

By Tim Linscott

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It did not take the Perkins County School board long to discuss the issue.

After a few minutes of talking over whether to play eight-man or 11-man football next year, the PCS school board unanimously agreed to declare at the Monday, Nov. 18 school board meeting that the Plainsmen will play eight-man football for the next two seasons.

PCS head football coach and athletic director Carlie Wells explained to school board members that a letter was sent home giving information on both sides of the situation and a parent meeting was held Oct. 21 to discuss things with parents and patrons further.

“No one really was against going to eight-man,” Wells told school board members.

Before the meeting, Wells said, there were a few parents who were willing to strongly argue for staying in 11-man football, but after the meeting were more open to going to eight-man. He felt it was a situation of their ‘heart said 11-man but their head said eight-man.’

Freshman, sophomores and juniors took an anonymous vote when checking in their football gear and by a tally of 13-5 the players were in favor of eight-man football.

The trend to switch is becoming more evident in the region. Blue Hill and Dundy County are both switching to eight-man. Cambridge and North Platte St. Patrick’s, however, will be staying in the 11-man ranks.

According to the Nebraska Schools Activities Association (NSAA) a decision to declare if a school district wants to play eight-man, or opt up and play 11-man, must be made by Nov. 30 for scheduling purposes.

Schedules are released Feb. 12, 2014 and the commitment to play eight-man is for two years.

PCS has been a dominant team in 11-man football for years. The Plainsmen have won eight state titles, the last in 1990.

PCS student population numbers in grades 9-11 are at the levels that the district could play eight-man football, however, the district could have optioned to stay at 11-man football.

The cut-off point for staying at 11-man is 83 students and PCS has 81 students.

Wells projects that for the next 10 years the district could be at the level of playing eight-man football.

Teams in the area that play eight-man football include South Platte (30 miles), Paxton (30 miles), Sutherland (51 miles) and Creek Valley (61 miles).

As far as the play of the game, Wells said there are not as many options and formations on the field but coaches could ‘get as creative as they want to be.’

On Tuesday morning, Wells was in the process of informing players of the change.

“This should be a positive experience for our kids,” Wells said. “This should be the best thing for the kids with our numbers right now.”