

BOARD NOTES

The regular meeting of the School Board was held on Monday, May 18, 2009 with all board members present.

The Board adopted the agenda with the amendment to add Action Item "F" - Approve Resolution for the Indiana Bond Bank.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRESENTATION

- Marcia Kelly reviewed the Literacy Program that will be offered in the elementary schools next year through a grant. They will concentrate on the 5 "T's" - Time, Text, Talk, Tasks and Teacher Teaching.
- Angie Hambling talked about the Title I Stimulus Program they will be offering thru Title I grant monies. Rolling Prairie and Prairie View will be entitled to \$148,000 for at least two years. In 2009, the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act was instituted for students most at risk. Part of this stimulus money is to promote innovative programs.
- Jim Holifield reported on his trip to China through the Chinese Exchange Initiative from the Freeman Foundation. Through this exchange program, the Middle School will have the opportunity to work with a Chinese Exchange teacher that will offer Mandarin to our 7th grade students. There is also the possibility of student exchange programs.
- Board Recognition
 - The Board recognized members of the Gleaner Volunteer Program who worked with students at Rolling Prairie in areas of math. This volunteer group is eligible for the Volunteer Group of the Year.
 - The board also recognized the High School Academic Super Bowl State Finalists.
- **CONSENT AGENDA**

The board approved the Consent Agenda as follows:

- Minutes - April 27, 2009
- Financial Reports
- Claims
- Payroll
- Personnel Report as follows:

CERTIFIED

- Leaves/Resignations
 1. Nicole Bowen - P.E. Teacher - Middle School - Leave of absence beginning August 10, 2009 thru October 16, 2009
- Employment
 1. Sandra Thomas - Temporary Half-time Language Arts Teacher - New Prairie High School - for the 2009-2010 school year

NON-CERTIFIED

- Leaves/Resignations/Terminations
 1. Kathy Smith - Business Services - Central Office - Leave of absence beginning May 29, 2009 and continuing for 6-8 weeks.
 2. Sandra Rowe - Food Service - Olive Elementary - Terminated effective May 15, 2009.
- Employment
 1. Annette Ringer - Employee Services (Payroll) - Central Office - Effective May 21, 2009
 2. Lori Coursey - Receptionist - NPHS - Effective with the start of the 2009-2010 school year
- Employment - Extra-Curricular
 1. Kevin Macias - Wrestling Coach - Olive - 2008-2009 school year

REPORTS

- Superintendent's Report
 - Dr. Bender reviewed some legislative bills of interest to the schools. Bus drivers will be required to make a visual inspection before leaving a bus.
 - The legislation will be going into a special session to approve a budget.
 - Dr. Bender reviewed the cash flow. He wants to thank Sharon Heirbrandt for putting this information together. We will have to borrow again from the bond bank.

- The DLGF may take a more active role in tax collections in the LaPorte County area.
- Dr. Bender discussed the roll-over balance from the bond bank. Once LaPorte sets their rates, St. Joe County was able to send out their monies to us. The 07 budget was just approved. The DLGF said it would be a long time until the 2008 budget is set.
- Graduation is set for Sunday, May 31st. The wife of actor Sean Astin will be the guest speaker.
- The DOE gave their reimbursement for summer school which will be less than 50% reimbursement. Only 49% will be funded this year.
- Textbook Adoption - Dr. Bender wants to thank the members of the social studies committee for working on this to come up with materials to adopt. As the economic down turn got worse, he asked the team to look at alternative ways to teach so we did not have to adopt. The high school level needed to adopt. They are being frugal in the amount of books required. At the elementary and middle school, they will be looking at different ways to do things like technology. We will continue to use the old books but will have some alternative pieces for instruction. He is very pleased with them at the middle school. We would be looking at \$79 per student for a new adoption. It would be a \$12.00 increase in book rental. We did not want to raise book fees this year.
- Parent/Teacher Conferences

The State Superintendent indicated that the way we were conducting parent conferences was not according to state law. The half days did not qualify for a full day. Also, the half early release days were not according to law. We had to look at the contract. There are 186 teacher days - 180 of which are student days. One day is a holiday; four days are work days for teachers and one day is for professional development. It was imperative that we have one professional day because of PL221. We will take parent teacher conferences out of the calendar. When we talk about parent conferences, it is a wonderful piece, but there are different ways teachers communicate with parents now thru e-mail, etc. It is no replacement for face-to-face contact. The elementary schools will try and do some creative areas.

