

- By MICHAEL MORTENSEN, THE LACONIA DAILY SUN
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Laconia Mayor Andrew Hosmer addresses the Laconia School Board about the importance of city's school system to the its economic future. Listening, from left, are Superintendent Steve Tucker, board Chair Heather Lounsbury, and board members Stacie Soucy and Mal Murray. (Michael Mortensen/The Laconia Daily Sun photo)

LACONIA — The caliber of the city’s public schools is crucial to Laconia’s economic future, Mayor Andrew Hosmer told the School Board earlier this week.

“An exemplary school system is Laconia’s greatest asset,” Hosmer told the board at its meeting Tuesday.

Hosmer stressed that his appearance was not to lobby for any particular agenda, but rather to let the board know that he and the City Council strongly believe the city needs a school system that is teaching students in a way that they will excel in the global economy.

“I’m here to let you know that improving Laconia schools is a priority for me,” Hosmer said. “And I want to learn from you if and where I can work collaboratively with you to achieve our shared goals, which is having great schools.”

It was the first time in recent memory that a mayor had come before the School Board. Hosmer’s appearance came after board member Mal Murray urged in January that Hosmer be invited to address the board.

Hosmer reiterated a point he made during his inaugural address in January: that good schools bring increased property values and better options for housing.

He noted that people looking to buy a house typically ask real estate agents which communities have the best schools. That is also a big question for those who recruit employees for existing businesses and local institutions, he said.

“I want those Realtors and those recruiters and those board members to say, ‘Laconia is the place to live,’” Hosmer said. “We have a great school system, and we have a great community. I want it to be a desired place for professionals as time goes on.”

Hosmer pledged to lobby on behalf of the city at the Statehouse, particularly with respect to state aid to local communities and school districts.

“I intend to be there letting people know that Laconia is going to stand up and have a voice in the budget drafting and budget negotiations. I want to do that on behalf of our school system,” Hosmer told the board. “A priority for me has always been funding for this city — funding that I feel the state owed our city over years and failed to pay us.”

He said the council has made it a priority to look for ways to build the city’s economy “that is robust, that is thriving and appeals to people who are looking to move a business here.”

