

STATE OF MINNESOTA
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

FOR THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND
LEARNING

In the Matter of the Proposed
Consolidation of Independent School FINDINGS OF FACT,
District #324 (Jackson) and Independent CONCLUSIONS OF LAW,
School District #325 (Lakefield) AND RECOMMENDATION

The above-entitled matter came on for public hearing before Administrative Law Judge, Jan Craig Nelson, (hereinafter "ALJ") at 5:00 p.m. on December 9, 1996, at the Jackson Middle School Auditorium, 405 Fifth Street, Jackson, Minnesota 56143. The record in this matter closed on December 9, 1996 at the conclusion of the public hearing.

Kevin J. Rupp, Attorney at Law, 300 Peavey Building, 730 Second Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402 appeared on behalf of Independent School District #324 (hereinafter "Jackson") and Independent School District #325 (hereinafter "Lakefield"). The following school officials all testified in support of the proposed consolidation: Gery Arndt, Lakefield Superintendent of Schools, 440 Main Street, P.O. Box 338, Lakefield, Minnesota 56150; Dr. John Beardsley, Chairman of the Lakefield School Board, 701 Douglas, P.O. Box 1148, Lakefield, Minnesota 56150; Kent Baldry, Jackson Superintendent of Schools, 1128 North Highway, Jackson, Minnesota 56143; Richard Johnson, Chairman of the Jackson School Board, 901 Sherman Street, Jackson, Minnesota 56143; Mark Titus, Clerk of the Jackson School Board, 125 Circle Drive, Jackson, Minnesota 56143; and Randy Baker, Route 3, Lakefield, Minnesota 56150, a representative of the Lakefield School District Staff.

The following residents of the Lakefield School District testified in opposition to the proposed consolidation: Larry Oelke, Route 2, Box 41, Heron Lake, Minnesota 56137; Jean Oelke, Route 2, Box 41, Heron Lake, Minnesota 56137; Elizabeth Zellar, 309 Funk Avenue, Lakefield, Minnesota 56150; and Mike Handzus, Route 2, Lakefield, Minnesota 56150.

The following residents of the Lakefield School District testified in support of the proposed consolidation: Bill Rost, Route 2, Box 67, Lakefield, Minnesota 56150; Steve Foster, 309 Park Street, Jackson, Minnesota 56143; Jim Nesseth, 507 Milwaukee, Lakefield, Minnesota 56150; Paul Rentschler, Route 3, Box 127, Lakefield, Minnesota 56150; Kathy Condon, 101 Margaret Avenue, Box 308, Lakefield, Minnesota 56150; Gail Prochaska, 720 Walter Street, Lakefield, Minnesota 56150; Larry Miller, Route 1, Box 68,

Lakefield, Minnesota 56150; John Nauwerth, Route 2, Box 21, Lakefield, Minnesota 56150; and Laurie Rossow, Route 1, Lakefield, Minnesota 56150.

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

The issue in this case is whether the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning (hereinafter "Commissioner"), should approve, modify or reject the proposed plat and also whether the Commissioner shall approve or reject any proposal contained in the petition regarding the disposition of the bonded debt of the component districts pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 122.23, subd. 6.

Based upon all of the files, records and proceedings herein, the Administrative Law Judge makes the following:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. In February of 1996, the Jackson and Lakefield Boards of Education voted to proceed to consolidate their two districts into a single district. The time line agreed upon by the two boards would have consolidated the districts into a single district on July 1, 1997. (Ex. 2)

2. On or about March 5, 1996, Luther F. Glaser, Jackson County Auditor, submitted the application for approval of plat of consolidation to the Commissioner pursuant to the requirements set forth in Minnesota Statutes § 122.23. (Ex. 2)

3. Upon receipt of the plat and resolutions of the respective districts, the Commissioner approved the plat and approved the proposal contained in the resolution regarding the disposition of the bonded debt of the component districts, and the matter was scheduled for a special election on September 10, 1996.

