

**REDHAWKS**

Continued from Page 1

9-11) than North Tama, and only one, Belle Plaine, had a smaller enrollment.

Since the Nov. 9 meeting, however, Belle Plaine's school board voted to move varsity to 8-Player next season.

**Public comments**

The majority of the comments made in person during the Dec. 13 special meeting favored at the very least a two-year transition of JV football to 8-Player beginning next year.

Both Coach McDermott – who was first to address the board – and father Craig Greiner provided separate comments that seemed to sum up what many in the room were feeling with McDermott stating, “My heart and my emotion says, ‘Stay 11-Man forever.’ My head and my logic and the numbers say, ‘At some point, we really need to look at [moving down].’”

Greiner echoed the coach during his comments to the board, stating: “My heart says stay 11, my brain says eight.”

McDermott spent most of his three minutes of allotted time addressing the recent announcement by the Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) that it is considering taking into account socioeconomic status by way of free and reduced lunch numbers as part of future high school football classifications.

Under the new system



North Tama school board members (l-r) Val Bradley, David Calderwood, and Doug Dvorak listen as retired Redhawk football head coach Tom McDermott (out of frame) answers a question during board discussion on moving from Class A/11-Player football to 8-Player.

proposed by IHSAA, BEDS enrollment would be reduced by a number equal to 40% of a district's free and reduced price lunch enrollment number.

According to recent reporting by the Des Moines Register, should the amendment – which is being voted on by IHSAA member schools from Dec. 16-22 – pass the change would affect roughly 35 to 45 districts.

As Coach McDermott discussed the IHSAA's proposal, he told the board “a lot of schools could drop down into 8-Man that are not 8-Man now” including Postville, BCLUW, Lynnville-Sully, and North Linn.

In terms of North Tama's opponents, A.D. Wurth told the North Tama Telegraph following the meeting, Grundy Center and Hudson would likely shift up a class from Class A to 1A.

In addition to McDer-

mott and Greiner, several Redhawk football youth/junior high/JV coaches provided public comments including Tony Dudys, coordinator for 3rd-6th youth football.

Dudys told the board this past season, out of the four grades, only the 6th grade – which had seven kids go out for youth football – boasted enough “bigger kids” that could “hold the line” in the future.

“I think the most important part is the safety of the kids and everything about the kids,” Dudys said. “When we have comments from [parents] that have kids in the lower grade football [teams] that can't even play a game because they don't have enough kids ... that should be something that should be thought about.”

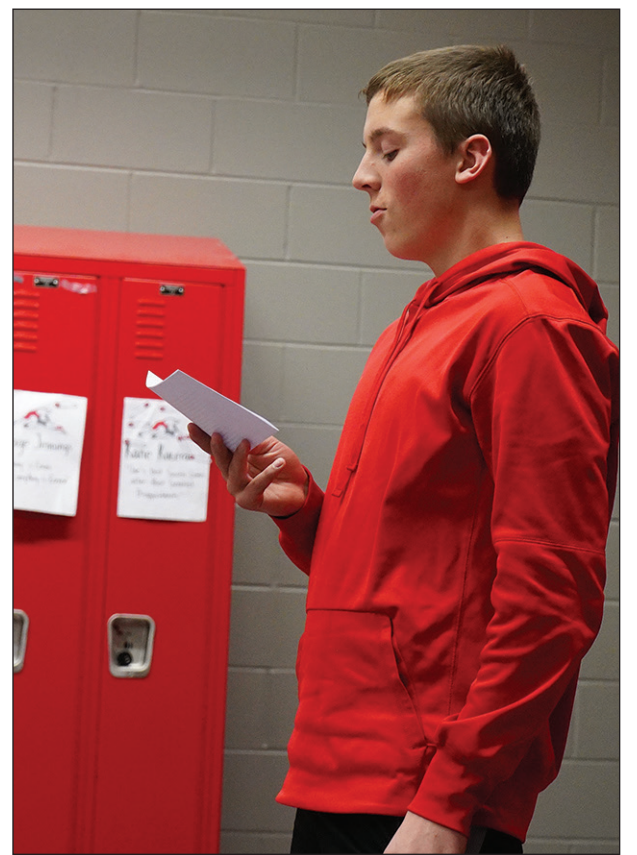
North Tama eighth-grader Brayton Cibula also addressed the board, stating while he

looks forward to playing high school football next year he would not be looking forward to the opportunity “near as much” if the district moves to 8-Player. He then cited a survey recently administered by A.D. Wurth of current Redhawk football players that showed a majority think similarly to Cibula, preferring Class A/11-Player to 8-Player.

“Switching from 11-Man to 8-Man football takes away 27% of the starting opportunities to play,” Cibula said. “While I'm not saying that switching to 8-Man is a terrible idea, I just wanted everyone to understand what a majority of us players want to do.”

**Board discussion, vote**

Following the public forum, board members discussed their views on the subject. It became increasingly clear as the members chatted across the confer-



North Tama eighth-grader, Redhawk football player Brayton Cibula reads prepared comments to members of the North Tama school board (out of frame) during the Dec. 13 special meeting to address moving varsity football from Class A/11-Player to 8-Player.

ence tables with each other, that moving varsity to 8-Player for next season was likely to fail if a motion was made.

Board member and parent Val Bradley stated at one point, “I will not go 8-man cold turkey,” while Haley Blaine – a Redhawk youth football player parent who has publicly expressed her desire to move to 8-Player – said, “I can compromise if we say tonight that in two years we will go eight.”

Board president and parent Rod Zobel continued his stance of remaining at Class A, stating, “I've been pro-11 [player] since the beginning and I still feel that way, I feel our numbers are solid enough, even at the younger levels.”

“I'm just concerned that we're going to be sitting here two years from now and we're going to be saying the same thing – ‘our freshman and sophomores don't want to go to 8-man,’”

board member Doug Dvorak stated. “[S]omewhere along the line, we've got to change.”

While the vote failed, Zobel indicated the board would address possibly moving JV to 8-Player at a future meeting.

Moments before the vote, Dvorak made one final comment, referencing one of Coach McDermott's handouts listing BEDS enrollment data for area teams.

“Those are teams we played last year, correct? ... We're not just 121, 115, or 112, we're 103,” Dvorak said. “If we go 8-Man next year, it's not the end of the world. Two years from now, numbers come up, we can switch back to 11-Man. But I just think it's a risk with the numbers and the kids. ... It's not that we don't believe in the young men coming up ...”

Dvorak ended with: “We've had differences before ... We're a good board.”

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