

Auto-Generated Transcription of June22Byers.mp3

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Transcription:

0s: A healthy body needs a healthy mind to function properly.

6.2s: Mental health parity is the law requiring that your insurance coverage for mental health

10.4s: or substance use disorders be no more restrictive than coverage for your physical health.

16s: Health coverage is health coverage, whether it's for your physical or mental health.

20.52s: Whether you need surgery or treatment for depression, you're covered.

24.92s: Know your rights.

26.28s: Learn more about mental health parity laws at [GetCoveredIllinois.gov](#).

32.36s: This podcast is a part of the New Hof Media Podcast Network.

35.8s: We go back a couple of weeks when DPS declared that both Dennis Lab School campuses were

41.28s: structurally unsound and they were not going to be able to know all of what that meant

46.36s: for quite some time, certainly not by August and time for kids and teachers to resume.

51.92s: There have been all kinds of speculation and conversations about where do you park

55.48s: all these kids and do the best by them.

58.32s: Last night, quite a bit happened at the special board meeting which was held at MacArthur

1m3s: High School, correct?

1m4s: Yes.

1m5s: And why there?

1m6s: Make sure we had enough space for everyone.

1m7s: Yeah, like how building board rooms a tiny little place.

1m9s: I don't know what it looks like on TV, but it's not very large.

1m12s: So you wanted to accommodate anybody who had questions, teachers, staff, parents, kids,

1m17s: whatever.

1m18s: Yes.

1m19s: All right.

1m20s: What did you expect going in, Bill?

1m21s: Yeah, I really expected probably a little bit more parental involvement last night.

1m28s: We had a lot of our teachers express their concerns and their voice last night, but it

1m36s: was pretty much as expected.

1m38s: As you know, Brian, I've been down this road a number of times in another life.

1m43s: Expectation was we were going to hear concerns from parents, but what we really would like

1m48s: to have is not only concerns, but solutions.

1m52s: And I think sometimes there's a disconnect between concerns and solutions.

1m56s: There is.

1m57s: And I would also separate teachers and staff from parents.

1m60s: You know, parents would say to you, and I think rightfully so, yes, they need to be

2m3s: involved, but we're paying taxes.

2m5s: This is your school district to run.

2m6s: We're not in charge of the solutions.

2m8s: You guys are.

2m9s: Well, we are.

2m11s: You would think sometimes by some of the comments that they have solutions, but in reality, it's

2m17s: always complaints and solutions.

2m18s: I get that.

2m19s: But you can understand.

2m20s: I mean, I fully, you know, this may be the worst couple of schools this could have happened

2m26s: to when you talk about parental involvement, you talk about the West End revitalization

2m30s: and over the last 10 or 15 years, you know, that Dennis spirit on that campus and the

2m35s: involvement from everything from parents to Millican and everything else that that was

2m39s: a pretty special place.

2m41s: Brian, let me let me give you a little quick little story.

2m43s: I sat in Bob Oaks's office, 1988, and we decided where my kids, my four kids, boys went to,

2m52s: you know, we live in the West End, Dennis School, and that's where we chose to live.

2m58s: I live two blocks from Dennis School.

3m0s: So we've been invested in the West End for a long time.

3m4s: So that sets the frame for you a little bit in my loyalty to Dennis, right?

3m7s: I get it.

3m8s: There was a resurgence then and a lot of folks got involved.

3m11s: So there's a special attachment, right?

3m13s: There is.

3m14s: Even when the whole Lincoln Park idea came out, there were a lot of people over there

3m18s: that were big fans of Dennis that didn't want to see that building closed.

3m22s: Now knowing what we know now versus knowing what we knew then might have changed that

3m26s: dramatically, but you know, there's no going back and doing that over.

