Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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The Gallup McKinley County Schools Board of Education recently held a special meeting to discuss and take action on possibly rebranding the school district.

A number of community members and city officials were present at the May 7 special meeting to voice their thoughts on the matter.

Mayor Jackie McKinney was the first to speak, and said the city and the school district have to work together for the benefit of the students.

He and Dist. 4 Councilor Fran Palochak spoke in favor of keeping the name the way it is.

He added that it is already difficult to work with the state when New Mexico is at the bottom of national rankings in nearly every category in education.

"If we start dividing ourselves, it shows we're not united on issues," he said. "The new governor is committed to working with schools and students. Let's be who we are."

The floor was opened to public comment, and several issues were brought up about the potential renaming of the district.

The school board was asked why they were seemingly rushing into a decision like renaming the school, and that they were not being fully considerate of schools, students, and families in rural communities.

Georgianna Desiderio, vice-president of the Indian Education Committee, asked why the board felt a name change was necessary, and whether it was for political or monetary reasons.

"The board is lacking in certain areas [of resource management], so a name change should not be at [the] top of their list," she said. "If we're here for our children, put [your] money where your mouth is."

Other comments emphasized the use of funds on a name change and not on supplies and programs that would benefit the students.

One such comment was made by Rebekah Nez, IEC treasurer. She said that a name change would not be worth the price, and that the real change has to be made to the staff's behavior towards the students.

"Spend the money on our students," she said. "They're the reason why you're up here."

Dist. 1 member Kevin Mitchell said that the name change would be a part of the logo change, which was already approved at a previous board meeting. He added that the funding is already

in place, and that it would not be a great additional cost.

Jvanna Hanks, assistant superintendent of business services, said the potential rebranding and redesign of district vehicles like school buses would be approximately $3,000.

The renaming portion of the logo design would come from operational funding, according to Hanks.

The district has an operational budget of about $120 million for next year, and the potential total for the whole renaming process is about $20,000, according to Hanks.

The survey results, which, when tallied, came to about 2,045 votes, showed that the majority of the participants did not want the name changed.

However, the opportunity to move forward with those results was not without opposition.

Mitchell and Dist. 3 member Priscilla Manuelito felt that more time to reach out to rural communities would have provided the most representative results.

However, Board Vice President Chris Mortensen said that the board had already taken enough time and gotten more feedback than expected in making the decision to potentially rename the school.

Reaching out to rural areas like Crownpoint is important to establishing a feeling of community, Manuelito said. She spoke about talking with students from Crownpoint and finding that they were not fully aware they were technically part of GMCS.

"Gallup is a crucial place for the community," she said. "I would never want to divide the

community."

Despite the objections, the decision to stay with the name "Gallup McKinley County Schools" passed with a 3-2 vote.

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