administration costs, maintenance costs, and you will have about 30% of your tax costs going to fund this administration cost. Secondly, he stated that although he is in opposition of this, he is not the leader.

Ms. Dunn stated that whether constitutional or not, we do not have a choice. The choice we have, is either to participate or not.

Robert Engbert, 5059 S 100 E

Mr. Engbert stated that as an annexed resident, he has questions about the financial burdens this will place on the school district. He wanted to know if this will be a hardship on the school district to assimilate these students, and if this will impact the citizens' taxes?

Ms. Dunn said that about 60% of the property taxes go to the school district. About 12% go to the City and 22% to the County. If this affects people, it will be a small amount.

Mr. Leffel stated that they have not had time to determine how this will affect the tax rates, but Murray's and Granites tax rates are almost identical on the school side. Initially he does not feel there would be much impact. Down the line, with the changes, it would need to be evaluated. If the City decides not to participate and a new district is formed, the students will be welcomed, and they will do the best they can. Whatever resources are available will be made available to these new students. They will initially have state funding and will evaluate the tax rates down the road.

Jan Little, 5572 Brockway

Ms. Little stated that she was involved in a study, about 10 years ago, called Future Native Populations, which studied residents, turnover, etc and asked if another study like this would be helpful. She asked what is going to happen if we get the smaller district, and then end up with a larger than expected population of children.

Ms. Dunn stated that a study was done for the interlocal agreement participants; from what they hear, there were a lot of inaccuracies in the study, they have reviewed this study, and feel that there is not enough time before the decision must be made to do another study. Ms. Dunn stated that those children would have to be accommodated. We do not know what the future will bring, but we do know that neighborhoods regenerate.

Nicole Little, 5572 Brockway

Ms. Little asked that if the majority of population at Cottonwood is from the west side,

why were these people not represented in the past? She also asked if Cottonwood does get closed down, what happens to those students? She felt that many of the west side schools are overcrowded already, and would like to know if these students will receive the same opportunities that they get at Cottonwood.

Ms. Dunn stated that the way this is set up, only those people that will be included in the new school district, will get to vote. This is how the legislation was written, that is how the law stands today. Right or wrong, we agree with what is being said, but the law is the law, and it doesn't allow for those students to be represented. Yes, those students will be in schools that are over crowded already; Granite School District will remain their school district if this all happens, and Granite will decide how to handle that. As for the students in this area, if we choose not to participate, all the students that go to Cottonwood from the Murray area will go to Murray schools. If we do participate, and the vote wins, all the students on the east side of Murray will go to the new district.

Toni Simmons, 1222 Castlecreek Dr

Ms. Simmons asked if it would be better to participate, giving us the option to at least vote on this matter.

Ms. Dunn stated that they could draw some scenarios, but it was up to the people to let them know how they want them to vote on this. With 12,000 people, and about 53,000 people in the other areas, she stated she did not know what the people in the other areas would vote. If you were to say "everyone is in favor of this" in the other area, it would not matter what we voted for. But we don't know what that vote will be.

Mr. Brass stated that they are here to educate the residents, and their neighbors. The determining factor would be what percentage of the other areas will vote too, and if there is enough to overturn it. If the goal is to remain the same, the best thing to do to stop this would be to lobby the County Council members to withdraw Millcreek Township, then it would go no further. Otherwise, it is back to our two options.

Ms. Dunn remarked that in other meetings, people have decided that our first choice would be to remain the same, the second best for us would be Murray, so they were asking them not to vote. The Council is there to lay out all of the options, and let the people decide what would be best for them.

Dawn Evans, 1112 Chevy Chase Dr.

Ms. Evans agreed with Ms. Dunn, stating that the City would welcome them, whereas with Option #1, she is not sure that they would be wanted. She would rather be in Murray than in a smaller school district.

Nicole Wakefield, Murray, Utah

Ms. Wakefield discussed the testing scores, from the Utah Education website, between Murray and Cottonwood. She stated that Cottonwood High School achieved the AYP for 2005-2006, and it states that Murray High does not meet the AYP. But, if you click on each individual category, it shows that Murray High actually has a higher percentage than Cottonwood. She would like to know where that discrepancy comes in.

