



MEMORANDUM

To: Representative Del Mcomie, Co-Chair, Joint Education Committee
Senator Hank Coe, Co-Chair, Joint Education Committee

From: Lawrence O. Picus

RE: Consideration of a Hybrid Model for Groundskeepers in the Wyoming School Funding Model

Date: January 15, 2008

This memo is a follow-up to our groundskeeper memo of November 20, 2007 and reflects consideration of the issues you asked to review following the December 5 and 6 meeting of the JEC.

Background

In our November 20, 2007 memo, we described some potential inefficiencies in the current formula for providing school districts with staff for groundskeepers. We suggested that the variation in groundskeeper staffing seemed to be based on factors that had little to do with supporting an adequate education at school sites. We posed three options to the committee as follows:

1. Do nothing at present and wait for recalibration
2. Limit the acreage used to estimate the FTE groundskeepers in the model to the standards established by the School Facilities Commission for operating schools. These standards provide a minimum number of acres for a school site (which varies depending on the type of school) and increases the facility acreage as enrollment capacity increases. Groundskeepers would be provided for other district facilities, but not for vacant land and unused school sites.
3. Develop a "hybrid" model that provides some groundskeeper resources for vacant land and unused facilities, but at a rate substantially lower than used to generate groundskeeper FTEs for operating schools. A related question would then be which rate to use to support groundskeepers at other district sites (offices, transportation facilities, warehouses and maintenance and operations yards).

It was our recommendation that the state enact option 2 which we believe would provide a fair and cost based distribution of groundskeeper resources to the state's 48 school districts. During

the meeting, the committee asked us to look further at a hybrid model. The balance of this memo discusses implementation of a hybrid model for allocation of groundskeeper resources.

Discussion

The recommendation we made to the JEC was that legislation and WDE regulations be established to implement the following actions related to the computation of groundskeepers in the model:

- Acreage computations used to generate FTE groundskeepers for open schools are limited to the SFC allowable acreage for schools, or the actual school acreage, whichever is less. This is the same logic as used for custodians and maintenance workers.
- For schools with multiple levels (i.e. elementary, middle, and/or high schools on one school site), the acreage will be based on the highest level as is currently done for custodians and maintenance workers.
- Closed or mothballed schools would be resourced at 10% of what they would generate if they were opened – the same logic as used for major maintenance funding by the SFC.
- District office buildings would be the only other sites that generate groundskeeper resources, and only if the office is not co-located with a school building.
- No other sites will be resourced with groundskeepers.

The JEC amended this recommendation to also provide groundskeepers for district sites acquired prior to July 1, 1997, if waived by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. We were asked to look further at a hybrid model.

The difficulty with developing a hybrid model is the paucity of research on the costs of providing groundskeeper services to non-school facilities, and the inability of the School Facility Commission data to provide consistent identification of different types of facilities and their use. This is not a criticism of the SFC data, rather recognition of the many different organizational approaches used by school districts in Wyoming and the complexity of categorizing them accurately. In fact, the SFC data are among the most detailed and extensive of any state in the country.

As a result of the lack of clear data today, it is our recommendation that the JEC continue with our second option with the modifications they proposed in December. While a hybrid approach has certain desirable characteristics, the research base to develop a cost-based formula is weak, and the SFC data at this point make it hard to identify how non-school site facilities are used. While this issue probably should be revisited during recalibration, for now, we are confident that the proposal we made in December is adequate to fund schools until that time.