

## BOARD NOTES

SEPTEMBER 21, 2009

The regular meeting of the School Board was held on Monday, September 21, 2009 with Al Williamson, LuAnn Schwingendorf, Dale Groves and Bernie Baltes present. Rich Shail was absent. Dr. Bender was also present.

- Al Williamson reviewed guidelines for speaking on agenda items
- The board adopted the agenda as presented.
- On a nomination by Groves, seconded by Schwingendorf, the regular meeting was closed in order to conduct the Budget Hearing.

### **BUDGET HEARING**

- Dr. Bender said the budget was prepared according to state statutes. Keith Dennis reviewed the 2010 Budget as follows:
  - The ADM is 2,716
  - The actual Free and Reduced is 37.34%. This number actually hurts us in the budget.
  - Increased from 1,142 to 1,333 credits for A.K. Smith Career Center
  - In Special Education, we received \$293,075 in Stimulus monies that we will not get next year
  - Total General Fund revenue increased from \$16,157,707 to \$16,546,498.
  - Certified step and lane without any increase is \$151,000 which includes change in VEBA and Teacher's Retirement Fund - The VEBA increased to 1% and TRF increased from 10% to 10.5%. PERF increased from 11% to 11.25%.
  - New Positions - added one teacher at Rolling Prairie from Title II Funds; Director of Activities from Stimulus monies; and upgraded a floater custodian position to maintenance position
  - There is a \$60,000 surplus in the General Fund budget or .3%
  - The 2010 CPF Fund is very limited for schools and technology so we have monies to do the high school renovation project. We allocated \$365,000 for next year. Between the middle school monies and what we did not spend from last year, we may have \$2 million to do the project. We may have to phase in the project because of the costs.

There were no public comments on the budget.

Dr. Bender said when we build these budgets, we are given an AV figure from the county - money which is taken from the past as well as lowering that percentage from the AV through the DLGF. The General Fund is no longer supported from the property tax revenue. Special Education is also not supported from property taxes. We typically advertise high knowing we will not get that amount. We do not know what will happen with property taxes. The Bus replacement has not changed from previously. We get \$5,800 funded per child - \$5,100 is the base line. Tom Dermody has been placed on the education committee and we hope they will review this funding.

On a motion by Groves, seconded by Baltus, the hearing was closed and the regular meeting resumed.

### **CONSENT ITEMS**

The board approved the Consent Items as follows:

- Minutes - August 24, 2009
- Financial
- Claims
- Payroll
- Personnel as follows:

**NOTE: ALL PERSONNEL RECOMMENDATIONS ARE PENDING  
BASED ON THE EXPANDED CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK  
REPORT**

### **CERTIFIED**

- Employment
  1. Jenna Cox - Temporary 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade - Rolling Prairie Elementary - Beginning August 25, 2009 and continuing for approximately 4 weeks.
  2. Matthew Beahm - Temporary 4<sup>th</sup> Grade - Prairie View Elementary - Beginning October 24, 2009 and continuing thru approximately January 4, 2010.
- Employment - Extra-Curricular
  1. Tara Bush - Co-PL221 Chair - Prairie View Elementary
  2. Deanne Gonzalez - Co-Letterman Sponsor - NPHS
  3. Jemiah Feece - Student Council Sponsor - Prairie View
  4. Dena True - Co-PL221 Chair - Middle School
  5. Cassandra Neff - Quiz Bowl - NPHS

## **NON-CERTIFIED**

- Resignations/Retirements
  1. Tracy Kosinski - Food Service - Middle School - Resignation effective September 16, 2009
  2. Kim Colglazier - Food Service - High School - Resignation effective September 2, 2009
- Employment/Transfers
  1. Michelle Banks - Food Service - NPHS - Effective immediately
  2. Kristina Adams - Transfer to Teacher Assistant for Stimulus Special Education - Rolling Prairie Elementary - Effective immediately
  3. Tabitha Downs - Lunchroom Assistant - Prairie View Elementary - Effective immediately
- Employment - Extra-Curricular
  1. Craig Kuta - Girls Golf - NPHS
  2. Craig Kuta - Boys Golf - NPHS
  3. Susan Brasseur - Co-PL221 Chair - NPHS
  4. Ben Anderson - 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Volleyball