Mr. Leffel explained that in the program “No Child Left Behind”, they go over the “AYP” which stands for Adequate Yearly Progress testing. Every school is measured as required by the Federal Government. The problem with this is, these tests are broken down into several groups and subgroups, such as ESL and Special Education groups; if any one of these subgroups fail, then the whole school fails. At Murray High School, the special education group did not pass, which means that the whole school does not pass, even though every other group passed. This is a very frustrating part of this program.

Debbie Woodward, 986 E 5700 S

Ms. Woodward thanked Murray for showing the citizens this information and keeping the citizens informed. She then asked if Murray felt they could handle the additional people.

Ms. Dunn stated that, yes, Murray has felt a little like they had a “bull’s eye” on their back, with the sales tax issues, and now this one, but having said that, Murray School District has continually assured the Council that if we were to decide not to participate, they could handle, and welcome, the additional students, uniting Murray.

Mr. Brass added that the majority of the Murray School Board is present at this meeting to show their support and to answer any questions that come up. They have said all along that they can assimilate the students and are happy to have them.

Tammy Fox, 1177 Castlecreek Dr.

Ms. Fox stated that since Murray has taken over their area, they have felt much more welcome by Murray than by other cities, and would be happy to be assimilated into Murray.

Ms. Dunn reminded the citizens that at the end of the meeting, an informal vote would be taken to see where the residents stand on the two options. She also addressed the previous comment by saying that since this Council had decided early on that they would educate the residents on the issues, and involve the residents in their decision, she can assure you that the school board will do the same.



Elizabeth Chipman, 6162 S Wesley Rd

Ms. Chipman asked that if this were to happen, will the entire east side be able to vote? She also asked for clarification of Mr. Brass' comments regarding Millcreek Township.

Ms. Dunn stated that if we chose Option #1, then the entire east side from all the areas would vote together. If we opt out, all those groups would vote together without Murray. Millcreek Township would not help us at all. If we were to try to kill this vote, it would need to go through the County Council members. If the County pulls Millcreek Township, they would not have enough people to meet the population threshold previously discussed. Then it would go away, at least temporarily. Residents can go to the County website to locate the contact information for the council members who represent them.

Charles Kulp, 5529 Revere Dr

Mr. Kulp stated that you can access the County website at: [www.slco.org](http://www.slco.org). He also asked if there is any sense of the legislative intent from the folks on the Hill? Have they indicated that there would be any hold-harmless in this? Will they fund the school district in any way to keep them going at the necessary level beyond just the natural ebb and flow of the natural school population?

Ms. Dunn stated that no, they have not.

Mr. Kulp continued: So, 100% of our state income tax already goes to education and follows up with a per pupil basis, our property tax, and whatever they decide to pitch in from the general fund. With the school voucher system, they are already furious with the school board, and he thinks they will end up paying about a penny per pupil next year. We need to protect our students.

Mr. Kulp then asked if the citizens were pretty much guaranteed of having a tax increase from this.

Ms. Dunn stated that there is a likelihood of that happening, but it depends on what is decided later.

Mr. Kulp asked what happens to the school facilities and the employees.

Ms. Dunn explained that every facility and its employees will follow to the district that they end up in. Currently, they have been told that there are no bond issues on these schools.

Richard Clark, 5957 Sanford Dr.

Mr. Clark stated that no mention has been made of the Charter school at Cottonwood. He felt that this would have an impact on whether or not Cottonwood remains open. Under Option #1, it would be more likely that Cottonwood would remain open.

Ms. Dunn stated that without Murray, Cottonwood would have 350 less students. Either way, Cottonwood will lose the majority of its 850 students. Without Murray, they would actually lose 1150 students, because Murray and Taylorsville would both be out. With Murray in it, they still lose 850, but gain another 350 students. The other issue is with the AIMS program, which would continue wherever it found a home. Currently, they have a contract with the Granite School District.

Mr. Clark stated that under Option #2, Murray Council decides not to join, and the petition passes, Cottonwood becomes part of the Murray School District. That would be the most likely scenario for Cottonwood to close; there is no way Murray can support two high schools.

