

Hearing held on USD 115 land transfer petition

(KMZA)-It was standing room only for a public hearing Friday by the Kansas Department of Education on USD 115 Nemaha Central's petition to transfer land in the former Bern school area from Prairie Hills USD 113 to USD 115.

Scott Gordon, KSDE General Counsel, presided over the around 4 hour hearing at the Bern Community Center.

The USD 115 Board of Education approved a resolution last month authorizing the petition after failed mediation efforts between the two sides. The petition asks to transfer about 81 square miles of USD 113 territory.

According to information presented at the hearing, 68 students in the petitioned area are enrolled this school year in USD 115, while 21 students in the area are attending USD 113.

Following presentations by representatives of both districts, those attending were given 3-minutes each to provide their own comments.

A large number of patrons spoke both in support and in opposition to the petition.

Those in support of the petition said those who chose to send their children to Nemaha Central following the closing of the Bern school in 2012 deserve to have their land follow, run for the school board and have a vote on issues in the school district that their kids attend. Those in opposition to the petition voiced concern about the precedent it would set and questioned the timing of the petition.

Gordon said he will be taking written testimony from district patrons until April 15. It can be emailed to 113landtransfer@ksde.org. It can also be mailed to the Kansas State Department of Education, office of General Counsel, 900 West Jackson Street, Topeka, Kansas, 66612.

Gordon is to issue a written report with his recommendation to the State Board within 90 days. The board will then vote on the petition at a regular meeting.

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