## **REPORTS**

- Superintendent's Report
  - Dr. Bender reviewed the cash flow. Bernie asked if LaPorte had any explanation as to why we only get 60% of the CAGET monies. Dr. Bender said they had a reduction on what they assume the AV will be which was cut 15%.
  - Suellen Reed came to visit Dr. Bender. She is working with a brokerage company in Indianapolis. She talked highly of her visit here last year.
  - ISTEP reports were released in grades 3-8. We will be comparing to the state average because you cannot compare with last year's results. In the elementary schools, they have done fairly well compared to the state

average. At the middle school, they have been down. Dr. Bender said he had a teacher say our scores are slightly above the state average - isn't that good? Dr. Bender said he does not want them to be just a little above. They should be better. Third grade seems to do very well, and then they start to fall off. From grades 5-8, they continue to fall. We are about at the level of Triton Schools.

- We received our scores from American Diploma. State-wide, 83% of the students fell below the average for Algebra II. At New Prairie, 93% fell below. We have some huge issues to work through. We have a consultant coming in October to discuss this.
- H1N1 (Swine Flu) - Health Dept. will do a mass inoculation in LaPorte County around the middle of October with parental permission. We have no other information at this time. No permission slips have been received from the Health Dept. We wanted this to come from them. We discussed this at Meet & Discuss and the administrators. We will not know when this will occur until they have the medication in hand.

Bernie said it is not the "swine flu" - it is H1N1. It does not come from hogs. There is no documented case that it came from a swine to a human. This terminology has been very devastating to the swine industry.

- Dr. Bender said the Professional Standards Board has come up with ways to change the teacher licensing within the state. The middle school has fallen through the cracks. Changes would be devastating to our middle school staff. Many teachers have an elementary 1-6 and 7/8 non-departmentalized license. Previously, that is what you wanted for middle school. Now, those with general elementary licenses are the ones that are in trouble. Many people around the state have not talked about this. There will be big changes. We do not know what will happen. We will have to wait and see. We have been working with the association, the superintendent's association and the principal's association.

Jim Holifield said he talked with an individual at Notre Dame that said the teachers can take a test to add the endorsements to their license through Notre Dame with no additional course work. They must have had to teach at least four years. It is about \$90 per test. They have to pass at least two areas of content. Jim would suggest they take all four tests to be sure they are covered.

- Report Card Committee

The committee had a meeting a few weeks ago. Parents received a phone call on our messenger system that interim reports are ready and when report cards would be coming. The parents of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students can now have the availability to log on to PowerSchool to access grades. After eight years on the program, it was time to get everyone on board. We have made headway.

Also, report cards will be sent home with students on the last day of school. We cannot afford to mail report cards any more. We have an electronic grading system. The high school operates differently because of finals, etc. They will do as they have done in the past.

Carol Shamory said she cannot begin to tell you how wonderful it is to have access to PowerSchool. In South Bend, you cannot get information on your child and you cannot get through to the school. This is very effective as opposed to what is happening in South Bend. Dr. Bender said without having parent/conferences, this provides more information. Carol said her high school seniors are asking to see their grades more often.

- Fall Regional Conference

The conference will be held in Plymouth on October 14<sup>th</sup>. Board members should advise Joann if they are interested in attending.

- Certified Staff Attendance

He wanted to advise the board that these numbers are not reflective of anything negative. Last year we spent \$86,000 for substitute teachers for sick, maternity, personal and bereavement leave - which was 1,325 days. We are seeing more maternity leaves with the change in staff. For the first 20 days of school this year, we had 90 missed days for sick, personal, maternity and bereavement with 45 of those days for maternity. We have expended \$7,100 for substitutes.

Dr. Bender attended a meeting at the Service Center where they had a company come in that handles third party substitute teachers. They would work for this company. They do all the training and group them according to licenses. It tracks all the days for us - sick, personal, etc. The system would not allow the staff to exceed their limits. We will see if that is something the service center adopts. There is a fee for that, but we pay an individual now to do that here. Under this program, someone who wants to be a professional substitute can get health insurance and other benefits.

