

## BOARD NOTES

January 25, 2010

The regular meeting of the School Board was held on Monday, January 25, 2010 with Al Williamson, LuAnn Schwingendorf, Bernie Baltes and Dale Groves present. Rich Shail was absent. Dr. Bender was also present.

Al Williamson reviewed guidelines for speaking on agenda items.

There was a motion by Groves, seconded by Baltes to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion was approved 4-0.

### **INSTRUCTIONAL PRESENTATION**

- Dr. Bender and the School Board wanted to recognize Olive Elementary School and Sherry Bailey for attaining the 4-Star Award. This award recognizes schools around the state who demonstrated attendance levels and student achievement as well as other areas. Sherry Bailey said this award is the result of hard work from all levels of staff at Olive Elementary School.
- Dr. Bender announced that the School Board was recognized for Outstanding Boardmanship from the ISBA for their participation in conferences and meetings.
- Dr. Bender announced that the students on the Academic Decathlon team received gold, silver and bronze medals at the recent state competition. They will be recognized at our next board meeting.
- The School Board recently wrote a letter to the Executive Director of the ISBA requesting that they consider freezing their employees' salaries and dues for their organization due to the hard economic climate. We received a letter from Frank Bush indicating that the dues would not be assessed and they will be recommending that the staff not receive an increase.

Bernie said that is the only issue that was addressed at the recent business meeting that received any discussion. He said it started with our resolution.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

- There was a motion by Baltes, seconded by Schwingendorf to approve the Consent Agenda as follows:
  - Minutes - Special Board Meeting - December 17, 2009; Special Organizational Meeting - January 6, 2010; Worksession - January 6, 2010
  - Financial Reports
  - Claims
  - Payroll
  - Personnel as follows:

### **CERTIFIED**

- Leaves/Resignations
  1. LeAnne Pease - 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher - Prairie View - Leave of absence beginning approximately March 15, 2010 and continuing thru the end of the 2009-2010 school year.
  2. Cassie Pavey - Kdg. Teacher - Rolling Prairie - Leave of absence beginning January 11, 2010 through February 19, 2010
  3. Steve Wade - Math Teacher - NPHS - Leave of absence beginning January 4, 2010 thru approximately January 29, 2010.
- Employment
  1. Susan Scott - Temporary Multi-Grade Remediation Teacher - Middle School, beginning approximately January 16, 2010 thru April 30, 2010.
  2. Matt Beahm - Temporary 4<sup>th</sup> Grade teacher - Prairie View - beginning approximately March 1, 2010 through April 9, 2010.
  3. Shannon Wilkins - Temporary 5<sup>th</sup> Grade teacher - Prairie View - beginning approximately March 15, 2010 and continuing thru the end of the 2009-2010 school year.
- Employment - Extra-Curricular
  1. Janet Pfeil - Science Fair Coordinator - Olive Elementary - 2009-2010 school year

## **NON-CERTIFIED**

- Leaves/Resignations/Reductions
  1. Annette Ringer - Employee Services - Central Office - Terminated due to reduction in staff effective January 15, 2010.
  2. Katie Bates - Bus Driver - Leave of absence beginning January 20, 2010 and continuing through February 19, 2010.
- Employment
  1. Tara Linborg - Cook - 4hrs. - Middle School
- Employment - Extra-Curricular
  1. Josh Bolakowski - Assistant Wrestling - 1/3 - Middle School
  2. Bobby Whitenack - Assistant Wrestling - 1/3 - Middle School
  3. Larry Szczechowski - Assistant Wrestling - 1/3 - Middle School
  4. Randy Curless - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls Basketball

The motion was approved 4-0.

## **REPORTS**

- Superintendent's Report
  - Dr. Bender said the majority of this evening will be dealing with reductions which will have an affect on everyone. He said it is just the beginning. This corporation, as well as other corporations are facing cutbacks. We have lost \$45,000 this month because of the cut. It brings other issues.
  - We have presented drafts of possible calendars for 2010-2011. We have presented these options to the Association for their input. We hope to bring back a recommendation to the board for approval in February. Some issues were brought up by the community. One item was Parent Conferences. Dr. Bender sent a note to the bargaining team regarding parent conferences, but did not receive a response.

We have put in the possibility of a fall break. We tried to address the issues of the long winter break with the two additional days before Christmas. Some people do not like the work days on the end of the break. Parents are ready for students to come back to school after

January 1<sup>st</sup>. We also experienced some issues with the Vocational Education students this past year because they were back in school while the other students were not. Teachers will bring back some comments and we will bring a final recommendation to the board.

- We will be talking about referendums. This corporation is looking at the possibility of two referendums. We have no CPF monies to do projects, and we would like to look at an operating referendum because we are the third lowest school in the state for per pupil expenditures. New Prairie receives \$5,300 per student. Dewey Twp. received \$12,000; Westville receives \$6,300, Michigan City receives \$7,300 and Munster receives \$6,500. We are ranked 328 out of 331 schools. We are third from the bottom. In addition to the state cutbacks, we are not at the dollar level with the rest of the state. We have discussed this with local representatives. They want to help, but it is very political.

To make up for these deficiencies, we will be putting together a broad-based committee made up of staff and community members to talk about this. We will hope that people understand how serious this situation is. It will take something like this for people to see how serious it is.

