

BOARD NOTES

January 26, 2009

The regular meeting of the School Board was held on Monday, January 26, 2009 with all board members present.

Rich Shail reviewed the guidelines for speaking on agenda items.

The board adopted the agenda as presented.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRESENTATION

- Mark Norton reviewed the new software which is a new cross platform between IBM's and Mac's. There is a deployment application for laptops that breaks up installations in small pieces. One application is self-healing. Mark makes the determination whether an application is to be self-healing or not. This new software will save many hours of additional work for the technologists.
- The Board recognized winners from the VFW Patriot's Pen Essay Contest. Chelsea Suppinger received 1st Place, Hunter Papai - 2nd and Eric Brown 3rd place. Judy Bubanovich is the sponsor. Mrs. Bubanovich indicated that Chelsea went on to win District competition and is waiting for the final results from state competition.

CONSENT ITEMS

- The board approved the Consent Items as follows:
 - Minutes - December 15th and January 5th
 - Financial Reports
 - Claims
 - Payroll
 - Personnel Report as follows:

CERTIFIED

- Employment - Extra-Curricular
 - 1. Matt Flagg - 7th Grade Team Leader - 5-member
 - 2. Josh Bolakowski - 2nd Assistant Middle School Wrestling

NON-CERTIFIED

- Leaves/Resignations
 1. Judy Duensing - Bus Driver - Leave of Absence - January 27, 2009 thru March 27, 2009
 2. Brenda Gorny - Bus Driver - Leave of Absence - January 30, 2009 thru February 13, 2009
 3. Jack Haverstock - Bus Driver - Leave of Absence - December 17, 2008 thru approximately the first week of February.
- Employment - Extra-Curricular
 1. Larry Szczechowski - Assistant Middle School Wrestling
 2. Joyce DeLaurentis - Science Fair Coordinator - Olive

REPORTS

- The board received a report from the New Prairie Soccer Club.
- Superintendent's Report

Dr. Bender reported on the following:

- Reviewed the new Board meeting schedule for 2009 as approved at the organizational meeting in January.
- The board received a copy of the comments Bernie Baltes submitted to the State regarding the Governor's State of the State Address. Dr. Bender advised that the Governor indicated that students receive an average of \$11,000 for per/pupil expenditures throughout the state. New Prairie receives about \$5,000 per student which is about the third lowest in the state.
- The Governor also indicated that there needs to be more spending in the classroom. We have other expenses - i.e., transportation, food service as well as classroom expenses.
- Health insurance for Board Members - Dr. Bender said our corporation does not offer or pay for insurance for our board members. There are corporations that do provide this. Some of our board members do not even take the stipend.

- We received the final order from the new facilities appeal from the DLGF. We had to do this in two pieces. They just approved \$2,983 less than we asked for.
- We received information from the LaPorte County Auditor's Office. They are still working with the company that is redoing the AV for 06, payable in 07. They will be sending out provisional tax bills for 07, payable 08 by the beginning of February. They are now two years behind. We hope to receive 100% of that money collected.
- The board received reports from John Ellis of the IASP. They talked about the re-organization of school corporations. The board also received current House and Senate Bills under consideration. Bernie said a lot of those bills are duplicated within other segments. He said there are three bills on textbooks.
- The board received a copy of the certified staff leave report. As of December 31st, we have spent \$32,000 on substitutes for sick days, family illness, bereavement and personal days.
- The board received a copy of the response to information requested by Dale Groves which Dr. Bender felt was good information for everyone to see.
- The board received a copy of the 2008 Public Opinion Survey.
- The board received a copy of the current cash flow. The new change in the basic grant from the state is now in effect beginning in January. So far, this has been beneficial for our district. We will be taking out a loan for \$1,361,225 on January 29th. Our ending balance as of January is \$2,240,285. We did issue a partial payment to the LaPorte Co-op. However, they need to determine what we will be compensated for their use of our facilities since the beginning of the school year.
- The board also received a copy of the Stimulus Bill for Title I and IDEA monies. Over a two-year period, we can receive \$1.03 million in federal assistance. This is based on size of our school.

ACTION ITEMS

- The board approved the Conflict of Interest Disclaimer Statements for C.J.'s Outdoor Services and Al Williamson, Board Member. This statement is required by the State Board of Accounts for any public servant who knowingly or intentionally has a pecuniary interest in or derives a profit from a governmental entity.