- Student transfers have been officially closed as of Friday, September 10<sup>th</sup>. Anyone wanting to come in now would have to pay full tuition.
- Negotiations will begin on October 4<sup>th</sup> and November 21<sup>st</sup>. We have a lot of areas to cover.
- Dr. Bender said there is an item on the agenda that he has an issue with. There is an action item to amend the agreement with the Co-op in the way we pay them. They want money in a timely fashion. They had a meeting last Friday with LaPorte. They said New Prairie is in arrears of \$357,000 that we owe from last year. South Central owes \$125,000; Westville - \$41,000 and Dewy/Cass - \$200,000. We have not paid because we had a cash flow issue. We will not jeopardize payroll to pay this. LaPorte took out a Tax Anticipation Loan on their end. They are now ahead by \$110,000. They are withholding stimulus money until we give them the money.

On a recommendation from our attorney and talking with Westville, we will contact an attorney from Michigan City to see if LaPorte can legally withhold this money. We are in arrears because of the situation with the county. The paperwork wants full payments by quarters. We have tried to pay by the month in the past. The first quarter due is \$250,000. We do not have the cash to do it. It is not a budget issue - it is a cash flow issue because we do not have money coming in from the county to pay this. We cannot take out any more bonds for money. Dr. Bender previously told the board and LaPorte that we should keep our own stimulus money. The other schools did not want to do that. The maintenance of effort of \$350,000 - they will put that into place. We are to be receiving stimulus money for each of our schools that we are not receiving.

Dr. Bender would like approval from the board to contact an attorney to discuss this. This is a real issue. He does not like how this has come down. We are forced to withhold money. It is not in our position. We have routinely paid \$75,000 to \$150,000 per month in the past. LuAnn said they cannot legally take that money to pay that off can they? Dr. Bender said that is what we have to find out. They wanted 7% to manage the money. After I talked to them, they reduced it to .7%. Dale asked if there is a chance we will be charged interest. Dr. Bender said it has not been done in the past. If times were going good, no one would pay late. LaPorte runs the board and they run this piece. It is a waste of time for the superintendents to sit in on the board meetings because LaPorte runs the whole thing. The principals have reports that are to be filed in November and we have no information to complete the report.

- Construction Update

Keith Dennis gave an update as follows:

- High School East is substantially complete. Only have balancing to get done. Waiting for controls to get their interface together.
- Sewer - The demolition of the wastewater treatment plant is moving along well. They will be taking down the fence in a few days and getting the new fence up. By the end of next week it should be completed.
- Detention Basin - Received new drawings today. They have a few ideas. Ed Sawa met with Prairie Excavating to get a cost.
- Met today with the cafeteria people on the new high school administration/cafeteria project. We are shooting to be in a position to bid in January or February for summer construction.

Bernie said when they were looking at the area, we were undecided where the line is. He said he looked at a new plat book and it goes through the lake. The school corporation owns a small portion of the lake. Keith said when they looked at the plat book, the line is where they thought it was. Bernie said the new book indicates it is through the lake.

Al asked about the wall for the middle school. Keith said the cost came in at \$61,000. We want to get some different quotes. We asked for some alternative designs. It is the wall that will match the west side. There are screens on the back side of our fencing. They can drop the roof - it does not have to have a roof. Dr. Bender said that is not our cost to absorb. They are willing to work with us.

- Unity Foundation

Dr. Bender reported that we have \$23,662 in the New Prairie Athletic Capital Projects Fund and \$158,073.87 in the Banzhaf Memorial Fund. We started with \$156,558.02 and paid out \$3,000 for scholarships. There were some losses in the investments, but not too bad.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

- Approve Resolution for South LaPorte County Co-op

Dr. Bender said the language they are asking for is somewhat appropriate. The problem is that Part "A" - the final settlement. It is reflective of final settlement with an ending date. That, with what we were told with the withholding of the stimulus funds, the recommendation would be that you not approve this for two reasons:

- (1) Not sure it is in our best interest
- (2) We need to send a message that we are not happy with what is occurring.

We hope things will change and get better.

The item died for the lack of a motion.

- Conflict of Interest Disclosure

The board approved the Conflict of Interest Disclosure for Al Williamson.

