

**Pierce High School District #2**  
**Monday, July 20, 2026**  
**Board of Education Retreat**

**Call to Order**

The Pierce Public School Board of Education met for a board of education retreat at 7:00 pm in the library at the Pierce Elementary School. Members present were Dan Unseld, Ryan Collison, Lisa Freeman, Stefanie Dvorak, Adam Venteicher and Todd Wragge. Three guests in attendance along with two CWP architects and principle Trent Suehl.

Notice of the meeting was printed in the Pierce County Leader and posted on Pierce Public Schools website.

A welcome was extended to the public, the open meetings act pointed out, and roll call taken.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Communication and correspondence from the Public**

There were no communication from the public.

**Discussion Items**

**Elementary Building Project Update**

The Board of Education received an update on the elementary school building project from CWP Architects.

CWP is continuing to work with Hausmann Construction on the project's structural design. One proposed change is rotating the gymnasium, which could improve site drainage and provide better visibility of the parking lot from the school office; therefore, increasing safety for our students and staff.

Since the bond issue was approved, CWP has met with elementary staff to discuss possible updates to the original design. Some classroom layouts have been reconfigured to better meet staff and student needs.

The district is also working with the city on several infrastructure items, including the requirements for the storm shelter and the installation of new fire suppression lines. A water flow test will be completed to ensure there is adequate water pressure for the fire protection system.

Board members reviewed the updated floor plans, as well as proposed interior and exterior design concepts. The overall design goal is to create a school that is durable, cost-effective, modern in appearance, and reflects the Bluejay identity.

CWP is continuing to gather input from staff on a few remaining design decisions, including the type of flooring to use in the sensory room and whether the special education classroom should have luxury vinyl tile (LVT) throughout.

The architects reported that the project remains on budget based on the current plans.

A geotechnical study is scheduled to begin this week to evaluate soil conditions at the building site.

The current project timeline calls for bidding the project by the end of the year to secure 2026 pricing. Hausmann Construction anticipates beginning construction in the spring, with the goal of completing the new elementary school by the 2028/2029 school year.

### **Budget Planning Discussion**

The Board of Education discussed questions that were raised at last week's regular meeting about the voting process required under Nebraska's LB 243 school funding law. The superintendent explained that there are two separate votes involved. The first vote is whether to allow the district to increase its allowable "base growth" by up to 6%. Approving this vote does not automatically mean the district will use the full 6%. It simply gives the board the option to use anywhere from 0% to 6% when preparing the budget. The second vote is to approve the district's budgets, including the amount of the base growth increase that will actually be used in the General Fund and Special Building Fund. The superintendent explained that approving the option to increase base growth is important because any unused growth can affect the district's future funding calculations under LB 243. If the board does not approve the additional base growth, that opportunity cannot be recovered in future years. Nebraska law allows school boards to approve an additional base growth percentage, subject to the requirements in LB 243.

The board reviewed a Property Tax Authority Certification spreadsheet. Based on current estimates, the district could increase its property tax authority by approximately \$21,000 under the standard 3% growth allowance. If the additional 6% base growth is approved, the district could have approximately \$727,000 in additional property tax authority.

The board also reviewed estimated budget figures for the upcoming projects needed within the high school. The superintendent reminded the board that a large portion of the district's cash reserves has already been committed to future facility projects, including approximately \$1.2 million for the district's window and door replacement project. Additional funds will also be needed for future high school renovations that will be completed alongside the elementary building project. Board members also reviewed a list of possible future building improvements. The superintendent noted that the cost estimates are several years old and were originally developed as part of a larger construction project. He explained that construction costs have increased over time, using the window and door project as an example. That project was originally estimated at about \$900,000 but is now expected to cost approximately \$1.2 million.

The superintendent also discussed how LB 243 calculates future property tax authority. Because each year's calculation builds on the previous year's amount, he believes using the full additional 6% base growth would place the district in the strongest financial position for future years. He also shared concerns that the Nebraska Legislature could change the school funding formula in the future. He noted that a proposal to place stricter limits on school revenue growth was introduced during the 2026 legislative session but did not advance, and that the Education Futures Fund is projected to face financial challenges in the coming years if additional state funding is not provided. Because of these uncertainties, the superintendent said he believes it is important to position the district as strongly as possible under the current law.

The superintendent asked the board for its thoughts and direction as budget planning continues. Discussion was had amongst the board members regarding the two step process of this vote. For the August Regular Board Meeting, the board will vote on whether to allow the district to increase its allowable "base growth" by up to 6%. After this meeting, another board retreat will be held to discuss the budget and the projected projects that need to be completed. Once this retreat is complete, in the September Regular Board Meeting, the board will vote will be to approve the district's budgets, including the amount of the base growth increase that will actually be used in the General Fund and Special Building Fund.

### **Adjournment**

Wragge moved and Collison seconded to adjourn. Voting unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 9:09 pm.

Stefanie Dvorak, Secretary

Pierce Public Schools

Board of Education, District 2; Pierce, NE 68767