3m30s: So last night, what did you talk about?
3m33s: What did you decide?
3m34s: What did you hear?
3m35s: And why are the teachers and I'm asking this just from the outside looking in, why is there
3m40s: such a disconnect between their concerns and the Kyle building solutions?
3m44s: Well, for them, they've been together for so long.
3m47s: So this is what we're hearing.
3m48s: We are a Dennis family and we want to stay together.
3m51s: All of us right now, we are not able to put all of them in one building.
3m57s: So we were separating K through six from seven and eight and in doing so we were still having
4m3s: to buy a module just module just so we can put all of K through six in one building.
4m9s: OK, so we're at this point.
4m10s: Where will K through six go when schools open in August?
4m13s: The current GLA Garfield Learning Academy for our alternative at students.
4m17s: OK, and we're moving our alternative students to Stephen Cater and we're going to section
4m22s: off a wing for them. OK, so the main concern was we don't want to split up the two.
4m27s: Yes. OK, and did you exhaust every option trying to not do that?
4m32s: Yes, we looked at all of our buildings, even looking at putting all of them at the high
4m37s: school because we know with the decreasing enrollment that they would fit.
4m42s: But you really don't want kindergarten for second with high school students.
4m47s: So, Bill, as a board, you know, what was the reaction to this plan?
4m53s: You know, I think the overall reaction was positive to the plan.
4m57s: There were questions, a couple of the board members had several questions.
5m2s: In fact, matter everybody got involved in asking the superintendent questions.
5m6s: And I think she was well prepared with those answers.
5m9s: I think what were some of those questions or concerns?
5m12s: Well, there were there were concerns about how what what it was going to look like.
5m16s: Where are the middle school kids were going to go?
5m18s: How that was going to how that was going to play out?
5m22s: And there were how did we how did we get here more?
5m25s: Some of the construction type questions.
5m28s: We had the two engineers there from that offer the two different opinions.
5m32s: And we had BLDD there who has done a lot of architectural work for us
5m37s: over that period of time.
5m38s: So a lot of concerns about their questions about timing, right?
5m41s: How what does this look like and what does it take going forward?
5m45s: And that's a big question right now is in any construction project,
5m49s: you forget the timeline and it's not a short timeline in today's world.
5m54s: Well, yeah, I'll go one beyond that here in just a few minutes.
5m58s: But so so this has all been voted on and decided.
6m1s: And this is what's going to happen, at least for this next school year.
6m4s: Yes. So we definitely know we're not going back into Dennis.
6m7s: The one thing that the board has asked me to do was try to find more
6m11s: modules to sit on the Garfield campus.
6m15s: And when you say a module, you know, I remember I can go way back
6m18s: in my member bank to Thomas Jefferson Middle School.
6m20s: When I was there, they had two outdoor classrooms.
6m23s: You know, you went to time, you put a coat on, you go out the back door
6m26s: and go to math. And I don't remember it being a hardship or anybody complaining about it.
6m31s: But at that point, they just didn't have enough classrooms.
6m33s: So they put those module type classrooms.
6m35s: Yes, we're looking at six, but it's all one.
6m37s: What's the cost of those?
6m39s: It's going to run us about hundred and fifty thousand dollars
6m44s: for the installation and first year's lease.
6m47s: OK, also it's a lease, so it's not something you own.
6m50s: You're renting it. Yes.
6m52s: And then what has to happen at Stephen Cader?
6m55s: Well, you're going to have to separate the alternative program from the rest of the building
6m59s: because those are the kids that have been removed from school due to behavior,
7m3s: academics. All right.
7m4s: So if your parent A or B, the immediate question is,
7m7s: well, you're going to send my kid into a school full of kids that have
7m10s: already been in trouble or can't mind or behave.
7m14s: They won't have any interaction with those students.
7m16s: They actually start school almost two hours before and they will end school
7m21s: almost two hours earlier.
7m22s: So not sharing buses or transportation or any common areas?
7m25s: No. OK. All right.
7m27s: So I don't even claim to know that there was a better solution out there.
7m33s: I don't know if you heard anything last night that suggested there might be,
7m36s: but it is what it is.
7m38s: It is. And we had people to send comments like,
7m42s: can we go to the old Kroger location?
7m44s: What about Fairview Plaza?