4. On or about September 20, 1996, the Jackson County Auditor notified the Commissioner of the results of the special election for the proposed consolidation of the Jackson and Lakefield School Districts. The voters in the Jackson School District approved the proposed consolidation with 1,213 voting for the consolidation and 316 voting against the consolidation. The voters in the Lakefield School District defeated the proposed consolidation with 595 voters voting for consolidation and 628 voters voting against consolidation. (Ex. 1)

5. After learning of the defeat of the proposed consolidation, the Lakefield School Board scheduled a special referendum to authorize a tax levy of \$333,000.00 a year for the next five years to provide additional operating capital for the Lakefield District. The special referendum was held on November 5, 1996, and failed with 445 voting in favor of the tax levy and 1,028 voting against the tax levy. (Ex. 22)

6. In October, 1996, the Jackson County Auditor received a petition signed by at least 50 voters resident in the area proposed for consolidation, seeking the proposed

consolidation of Independent School District #325 of Lakefield and Independent School District #324 of Jackson. Upon receipt of the petition, the County Auditor of Jackson County prepared a plat showing:

- (a) The boundaries of the proposed district as determined by the County Auditor and present district boundaries;**
- (b) The location of school buildings in the area proposed as a new district and the location of school buildings in adjoining districts;**
- (c) The boundaries of any proposed separate election districts; and**
- (d) Other pertinent information as determined by the County Auditor. (Ex. 3)**

7. A supporting statement was prepared by the Jackson County Auditor which contained:

- (a) The adjusted net tax capacity of property in the proposed district;**
- (b) The adjusted net tax capacity of the property and the approximate number of pupils residing in the Lakefield School District, and the adjusted net tax capacity of the property and the approximate number of pupils residing in the Jackson School District shown separately;**
- (c) The reasons for the proposed consolidation:**
 - "That the consolidation would improve the quality of education for the students by offering a broader curriculum, supporting a wider variety of activities and better utilization of the present buildings and still maintain a good working pupil-teacher relationship";**
- (d) A statement that no proceedings are pending to dissolve any district involved in the plat unless all of the district is to be dissolved and all of each district to which attachment is proposed is included in the plat;**
- (e) A statement that the jurisdictional fact requirement of Minnesota Statutes § 122.23, subd. 1 is met by the proposal;**
- (f) A statement that the proposal regarding the disposition of the bonded debt and outstanding energy loans is set forth in the petition for the proposed consolidation;**
- (g) The signature of the County Auditor. (Ex. 3)**

8. The petition to the Commissioner submitted by the citizens in October, is identical to the resolutions passed by the two school boards in February. The current plat and plan for

consolidation prepared by the Jackson County Auditor is virtually identical to the plat and plan prepared by the Auditor in February.
(Ex's 2 & 3)

9. On or about October 15, 1996, the Jackson County Auditor submitted for the Commissioners' consideration and action, the proposed plat for consolidation, and information relating to the petition presented to him on October 11, 1996 requesting proposed consolidation of School District #325 of Jackson County and School District #324, part in Jackson County and part in Martin County. The letter of transmittal to the Commissioner indicated that separate plats and supporting statements were prepared for the Auditor of each County in which any part of the proposed district is situated; that both plat and information are correct according to the best of the Auditor's knowledge and belief; and that the major portion of the above territory lies within the boundaries of Jackson County. (Ex. 3)

10. On or about October 23, 1996, the Commissioner sent a letter to the Jackson County Auditor, informing him that he had reviewed and approved the plat and supporting statement for the proposed consolidation of Independent School District #324 (Jackson) and Independent School District #325 (Lakefield). (Ex. 9)

11. On or about November 7, 1996, the Commissioner received notification from one of the petitioners for the consolidation as to a clerical error contained in Paragraph 3 of the petition dealing with Bonded Debt. The statutory cite in that paragraph referred to Minnesota Statutes § 122.23, subd. 16(a). The correct reference should have been to Minnesota Statutes § 122.23, subd. 16(c) to be consistent with the language of the paragraph. (Ex. 5)

12. On November 27, 1996, the Commissioner notified the petitioner that the correction from Minn. Stat. § 122.23, Subd. 16(a) to § 122.23, Subd. 16(c) had been made, in as much as the language in the petition was taken from Subd. 16(c). (Ex. 6)

13. On or about November 11, 1996, at least 20 resident voters living within the area proposed for consolidation petitioned the Commissioner for a public hearing pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 122.23, subd. 6. (Ex. 4)