- PL 221

The board received the recent standings for our schools. It is not good news to report. For 2007-2008 the high school was placed on academic watch. They were exemplary in 2004-2005. At the middle school, they have been on academic watch for four years. Academic probation is the next step. Once we move into that, the state comes in to say you need to restructure. It possibly means shifting principals and teachers. Olive received commendable; Prairie View is on academic watch and Rolling is on academic watch. A lot of these areas happen because of special needs students.

- The administration and teachers' association had their first day of training in collaborative bargaining.

- Summer Projects

Greg Dudeck reviewed the following summer projects that they will be working on:

- Pre-construction meeting will be held on the HVAC project with D.A. Dodd. Hope for completion by July 21st.
- High School maintenance repair projects on the roof. Hope to complete in the next few weeks.
- Classroom carpeting at the elementary schools - about a \$132,000 project
- Asphalt maintenance in the tennis courts. Painting will occur as well.
- Bus garage and behind high school east will get crack repairs
- H.S. gym floors completed. The other five schools will be done this summer.
- Fencing at the high school
- Pool tile repair
- Exterior doors at the high school
- Clock system upgrade at the elementary schools similar to the system at the middle school

- Wallpaper replacement at Olive
- Roof repair and maintenance
- Addition to the blue barn for fine arts storage
- Swimming pool drain - due to the entrapment law, we will have to replace the drain
- Sewer project - worked with the attorney. There was an extra charge for the extra digging and demobilization. They needed \$7,500 in cash for the excavation. They were to begin within 10 days. There was a meeting with the engineer at Oselka scheduled, but Oselka canceled. They are indicating that the locaters are incorrect. They are going to re-order the locaters. We did verify they are on a job in Plymouth. We know they have some people working for them. We have a performance bond on the job. The insurance company will step in and hire a contractor if they do not complete the job. We will not be out any money if this should occur.

There was a concern expressed by a parent in the audience that the pool temperature during summer swim is too cold.

Rich asked if we have made contact with the homeowners that there will be surveying being done on that north fence. He wants them to know for certain before anyone goes on the property. John Saylor will mark out that easement so he can communicate with the neighbors. Rich said it makes him nervous when he sees someone walking around. These people will also be nervous. It is in our best interest to let them know.

ACTION ITEMS

- The following board policies were introduced for second reading and approval:
 - #0165.3, 1411, 1537, 2340, 3211, 3437, 4211, 4437, 5111, 7440, 7510 and 8510.
- The board approved the revised 2009-2010 school calendar as presented. Dr. Bender said when the association and administration met, we agreed to send a joint letter to voice concerns with the state superintendent. Dale Groves said he is disappointed that we cannot have parent conferences. He agrees that there are ways we can communicate that we did not have in the

past. There are always those parents that do not have computers and cannot communicate. Also, in reading the school improvement plans, Prairie View mentioned their parent involvement with home/school communication as one area. If we cut out parent conferences, it will be more difficult. At the middle school, they listed parent involvement - many parents believe involvement is important and only half feel they are involved. How many more will feel left out.

As a teacher, he feels when he is not involved with parents and cannot meet face to face, bad things can happen. It makes my life and the parents' more difficult as well as the students. It makes me nervous. He fears what type of precedent we are setting. Will we be able to get this back next year or will this be permanent. We will not have parent conferences at New Prairie. I would be sad if this happens. I know it is the law and we were not doing things correctly. He feels we should try and go back and try to hash this out. Because of that, he cannot approve the calendar that does not have parent conferences.

Dr. Bender said there was no give in the conversation. There are four days in the contract and they did not want to give that up. We needed the professional development day. It costs \$60,000 to pay teachers extra. Given the circumstances we have, something may come up in negotiations. We are pretty much tied as far as days. We have no options.

Bernie said we cannot do much but to pass the calendar. If something changes, we can look at it. Rich asked what attendance we have. Jim said 100%. Rich said he would hope those parents put that information in their letters that we have 100% and it is going away.

Dale said it is wonderful that we have 100% participation, but ultimately, what it might come down to is teachers spending more time outside the class talking to parents. He hopes that parents would be okay with that and are willing to set up appointments. He knows that parents stepping into schools is challenging because they do not have good experiences. Rich said our hands are tied right now.