7m45s: What else have you got legitimate questions?
7m47s: Where it would be big enough to put all these kids?
7m49s: Right. But they're not thinking that you're just not going and moving desk.
7m53s: There is a lot that you have to do to make school bathrooms,
7m56s: electrical, you know, wearing all of those things.
7m59s: So. So this seems to be the least expensive route
8m2s: because you're going to have to make a lot of long term decisions, right?
8m5s: Yes. On these two buildings, on all the other buildings.
8m8s: I mean, I mean, you know, I know this has been in your face for the last
8m13s: couple of months, but are you concerned as a board member that you might have
8m17s: several buildings that are heading this direction?
8m20s: Yeah, I think one of the things that you're going to see us doing real quickly
8m23s: is get involved in a facility study.
8m27s: Dr. Clark's team is already looking at how that might roll out
8m32s: and how we might begin to look at all of our facilities so that we have
8m36s: a long range plan and an assessment of every one of those individual buildings.
8m41s: But the biggest part of this question, Brian, is we're in a declining
8m45s: enrollment situation and we're going to have to get past this
8m51s: and then begin serious conversations about what our district looks like
8m55s: three years, five years, ten years down the road.
8m57s: And it's going to be different.
8m58s: I mean, we might be in a year or two under 7000 students.
9m2s: So, you know, when you think about that, I think when at its peak district 61
9m6s: was 22000 students and I know when I came to town, it was 13 or 14000 students.
9m13s: Yeah. And now we're 7500 students.
9m16s: Our high schools are Dr. Clark going to have to help me.
9m19s: But 900 at MacArthur and gather less than 1800 students.
9m25s: All right. Two questions about that.
9m27s: That decline over years.
9m29s: There's a lot of things you can attribute that to, you know,
9m33s: if you go back to the time when there were 22000, you know, there wasn't much
9m37s: in Maroa or Forsythe or Mount Zion or Lutheran School Association.
9m41s: St. Teresa had its population.
9m43s: So there's been a symmetrician, right, throughout the years.
9m46s: The population overall making county has gone down over the years.
9m50s: Do you worry, though, about turning that number the other way around?
9m53s: I mean, have people left district one?
9m55s: Will people leave over this?
9m57s: You know, will those West End families who want what they want
10m0s: turn to another alternative option?
10m3s: Yeah, unfortunately, that is going to happen.
10m6s: I'm hopeful that once they see the plan that that changes their mind,
10m11s: that they see that we're trying to keep our kids together,
10m13s: that they see that, you know, Dennis, yes, you are a family,
10m17s: but that building doesn't make you a family.
10m19s: It's what you do with kids.
10m21s: Yeah, I look, they have that family is where they draw their strength, right?
10m27s: That's where they their superpower and people hate change.
10m30s: I mean, we know there are some just things that are just always going to be.
10m34s: But I hope that the grownups and the teachers and you got to figure out that
10m39s: disconnect, I still can't understand why teachers are showing up at a public
10m44s: board meeting asking their bosses, why are we doing this?
10m47s: Like that the internal communication isn't better.
10m49s: And I don't know not faulting you or them.
10m51s: I just it's a strange thing to me.
10m53s: You know, it always feels like, you know, we're a privately owned family company,
10m58s: right? And it would be like us making business and then having a meeting
11m2s: for the public and our own employees showing up going, what's going on?
11m5s: Not a good look, right? Right.
11m7s: No, it's it's a look that I think Dr.
11m9s: Clark's working on very diligently to try to try to.
11m14s: I don't think it's easy, by the way.
11m15s: I know it's not.
11m16s: So I just think if everybody kind of took this approach of like, how do we?
11m20s: This is a disaster.
11m22s: This is an emergency.
11m23s: How do we get all hands on deck, roll up the sleeves and do the best by these kids?
11m27s: I think if you start every conversation with what's best for these kids,
11m31s: public education would be a way better place today.
11m34s: Brian, you make the same comment that I made in the board meeting last night.
11m38s: We all need to get in the boat and row in the same direction.
11m40s: Yeah, for the kids for the kids.
11m43s: That's right. All right.
11m44s: So are you worried about other structures?
11m46s: I mean, I don't know the age of all the buildings.