14. On or about November 13, 1996, the Secretary of State's Office notified the Superintendent of the Jackson Public Schools that the planned method of reducing the size of the combined school board from the consolidation of the Jackson and Lakefield School Districts to a final size of seven members meets the requirements of Minnesota Election Law. (Ex. 7)

15. In response to the petition seeking a public hearing on the proposed consolidation of the Jackson and Lakefield School Districts, the Commissioner issued a notice of special hearing, scheduling a public hearing for Monday, December 9, 1996 at 5:00 p.m. and continuing until all who wish to testify have been heard at the auditorium of the Jackson Middle School, 405 Fifth Street, Jackson, Minnesota 56143. (Ex. 8) Notice of this hearing was provided to all Lakefield and Jackson School District residents by mail on December 4, 1996. (Ex. 20) The hearing was also publicized in the Jackson County Pilot. (Ex. 12)

16. On December 9, 1996, the Commissioner signed and filed a delegation of authority with the Secretary of State's Office, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 15.06, subd. 6, delegating authority to the Administrative Law Judge to conduct the public hearing pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 122.23, subd. 6 regarding the plat and plan for consolidation of Independent School District #324 (Jackson) and Independent School District #325 (Lakefield). (Ex. 11)

17. A fiscal impact study was completed for the Jackson and Lakefield School Districts on or about June 10, 1996 by Springsted Inc., 83 East Seventh Place, Suite 100, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101, to study several questions concerning the consolidation of the school districts. This fiscal impact study had been completed in anticipation of the proposed consolidation then being considered by the Jackson and Lakefield School Boards (Ex. 10)

18. Jackson School District's population has declined over the past 15 years: 6,425 residents in 1980, compared to 5,454 in 1995. Lakefield School District's population has also declined over the past 15 years: 3,241 in 1980, compared to 2,770 in 1995. (Ex. 17)

19. The Jackson School District contains 234.8 square miles, and the Lakefield School District contains 134.0 square miles. (Ex. 17)

20. Both Jackson and Lakefield school districts have experienced declining enrollments over the past several years. Jackson enrollment has declined from 1,534 students in 1971-72 to 1,029 in 1996-97. Lakefield enrollment has declined from 588 students in 1978-79 to 440 in 1996-97. (Ex. 18)

21. Lakefield School district projects that its student enrollment will continue to decline over the next 4 years to 429 students in the 1999-2000 school year. Jackson School district projects that its student enrollment will continue to decline over the next 4 years to 959 students in the 1999-2000 school year. (Ex. 18)

22. Lakefield School district's Kindergarten enrollment is projected to decline from 32 in 1996-97 to 15 in 1999-2000. Jackson School district's Kindergarten enrollment is projected to decline from 65 in 1996-97 to 58 in 1999-2000. (Ex. 18)

23. School Districts who consolidate receive additional revenue from the State of Minnesota to help defray the cost of the consolidation. These dollars can be used for items such as new athletic uniforms and signage, as well as general operating expenses. This funding amounts to \$200 per student in the first year and \$100 per student in the second year. Projected revenue to a consolidated Lakefield-Jackson school district would be \$348,900 in the first year and \$174,450 in the second year, for a total of \$523,350 over the two years. (Ex. 18)

24. Combined tax rates for Revenue and Debt in both Lakefield and Jackson school districts as they are now constituted, are projected to drop if the two schools consolidate: initially a small amount and then substantially once the Jackson High School is paid off in February of 2000. (Ex's 10, 17, 18, 19 & 20)

25. Lakefield School district's combined tax rate would drop from 44.23 to 43.56 for the first three years. The fourth year it is projected to drop to 35.13. Jackson School district's combined tax rate would drop from 47.54 to 43.56 for the first three years. The fourth year it would drop to 35.13 as well. (Ex's 10, 17, 18, 19, & 20)

26. Lakefield's High School was built in 1935 with additions in 1952, 1964, and 1981 and contains 57,816 square feet. It has a capacity of 285 with a current enrollment of 168 and therefore has a 59% utilization. Lakefield's elementary school was built in 1957 and has 31,450 square feet. It has a capacity of 250 with a current enrollment of 200 and therefore has a 80% utilization. (Ex. 19)