- The board approved the second reading and approval of board policies #0144.2, 2464, 3231, 5460, 6460, 7434, 7541 and 8600.01.
- The board approved the out of state field trips as presented:
  - (1) Jim Holifield has been working with the Chinese government on an exchange student program. They are waiting on the Chinese government. He said the group in charge of the exchange program has over-committed themselves to get the teacher here, so it will not happen for the first semester. The Chinese government put the clamps on any students coming over there because of the H1N1 flu. Principal Mah said they are very afraid of this. Jim wanted approval to move ahead for spring break if possible. There would be 15 students and 3 adults attend. It would be a 9-10 day trip - two of those days for travel. It would cost approximately \$2,500 of which \$1,200 is just for travel. They would be staying with host families. Discovery School used some of the cost to pay for the adult supervision. We will not do that.

Bernie asked what financial responsibility and liability would there be. The financial responsibility would possibly be a bus to Chicago. It would be no cost to the school. As for liability - Penn had to change the board policy to address the liability.

- (2) Spanish Exchange Program - Clara said Sandra Murray would like to take some students in conjunction with another school corporation on a tour to Spain. This would be a summer exchange trip. It would be all funded through the students - fundraisers and their own money. Clara is not sure how the liability works. Usually, those companies that put the trip together provide the liability. This is a private company.

Dr. Bender said we are asking that you look at the opportunity to pursue this as it comes along. We may have to add to our board policy.

The board approved the two trips.

- The board accepted the donation of \$50 for the mentoring program from the St. John Kanty Rosary Sodality.

Dr. Bender said we also received a grant from the Unity Foundation for the Activity Center for \$2,000.

## **DISCUSSION**

- Dr. Bender said he had the Breakfast with Bender meeting. Some of their interests were special education. We have a variety of backgrounds. Tom Horvath is the community member. He came away very enlightened. We will have Roberta Jensen and a new parent from Hudson Lake attend our next meeting. They have children attending, but dad feels they should continue going to school in Chicago because he is not sure we can provide what they need.
- Dr. Bender also started a roundtable with some middle school and high school students. They are average students in school. The high school students see issues and they want to see ways to correct it. One issue was the congestion in the cafeteria area. It is a very enjoyable group.

Bernie said he really enjoys reading the minutes from the Breakfast with Bender meetings. Dr Bender said the next meeting they want to discuss testing. They feel there is a large amount of testing being done.

## **BOARD COMMENTS**

- Dale Groves said with no parent conferences this year, he would like to encourage parents to make face to face contact with the teacher even if your student is doing well. Students like to hear you brag on them.
- Bernie would like to thank everyone for their help at the Invitational. He received many comments how impressed they are the way this is run. He received many positive comments.
- Bernie said he went to a volleyball match a few weeks ago. He was asked if it was possible to have the flag placed somewhere where it was more visible because that section of bleachers was not out.
- Bernie said Mr. Norm Barlof passed away. He was awarded the Peace Prize. He did genetic modifications in plants in foreign countries. He is credited with saving millions of lives. He was educated in a one-room school house. He

moved ahead to use technology that was available in every step of his life. In 1920, it was fine to educate like that, but today, it would not meet the criteria. We need to move ahead with what needs to be done and not say we did fine in the past. This individual moved forward. He is credited with the Green Revolution.

- LuAnn also wanted to comment on the invitational. She was at a walk in South Bend on Sunday. She heard a man comment that he had been at the invitational and he was raving how wonderful it was. Other people in front of her were there as well. She said there were many people who commented on how organized and awesome of an event this was.
- Dr. Bender said we have been assigned a representative from AdvancEd for District Accreditation. Maureen Stafford, who made a presentation to the board, will be our representative. He feels this is a plus to our corporation. Bernie said she makes presentations to the State Board of Education. Dr. Bender said we have been asked what the workload will be, but we do not know that at this time.
- Al said in reference to parent conferences and PowerSchool, he and his wife are on the site 4-5 nights a week. We emphasize that. Our kids know we are on it. He would like for teachers to stay on top of it. It works great.

Rebecca Higgins wanted to say that Doug Snyder is doing a great job at the high school.

The next meeting is October 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.