

SB 1525-8

Background re: Days Creek School District

Days Creek School District continues to work toward extracting itself from the large deficit in cash discovered by the current superintendent, Mindy Porter, and the Douglas ESD. The amount of money this small district requires in the form of a loan is not large, but without it the district will close within the next 30 – 45 days. Banks have been unwilling to loan the district money.

In a letter to the editor from January 30th, the former superintendent publicly took responsibility for not initiating spending reductions more than two years ago. The former business manager built a budget that anticipated an enrollment larger than was reasonable in an effort to balance the budget. The former superintendent retired in June and the former business manager was relieved of duties in November, and was subsequently terminated, once gross neglect and incompetence were uncovered. Fiscal services for the district are now conducted by Douglas ESD.

Since November, Douglas ESD has been working with the superintendent and the Days Creek School Board to reduce expenses, re-align programs, and communicate the seriousness of the situation to the staff and community. To date, the district has renegotiated its classified and certified labor contracts, resulting in a reduction of salaries and workdays. Non-payroll expenditures have also been reduced significantly.

The former business manager was not current in payments to OEGB and PERS and those accounts have been brought up to date.

The Days Creek and Tiller communities that encompass the school district have been engaged throughout this time of turmoil and continue to seek to help the district through fund-raisers and the establishment of a committee to seek outside funding sources. To date, these attempts have been valiant but have resulted in minimal success.

The district plans to issue a RFP for food and bussing services from the private sector with the hope that improved services and accountability will reduce costs. The district continues to work closely with the ESD to identify further savings by contracting for Information Technology and Special Education.

The district and community are discussing the consolidation of two buildings, 17 miles away from one another, into one campus in the community of Days Creek. They are also considering a local option levy.

Still, the Days Creek School District lacks finances to complete the entire school year. The district requires a loan to continue operation this year until further adjustments can be made to stabilize the district.