11m49s: But I mean, this I asked you about it last time you were here, this 10 year
11m52s: thing seems incredibly weird to me when you're talking about 80, 90, 100
11m57s: year old buildings, right?
11m60s: You said after we get through this, there will be some sort of plan.
12m3s: How do you people who have concerns about sending their kids to an older
12m7s: building this fall, what can you do to make sure that they know that it's safe?
12m13s: Well, we're this year is our year for our health life safety checks anyway.
12m17s: And we've already had our notification from the Regional Office of Education.
12m22s: So that's going to happen no matter what.
12m24s: But we are also going to do in debt studies, just like we did for both campuses
12m29s: throughout the district, just because we want to know.
12m32s: Yeah, but it turns out after that in-depth study, there was a lot of
12m36s: pre-knowledge of problems.
12m38s: So it goes back to the health life safety.
12m41s: So when you get that, they'll say, and I'm making this totally up.
12m44s: The young man mentioned something about a one inch gap or something
12m49s: in a stairwell, then you go and you repair that.
12m52s: That's what health life safety tells you to do.
12m54s: And then you have to report that something's been done.
12m57s: Now, I don't know what actually was out there in 2013 when they were last
13m2s: here, but you do have to have a plan to have it done by a certain date.
13m6s: And it's not always a month.
13m8s: It may be a year.
13m9s: It could be five years.
13m11s: It could be the next 10 years.
13m13s: All right.
13m13s: How you said lack of parental involvement last night surprised you a little bit.
13m19s: Were they there and not just didn't get up to speak?
13m22s: Or what did the audience look like?
13m25s: Some were there.
13m26s: Some parents were there.
13m27s: We had community members there, union leadership, and of course, staff.
13m32s: Were there.
13m33s: OK, but as you're sitting up there, you know, you asked these people to vote
13m37s: for you a little different than Dr. Clark.
13m39s: You know, she's been given this job.
13m41s: She's it's her job to do her job to run.
13m44s: You guys have basically one employee.
13m47s: That's right. And that's Dr. Clark.
13m49s: But as an elected official, were you surprised by the lack of attendance
13m52s: of parents or families?
13m54s: Yeah, I'd sure like to see more parents get involved.
13m56s: And I think one of the things we're going to try to do is get more electronically
14m1s: involved and so that people can respond via whatever is Facebook,
14m5s: the the website, all those kinds of things.
14m8s: Because younger, the younger demographic, and I'm talking maybe under 40
14m12s: at this point in time, that's the way we we interact today.
14m16s: And you're going to get more participation.
14m18s: That's 20 year old technology you're talking about.
14m21s: Well, it is. But that's the way we interact.
14m23s: I know. But that's the bureaucracy part of all this with large and part of it.
14m28s: You can't escape because it's just size and scope.
14m32s: You know, people will say, and I know they said, you know, run it like a business.
14m35s: It's never going to be a business.
14m36s: There are more efficient ways to run it.
14m38s: There's more efficient ways to communicate.
14m40s: And I would suggest to you that I've suggested to Dr.
14m42s: Clark and to anybody that will listen, you got to quit reacting
14m46s: and start getting proactive about what you're doing in this community
14m49s: because you can't just run from dumpster fire to dumpster fire
14m52s: and then expect people to understand your narrative. Right.
14m54s: I mean, that's but yes, I think a more efficient way of channeling
14m58s: you know, to communicate to people where they are. Absolutely.
15m2s: Yeah, I think we need to use all those methods of communication
15m6s: to get our parents engaged.
15m9s: It's one thing to have our employees engaged, right?
15m12s: Our teachers engaged and they were engaged.
15m14s: They were the biggest part of the audience last night by far.
15m16s: And that shows you they care.
15m18s: But I just still wonder about that disconnect.
15m20s: You know, and I with Dr.
15m22s: Clark and I've had this conversation publicly and privately, you know,
15m25s: building to building and they feel underwater and you understand.
15m28s: I mean, public education is not easy today.
15m30s: If it ever was, it's certainly harder today than it used to be.

15m34s: But there's no question about that, Brian.
15m35s: I think we we operate in a different environment today than we operated
15m40s: 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 30 years ago.
15m42s: So and we have to adapt to those.
15m44s: And one of the things that has been a revelation to me is
15m49s: more and more how difficult this large organization is to move.
15m54s: It takes a while to move it.
15m56s: But we all need to get on that same page and sing out the same sheet of music.
16m0s: All right, we're getting the boat in row.
16m2s: You follow those today.
16m3s: I got to tell you those parents just want to know the kids are safe
16m6s: and they're getting education. Yes.
16m7s: And they'll get the I mean, everybody.
16m10s: And I don't mean this towards the staff.
16m11s: I'm I understand their job is incredibly hard.
16m14s: But it's amazing how quick people will adapt.
16m16s: You get into a new building.
16m17s: It's still the same kids.
16m18s: It's still the same thing and people will adjust.
16m21s: We don't like doing it.
16m22s: But once we do it, we're pretty good at it as human beings.
16m25s: It's just that upfront part, you know, you know, we've got, you know,
16m29s: five interns working for this this summer through the DC Li Leadership Institute.
16m34s: And I was telling them the other day, you know, if you start your life out,
16m38s: realizing that change is inevitable, that it no matter how much you hate it,
16m43s: if you lean into it, you're jumpstarting about 85 percent of the people
16m47s: just by having that knowledge. Yes.
16m50s: Hey, you know, they used to talk about you'll change jobs three or four times
16m53s: in your career. Now it's you'll change not jobs, careers several times.
16m59s: All right. Well, listen, keep us posted.
17m1s: You're welcome any time as our, you know, the educators, teachers, unions,
17m5s: whatever you guys want to do to talk about it.
17m7s: But this is the plan moving forward.
17m9s: You're going to be at Garfield and then the seventh and eighth
17m11s: graders are going to be at Steven Decatur and you feel comfortable at this point.
17m15s: Not that there may not have to be an adjustment here or there,
17m17s: but you'll be able to do what you need to do as educators.
17m20s: Yes, we'll be able to get my babies in school.
17m22s: And then we'll start looking on longterm plans.
17m25s: All right, Dr. Clark, Bill, we appreciate it. Thank you.
17m28s: You've been listening to the New Hof Media Podcast Network.
17m31s: For more, visit NewHoffMedia.com.