27. Jackson's High School was built in 1981 and contains 110,905 square feet. It has a capacity of 500 with a current enrollment of 344 and therefore has a 68% utilization. Jackson's Middle school was built in 1938-62 and has 112,773 square feet. It has a capacity of 315 with a current enrollment of 243 and therefore has a 77% utilization. Jackson's Elementary school was built in 1951-58 and has 72,544 square feet. It has a capacity of 530 with a current enrollment of 479 and therefore has a 90% utilization. (Ex. 19)

28. If the two districts are consolidated, the combined Lakefield-Jackson School district does not plan to close any buildings. Both communities would maintain their existing elementary schools through grade 5. All students in grades 6-8 would attend middle school at the current Lakefield High School facility. All students in grades 9-12 would attend High School at the current Jackson High School facility. (Ex. 20)

29. Jackson School District's Debt service which would be assumed and paid by the combined district if the schools consolidate, currently consists of:

(a) Long Term Bonds (issued in 1981 to build a new High School) with annual payments as follows: 1998 - \$332,518; 1999 - \$314,249; and 2000 - \$301,490;

(b) Capital Lease with annual payments as follows: 1998 - \$77,977; 1999- \$77,977; and thereafter \$474,361;

(c) Energy Loans with annual payments as follows: 1998 - \$54,804; 1999 - 53,913; and thereafter \$145,845.

(Ex. 10)

30. Lakefield School District's Debt service currently consists of Energy Loans which are projected to be paid off by the district prior to the date of consolidation. (Ex. 10)

31. K-12 education is financed through a combination of revenue sources, such as state aid, local levy, and the levy referendum. The majority of school district revenue is determined annually by statutory funding formulas. The total revenue allowed by these formulas is then allocated between taxes and state aids. Any shift in the tax allocation percent is offset by a corresponding change in state aids. (Ex. 10)

32. The State of Minnesota's funding formula takes into account enrollment in the district, which is weighted to produce total pupil units (WADM-weighted average daily membership). The WADM's are multiplied by the foundation aid allocated for each WADM by the stat legislature to produce the maximum amount of general fund expenditures allowed. If a district's voters have passed a levy referendum, additional funds may be collected and spent in the district. (Ex. 10)

33. The state aid portion of the revenue provided to a school district can fluctuate depending on the district's Adjusted Net Tax Capacity (ANTC). The ANTC is the value of the property which is multiplied by the tax rate to produce revenue. Districts which have greater property wealth will receive less funding from the state, while low property wealth districts will gain a greater share of their funding from the state. (Ex. 10)

34. Both the Jackson and Lakefield School District's are projecting a continued reduction of state funding (4%) through Fiscal Year (hereafter "FY") 1999. Weighted Average Daily Membership for secondary students is scheduled to reduce from 1.3 to 1.25 for FY 1998, and to 1.20 for FY 1999. (Ex. 19)

35. The Lakefield School District is currently operating with a continuing referendum of approximately \$34,875 per year, and a 5 year referendum due to end in 1996 of \$162,612. The Lakefield school officials have projected what will happen to the general fund when the present referendum ends. The figures reflect a drop in Pupil Units and a 3% increase per year in expenditures:

<u>Date</u>	<u>General Fund Balance</u>
6-30-95	\$ 316,006
6-30-96	297,983
6-30-97	211,401
6-30-98	164,303
6-30-99	(90,151)
	(less \$200,000 referendum)
6-30-2000	(622,442)
6-30-2001	(1,263,914)

These numbers assume no adjustments, no cuts and assumes no 5 year referendum dollars. (Ex. 21)

36. Because the special funding referendum failed in October, if there is no consolidation, Lakefield school officials will have to initiate massive cuts in order to balance the budget, including but not limited to the following cuts: Cut Elementary Teachers to 1 per grade level; Cut all Agriculture classes; Cut all athletic programs; Cut all Band, Chorus and Music classes; Cut all extra curricular activities; Cut Art; Cut foreign languages. These cuts would save the Lakefield School District approximately \$400,000.00. Because of these cuts, it is anticipated that many students may exercise their options under

open enrollment and leave the district to attend school elsewhere, where their educational needs can better be met, thus compounding the problems of declining enrollments.