- School Improvement Plans

Dr. Bender said if this continues with our scores, we have to be open at attacking the issues. We don't have any data. With the MClass assessments, full-day kindergarten is one of the best and educationally sound investments we have done. That is the opinion of the administration and staff. This is what they continue to look at in school improvement plans.

The board approved the school improvement plans for all buildings as presented. Bernie asked how many community people served on the committees. Most schools had their PTO officers - approximately three community people. Bernie said you should have one more community person than school personnel on that committee. Dr. Bender said he never heard that. You have 2-3 on the committee. That is all he can remember. When they put those plans together, it falls under the NCA guidelines and they would point that out to us if it was not correct. We depend on those people to oversee that accreditation to be sure those guidelines are met.

Dale asked what the Purdue Math concept is. Marcia said it is problem-solving math. Mr. Feikes trained the staff.

- Textbook fees for 2009-2010 were approved as follows which indicates no increase with the exception of some course selections at grades 9-12:

Kindergarten	\$60
Grades 1-2	\$91
Grades 3-5	\$93
Grades 6-8	\$130
Grades 9-12	Based on course selection

Since we are not adopting social studies in grades K-8, we will send a waiver to the state which is on the approved list.

- The board approved the lease with Quest Development in LaPorte for the rental of a building for the Title I students in our corporation. We will concentrate on the Latino students at the Village in LaPorte which makes up 25% of the Title I students. This is not directly related to the ESL program. We are addressing Title I assistance for those students. This lease approval is contingent on final approval from Title I.

Rich said he was lead to believe this is for the Latino children in the Village. He is now told this was for Title I students at Rolling Prairie and Prairie View. Should he be concerned about this because the lease agreement says the participants are the Latino students within the premise of the LaPorte Village. Bill suggested we accept the lease and ask Keith Dennis to work with Quest to work out the language between the two parties.

- The board approved the resolution for the bond bank.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Senator Jim Arnold and Representative Tom Dermody were present to discuss the latest legislative issues. Rich Shail said he appreciates everything they do for us at New Prairie.

Tom Dermody said the budget was not approved. He said they are going back to doing something that should have been done in the first four months. This will cost more money to the taxpayers. He knew several days before that the budget would not pass. We are having to cut back annually to increase the biannual by 9%. We could not support that. The Governor could have made cuts, but it is our responsibility to pass a budget to do the right thing. We were \$255 million off. Only 50% of the many bills introduced are for education. That money needs to be looked at. Thirty percent are for violent criminals and Medicaid. No one wants to make cuts. The funding formula and how a school receives money based on free and reduced needs to be addressed. New Prairie is the third lowest from the bottom in funding. He understands the problems with Gary and those areas. There is no parental support. But, Gary will receive \$9,600 in 2009 and \$10,500 in 2011. East Chicago will receive \$8,750 and \$9,500; Indy will receive \$8,500 and \$9,300. New Prairie will receive \$5,800 and \$6,000. If we are making a difference in those schools, I will back them. But we are throwing more money at the problem. Accountability - where is the money going? South Central, New Prairie and LaPorte suffer with lower dollars. He cannot get any answers. Jim Arnold and I agree 100% on this. It has to be addressed.

June 1st is the first round of meetings and how much will be spent on K-12. We have an idea what the revenue will be.

Bills outside the budget - did not support a school discipline model. The DOE would set up a program and send it to the schools. Tom Dermody opposed this. Your plan would be sent to the DOE each year to one person to read. More mandates!! Another bill is safety training for staff. He cannot support that bill.

We did not do our job. We will be there in June. There will not be many changes for New Prairie. Until we can change the formula, it will be difficult to change. Tom said he is disappointed with Tony Bennett when he met with the superintendents. He set up a study council and not one individual is from Northern Indiana. It was a slap in the face. He asked them to reconsider and put someone from here to be placed on the committee. I was told no! Renssealer is considered northwest Indiana.

Dr. Bender said there are things that have come down, but if they would have given us a year to grandfather like parent conferences and professional development, it would have helped. We are thrown to the wolves to defend it.

Tom Dermody said Dr. Bennett will challenge the schools. In reference to the 180 student days, it should not be decided by the legislators. It should be by the DOE and administrators. He does not feel this group will represent us well. They are trying to break some areas that may be better.