Ms. Dunn stated that this would not be the most likely scenario. Under Option #1 there are currently four high schools; if we decide to participate and the vote is positive, there are four high schools with enough students for two, Granite is the other school.

In that new area, the high schools would be: Skyline, Olympus, Cottonwood and Granite. Under Option #2, there would be enough students for one high school, and there are two. Either way, you have half the number of students to keep the schools open.

Ms. Dunn stated that Granite would be one of the schools to go in that area.

Rosie Haidenthaler, 1006 E 5645 S.

Ms. Haidenthaler asked when this would all go into effect.

Ms. Dunn stated that once the vote is taken in November, the district would be put into place, but students would remain where they are for one year. Then, in that time, the new school board would have time to put their governing board into place. The transition year would be 2007-2008, and would go into effect fall of 2009.

A citizen asked about option #2, and wanted to know if Murray would get control of Cottonwood High School. She wanted to know if the school board would have the option to close down Twin Peaks and decide to bus them elsewhere as well.

Ms. Dunn stated that the governing boards make all of those decisions. As far as the impact to the elementary schools under either option, they do not have the answers to that. It would be up to either the new school district, or Murray School District.

Both of them would need to study these issues to make any decisions.

The Citizen stated that her opinion would be to go with Option #2, then actively lobby those people with the opportunity to vote, and encourage them to vote it down.

Kristen Davis, 1457 E Vine Meadows Circle

Ms. Davis asked the status of the Murray elementary schools, and if any of them may be closed.

Mr. Leffel explained that this is unknown at the time. He said we have some room in some of the elementary schools, but none are at capacity. The rate has been declining for the past four to five years. If these schools are at capacity, this would help the cause on the east side.

Lori Brockbank, 768 E Shiloh Way

Ms. Brockbank asked if they would be voting on this issue on the west side?

Ms. Dunn stated that they would not.

Nicole Little, 5572 Brockway

Ms. Little remarked that it is great that Murray is so welcoming to them, but doesn't think that they realize that it will not be an easy integration for the students going to any new school. As a recent graduate of Cottonwood High School, and past president, the students have spent a large amount of money on the school, and felt that the school should be left open. Also, if a lawsuit were to be brought up, it is her understanding that the issue would be dropped. She was wondering if any lawsuits were being brought up, and if a petition would change anything.

Ms. Dunn stated that nothing had been brought up that they were aware of, and since the law was already in place, nothing else, such as petitioning, would change this, but appreciates her passion. She also stated that the County District Attorney would be getting an opinion based on the studies that she has seen, and that should be coming out next week.

Pam Meadows, 5505 Sommerset Way

Ms. Meadows asked if the students from Cottonwood would go to Murray High School, under option #2 if the vote passes, and wouldn't that put Murray High School at capacity. She felt it would be better for the students to be in smaller classes by keeping Cottonwood open?

Ms. Dunn stated that without enough students, and the number of students they would have, it would cost much more to run the school than to close it. These decisions will fall on the new school district, or Murray school district, and will entail much more discussion and study on both sides.

Kim Anderson, 1144 Chevy Chase Dr

Mr. Anderson asked that if we tried to keep Cottonwood High School open, could we not invite those from Taylorsville that are going there, to go there also?

Ms. Dunn stated that the school district could possibly look into that.

Mr. Leffel stated that since the students at Taylorsville are part of Granite School District, and Cottonwood is part of Granite School District, the state would reimburse Granite district to bus those students from Taylorsville to Cottonwood High School. If Murray inherits those students, they would still be welcome to come, but the state will not pay to bus them.

Mr. Dredge expressed his appreciation for the turn out at the meeting. He stated that the sad thing in all of this is that we are where we are because the legislature acted, without the involvement of the citizens. He said it is important for residents to be involved at the State level as much as possible to head off issues before situations such as this arise.

Ms. Dunn called for an informal vote on the options.

Option #1: approximately 22 in favor  
Option #2: approximately 43 in favor

Ms. Dunn closed by saying that this does not determine the Council's decision, and that many may want to review this information further. She expressed her thanks for the involvement.

Meeting adjourned.