37. Students at Lakefield-Heron Lake-Okabena are already experiencing problems obtaining the classes they need. In one case, a student has only been able to obtain 3 classes out of 7 class periods in a day, with 4 resulting study halls. This student has checked into the classes she needs in another district under open enrollment, and is able to get all of the classes she needs there. (Ex. 24)

38. The Boards of Education for both the Jackson and Lakefield School Districts support the proposed consolidation as the best long term solution to educating the students in both districts. They believe that consolidating will improve the educational opportunities for students, provide a greater service for the money spent, and utilize the buildings and staff in a cost efficient manner.

39. Consolidating the two districts will offer students a greater variety of classes. Lakefield currently offers 120 different semester classes, while Jackson offers 104 different semester classes. The proposed consolidation would result in offering 154 different classes - a 28% increase for Lakefield and a 48% increase in choices for Jackson. Students in some cases will have the opportunity to choose from more than one teacher in a department or subject matter, and the combined District will be able to offer more electives and advanced courses. (Ex's 19 & 20)

40. By consolidating the two existing districts, some savings will be realized by: eliminating one of the Superintendent positions; eliminating one of the boards; utilizing one business office; Reducing Coach/advisor salaries, travel costs and game management in athletics; payment of dues and memberships; and Licenses for items such as software and ITV. These anticipated savings are projected to be \$143,000.00 the first two years. (Ex. 19)

41. Opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities will be enhanced if the two districts consolidate. The consolidated district will be able to offer some new activities such as dance line, tennis, and/or swimming. Although Fine Arts offerings are not expected to increase, there will be more opportunity for participation at lower grade levels. Sporting events will be offered at the seventh, eighth, ninth, & tenth grade levels, as well as junior varsity, B-squad, and varsity. Jackson and Lakefield currently are paired in two sports programs: Wrestling and gymnastics. In addition, the combined district may be able to offer intramurals in sports like volleyball, basketball, and softball. (Ex. 19)

42. Lakefield has been paired with Heron Lake-Okabena for the past 10 years. The Lakefield school board has notified the Heron Lake-Okabena School board that it intends to terminate its pairing arrangement with them at the end of the 1996-97 school year. (Ex. 22)

43. The Jackson and Lakefield School administrations together with Southwest Coaches (the present transportation provider for Jackson) have developed a transportation plan

that will limit bus rides to no longer than one hour. Lakefield students already experience similar bus rides due to the pairing with Heron Lake-Okabena. (Ex's 19 & 20)

44. Research indicates that the Minnesota School Districts with enrollments between 1,200 and 1,950 students have the lowest average instructional costs and lowest average operational costs per pupil unit. Optimal school size is 100 students per grade with at least 1,300 students per district. (Ex. 10)

45. Research also exists which supports the proposition that "bigger is not always better" when considering maintaining healthy viable communities. (Ex. 22)

46. 475 persons self-identifying themselves as residents of the Lakefield School District, signed petitions opposing the proposed consolidation of the Lakefield and Jackson School Districts. The same petitions also requested that Lakefield instead, reinstate the pairing agreement with Heron Lake-Okabena for the 1997-98 school year and work towards consolidating with Heron Lake-Okabena. (Ex. 22)

47. Four residents of the Lakefield School district testified in opposition to the proposed consolidation of the Lakefield and Jackson School Districts.

48. Everyone who attended the public hearing was given an opportunity to testify at the hearing. The hearing was adjourned only after no one else wished to testify.

49. The proposed district to be consolidated contains at least 18 sections of land as required by Minn. Stat. § 122.23, subd. 1.

50. The teachers and staff at Lakefield support the proposed consolidation with Jackson.

51. Consolidating the Jackson and Lakefield school districts will allow teachers to teach more classes in their area of training, reducing the amount of prepratory time needed to teach multiple subjects which they are required to do now.

From the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Administrative Law Judge makes the following:

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning and the Administrative Law Judge have jurisdiction in this matter pursuant to Minn. Stat. §§ 122.23, subd. 6 and 15.06, subd. 6.

2. The procedural requirements of Minn. Stat. § 122.23 have been met, and the Commissioner has authority to approve, modify or reject the proposed plat and also approve or reject any proposal contained in the petition regarding the disposition of the bonded debt of the component districts.

3. A public hearing was properly requested within 20 days after submission of the plat to the commissioner by at least 20 residents living within the area proposed for consolidation.