- The board approved the 2009 Co-op Joint Agreement as presented.
- The board also approved the re-appointment of Shelly Goethals as Vice-President of the Building Corporation. Shelly had originally resigned when she served as a board member. Since we never filled that position, the board re-appointed her to that position.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- The board discussed the current athletic/activities policy and guidelines. This came about because of the inconsistencies occurring when school is closed. Rich said we wanted to invite people to discuss whether the plan fits our needs or changes need to be made.

Rich Shail read the current policy on closings and asked for comments. The following comments were made by the public:

- Laura Swain - She felt there may be some inconsistencies depending on certain groups.
- Mark Glassley said as long as we keep the students' safety in mind, that is the biggest thing. If we are out of school because of weather, someone could get hurt. We should keep that in mind.

There were no other public comments.

- Rich Shail said the decision to close schools is based on many people. The Transportation Dept. has spotters throughout the 60-mile district noting the weather conditions. He said he understands that people have issues due to the fact that it was not snowing in one area, but it is in another area. We cannot have one person making a decision and not following the procedures we have in place.
- Rich said there is currently a football coach that is being indicted on manslaughter because a player died. This is one situation. Another situation - we are trying to prevent and taking the responsibility off your back and trying to protect you people. We want to make this clear to all. We are out for the students. They are our biggest asset. We would be amiss if we lost a student because we made a bad decision. If anyone would like to discuss this further, he would suggest you get with the Athletic Director and we will run those comments thru the proper channel. If this has to be changed, we will look at this and make the appropriate changes.

- Board Committee and Liaisons

Dr. Bender asked if the board wanted to continue with the current schools and committeees. The board wanted to keep as is. Bernie said he thinks the philosophy has merit. He said he has not done a very good job of attending activities, but not because he did not want to. He feels it does have good merit. Olive is open at this time and Dale said he will take that. Rich said it is difficult to attend meetings during the day and asked that the principals try to consider that. He said if you really want them to be there, let them know.

The committee members are as follows:

Board Liaisons are as follows:

- High School - Rich Shail
- Junior High - Bernie Baltes
- Olive - Dale Groves
- Prairie View - Al Williamson
- Rolling Prairie - LuAnn Schwingendorf

Board Corporation Committee Liaison:

- Meet & Discuss - Rich Shail
- Collective Bargaining - Bernie Baltes
- Curriculum - LuAnn Schwingendorf
- Transportation - Al Williamson
- Building/Grounds - Bernie Baltes

BOARD COMMENTS

- Dale Groves said he attended the ISBA workshop on Friday with Rich Shail. He said it was an opportunity to learn a lot. He said there are a lot of things flying at him and different situations we are in. It was a great educational opportunity for him and grateful he was able to attend.
- Al Williamson asked if board members' e-mails could be placed on our web page so if people wanted to e-mail us they could. Bernie said he could list his e-mail, but he would not be able to respond by e-mail. If you place your phone number in the e-mail, he will return a call to you.

- Bernie said he was glad Dale took the time to attend the conference. He feels it is time well spent. Rich is a veteran board member, but you still pick up information. Bernie said he is the liaison for legislation. If there is anything you want to comment on, please contact him or Dr. Bender and he will forward the information to the legislators. We can get in touch with our legislators very quickly. Dr. Bender said as it gets closer to the end of the session, we will put together a group to go to Indy and meet Jim Dermody and Jim Arnold so New Prairie does not get lost in the shuffle.
- Rich said he heard some comments from the ISBA on school consolidation. There are 48 schools that have 1,000 or less student enrollment. All of these schools have made AYP. All schools have 65-75% money spent in the classroom. The ISBA is feeling there is nothing wrong with this philosophy and they are leaving it alone. They do not want to fix something that is not broke.

Rich said legislature and our Governor are trying to take power away from local government. We have to fight for our right to run our local entity. We cannot allow someone in St. Joe County to make a decision about New Prairie. They won't care about us. We have to fight for that. Rich said he will be getting on the band wagon to fight.

Bernie said when you send a written letter to a legislator, it means more than 1,000 paid groups. They will tell you that. If you send an unsigned letter, it will go in the wastebasket. What Rich said about the small community and schools doing the job better, we need to stress that.

Phil said there is a small school in southern LaPorte that has a small corporation. There is a lot of mileage out there. It is a small corporation, but those students would be on the bus for a long period of time if they consolidated. It would also destroy the town if the school closed.

Rich said 46 of the 48 schools have school boards and superintendents. Rich said we have to realize that we are here for the students. That is something that I try to do as a school board member as well as my fellow board members. I will be asking them to drive this philosophy into our community and corporation. I know we don't display it as much as we should. Displaying our actions and how we can make these children's lives better.