Bill Kaminski asked how quickly will we know how much money we will have. Tom said June 15th is his guess. The CIB and the budget are the issues. He believes that is why the budget did not pass because of the CIB issue which deals with the sports arena in Indianapolis.

Tom said Indiana ranks as the third highest gaming in the U.S. behind Nevada and New Jersey.

Senator Arnold said he is happy to spend two days with Mike Babcock to talk with his students. He asked Tom Dermody to come with him next year. Jim said you will hear from Bernie Baltes when school issues come up. He gets more communication from Bernie than anyone else. This is Jim's first long session. He is not familiar with school issues. There were 150 people were happy about coming back. Who else are you to blame? The Governor was not visible with his group. They did not communicate.

There were 1,293 bills. There is no way you can keep track of all of them. About 440 passed one house or another and 184 bills went to the governor. It is a grueling trip. Education is the most intricate. Tom Dermody is familiar with this. Funding is important. Jim sat next to a legislator from East Chicago and they are getting the majority of the funding. He does not know why. He does not see that changing.

Transportation Bill - Thought we might get something through. When the transportation bill came through, they talked about moving the gaming license from Buffington Harbor to other area. They also talked about the possibility of moving the Gary airport but keeping the funding in that area.

Jim said they are doing the best that they can down there. It is not that easy. He is concerned about his area here, but what is good for our area is not good for another area and sometimes a bill will not go through. Sometimes there are bad things that go along with the good bills.

Dr. Bender said without any knowledge of where the budget is going, do you think we will get close to what the anticipation might have been. Jim said he would hope that the preliminary figures may be close, but would not be surprised that education gets cut.

Tom would believe there may be some reductions. Higher education and tuition is doubling. There is no where else to cut. Fifty-two percent of the budget is K-12. If you are going to make a difference, that is the place. Medicaid is another place. You have to pass the bill. The stimulus money is another concern. We need to be careful we are not spending stimulus money because when it is gone, it is gone.

Tom said Dewey Twp. gets \$13,000 per student for 26 students. They send students to South Central and only pay \$5,000 and keep the remainder. They have a building fund for a school that will never get built.

Jim said the budget committee met last week and will be meeting on May 26th. The Governor will be meeting then to bring his proposal. Tom will be there on June 1st for the K-12 formula.

Dr. Bender is concerned that no teachers were present tonight because they should have heard about the information today regarding the budget and education.

Dr. Bender said he appreciates you being here tonight. Tom said when you approve building projects in the next biennium, you are looking at debt service fund.

Bernie wanted to thank these two gentlemen. They have been more accessible than any legislator around. He just wants to thank them for the time they spend.

Bernie said in reference to flat lining the general fund, 85% of the general fund is salaries. They keep going up. How do we balance that if we flat line? How do they see local school corporations handling this? Jim said he does not know how to answer that. There has to be an answer. They will want a pay raise. Where will the funding come from? You have a tax problem in LaPorte County. They are dealing with the DLGF about this situation. He does not know that there is a relief in sight. We are still in a mess and do not see a light at the end of the tunnel. Tom said NIPSCO has put in for a rate increase.

BOARD COMMENTS

- Dale said he had an opportunity to view the senior exit projects. He said it was wonderful and he learned a lot. Rich said he has heard nothing but great feedback from those people who judged. Also, what a great way for our students to be in touch with the outside.
- Al wanted to thank Jim Holifield for going to China for us and what they can bring back to the middle school. He appreciates what you have done.
- Bernie said for the past 6-8 months we have talked about recognition. He marveled at the Top Ten Dinner at the number of non-academic teachers that have such an impact on students. He is a strong supporter of athletics because of the strong learning beyond the academics. As one teacher said - Academics gets you the interview - what you are will get you the job. He wants to thank the extra-curricular sponsors for the impact that they have on the students. He wanted to make a special point to compliment those people.
- LuAnn wanted to say the same thing about the exit projects. She feels so inadequate when they are up there explaining their projects. She wants to thank all the teachers. They really make an impact on those students.
- Rich said tomorrow will be very interesting to watch the AK Smith bond vote. Over 300 people came in to vote early. This will have a huge impact on this school corporation. There is no way to determine, but it does not look favorable through the news.