4. Notice of the Public Hearing was in proper form and content and the Commissioner has complied with all relevant substantive and procedural requirements of statute and rule.

5. Consolidating the Lakefield and Jackson School Districts will offer a long term solution to the financial problems which both districts will face due to actual and projected declining student enrollments and projected decreases in state funding.

6. Consolidating the Lakefield and Jackson School Districts will improve curriculum and educational opportunities for students in both districts by offering students more choices and sections of academic classes, increased opportunities to choose instructors, more access to extra curricular activities, and greater access to and use of technology such as computers and Internet.

7. Consolidating the Lakefield and Jackson School Districts will provide greater service for the money spent by operating with full class sections; eliminating duplication of services such as two school boards, two superintendents, two coaches for sports which will be combined; and by qualifying for consolidation incentive funding from the State of Minnesota during the first two years of the consolidation, thereby getting the most for each educational dollar spent.

8. Consolidating the Lakefield and Jackson School Districts will provide more efficient staffing and use of school facilities by eliminating the need for any new building construction; utilizing the existing buildings in a manner which will allow both communities to maintain their elementary schools, while having the middle school in Lakefield and the High School in Jackson; utilizing the existing Jackson Middle School building to house additional programs for the school and the community; utilizing the entire staff in such manner as to avoid duplication or excess instructors; and allowing teachers to teach more classes in their area of training, thereby reducing the amount of prepratory time needed to teach different subjects.

9. The attached Memorandum shall be considered a part of these conclusions as if fully set forth herein.

From the foregoing Conclusions of Law, the Administrative Law Judge makes the following:

RECOMMENDATION

IT IS HEREBY RECOMMENDED: That the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning approve the proposed plat and the proposal contained in the petition regarding the disposition of the bonded debt of the component districts.

Dated this 16th day of December, 1996.

JAN CRAIG NELSON
Administrative Law Judge

Reported: Taped

MEMORANDUM

Minnesota Statutes § 122.23 sets forth the procedures whereby two school districts can be consolidated into a single independent district in Minnesota. This statute provides two distinct mechanisms to initiate this process: by resolution of a school board in the area proposed for consolidation, or by a petition therefor executed by 25 percent of the voters resident in the area proposed for consolidation or by 50 such voters, whichever is lesser.

The opponents to the proposed consolidation argue that the commissioner should reject the proposed plat and proposal, since the voters of the Lakefield school district already voted on a proposed consolidation with Jackson in September, and rejected it. However, their argument is not persuasive. Under the Statute as it currently exists, the commissioner does not substitute his will for the voters. His sole obligation is to review the proposed plat and proposal for consolidation and to approve, modify or reject it.

It is clear from the evidence that the plat and proposal for consolidation in this case is well thought out and if adopted by the voters in the two school districts will assure long term quality educational opportunities for the students of both districts, will alleviate the impact of declining enrollment on both districts, will provide improved curriculum and educational services in both districts, will provide greater educational services for the dollars expended and will provide more cost efficient staffing and use of school facilities. There is nothing in the proposed plat and proposal which warrants rejection or modification by the commissioner.

Although the voters in Lakefield rejected an identical proposal for consolidation in September, the voters also overwhelmingly rejected a special tax levy referendum in November which would have provided the Lakefield district the needed funds to operate without making drastic cuts in staffing and programs. In light of this fact, it is conceivable that the voters of Lakefield may have changed their minds on this issue.

Although the opponents presented petitions containing signatures of 475 persons who indicated that they were opposed to the Consolidation of the Lakefield and Jackson School Districts, and preferred to continue pairing and seek consolidation with Heron Lake-Okabena, such a petition has no bearing on the Commissioners approval, modification or rejection of the proposed plat and proposal for consolidation with the Jackson School

District. The Commissioner does not have before him a proposed plat and proposal for consolidation of the Lakefield School District with the Heron Lake-Okabena School District or any other district. The Commissioners approval of the proposed plat and proposal for consolidation of the Lakefield and Jackson School Districts does not mean that it is the only consolidation which would be approved. It is clearly up to the voters in the Lakefield and Jackson School districts to ultimately decide upon whether the proposed consolidation will occur.

J.C.N.