- We made application for the Race to the Top funds. About 90% of the Indiana schools signed on to do this. We did not get the Association to sign off on this. It means about \$126,000 to the corporation if we get it. We will meet with the Association if we get the money. If they are not in agreement, we will not apply.
- We will be discussing our financial dilemma. Dr. Bender called the LaPorte Herald Argus and asked them to send someone here for coverage. He was told they do not have anyone to cover this.

Keith Dennis distributed a copy of where we are and what we need to accomplish. The original budget was \$16,546,498. We are very slim on reserve funds. When we received notification about our tuition support, we were down \$167,000. We overestimated the Free and Reduced and Vocational classes. The state mandated reduction is \$712,000. When we negotiated the teacher contract, we settled for a stipend. We had \$275,000 in reserve for salary increases. Since it was distributed from last year's cash, it helped. So we have a shortfall now of \$545,901. Any cuts now will not have the full year impact. The certified step would be \$113,000. Therefore, the 2011 shortfall will be \$659,000.

Keith said there is legislation discussion to have the ability to take more monies out of the CPF. It sounds good, but Keith addressed the categories we currently handle from that fund. We do not have the amount of money in the CPF to take all that out. We have \$2 million to spend in 2010. We are already committed to \$1,985,869 in contracted expenses. We would then have \$385,000 as discretionary funds. We are suggesting moving \$85,000 which would leave a balance of \$299,000. Bernie said some legislation suggestions would more than offset the \$300,000. What they suggest we move over would be more than we have here. They keep shifting it there and then lower the money that you can have. Then they put property tax caps which will hurt us more. CPF has to absorb the circuit breaker.

Al Williamson said teachers, board members and community - we all have to buckle up. The financial state is terrible. It is an eye opener. We will all have to figure out how we can weather the storm. Education comes first. We will do what we have to. We have a great graduation rate here. We do not want to lose that.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

- There was a motion by Schwingendorf, seconded by Groves to approve the Conflict of Interest Disclosure for C.J.'s Outdoor services. The motion was approved 4-0.
- Reductions in Accordance with State Funding Cutbacks
  - Staff and Services as per the attached list:

Dr. Bender wanted to talk about how we arrived at this list. We had meetings with building level administrators on several occasions to see what could provide the least impact to the corporation. It is not surprising. Some were routine adjustments, but everything adds up. It does affect people. The reductions before you are what we talked about and have reviewed individually. It was clear from the Board president at our last meeting that the reductions in the corporation will come from recommendations from Dr. Bender and administration, but it is the board that makes the decision. It is not anything easy. This will not be the last time we will be doing this. This reduction tonight only amounts to half of what we need. We will do this in three separate sections: (1) Position Reductions; (2) Other Savings; (3) Transfer Expenditures to Other Funds. If all approved, it will amount to \$334,147.

- There was a motion by Baltes, seconded by Groves to approve the Position Reductions as presented:
  - Reduce Library Assistants by 2 hours at the Middle School and Elementary Schools
  - Reduce one Rolling Prairie Secretary by hours and days - 7 hrs. per day and 185 days. This makes Rolling Prairie the same as the other schools.
  - Reduce one Middle School Secretary by one hour and 185 days.
  - Eliminate High School Health Assistant. The corporation nurse will take over duties as school nurse.
  - Reduce Elementary and Middle School Health Assistants to four hours per day. Full-time nurse will rotate to all buildings on a regular basis.
  - Reduce Elementary Custodians to 1 ½ nights. We will reduce one custodian at one school by one and the other night custodian will alternate between two buildings. This will cut down on the cleaning. At Rolling Prairie we have a Performance Plus person and we will be cutting that person by half also.
  - Eliminated ATSE position at the High School/Middle School.
  - Reduce the High School Secretary from 12 months to 11 months (260 days to 230 days) and the Athletic Director from 11 months to 10 months (230 days to 206 days). Clara Clark will work on scheduling for these positions.
  - Reduce one Assistant Coach for Football, Boys Basketball, Girls Basketball, Baseball and Softball.

Bernie said the ATSE position hurts the most because it was put in place to keep students in school. But, he said he fully understands. Bernie said he wants everyone to understand that this is not something that is hammered down someone's throat and that it is a top-down thing. He wants to make sure we don't look like we are a "yes person" for the superintendent. He is not sure how to convey that to the general public. Dr. Bender said when these things come up around the state, they say a superintendent survives about 1 ½ years. We know how the public reacts. This is not just what Dr. Bender and Keith Dennis put together. Many of these items came from staff. He received over 90 ideas from staff to consider. None of this is what anyone wants to do. It is what it is. Al said this was a very hard thing to do.

The motion was approved 4-0.

- There was a motion by Schwingendorf, seconded by Groves to approve the reductions listed in Other Savings as listed:
  - Reduce temperatures and building hours and charging for building use. People say they pay taxes and they should be able to use it. People pay taxes for the jails, courthouses, etc. and they don't have the right to use it. It does not work like that. It does not give us the rights we think they should have. We will make an effort to reduce temperatures. We will set the temperatures at 68° where we have control. The Maintenance Director is looking at an overall assessment of the facilities - especially at Prairie View. We will also reinforce space heaters. This really brings the costs up.
  - Charging for Building Uses - 2 uses per week at \$50 would be about \$25,000. This is something that would require a policy change. We will look at this with a sliding rule charge depending on the groups. We will have a committee to work this through if it is something we want to pursue. We have a lot of uses in our buildings. We have people that pay taxes that never use the buildings.
  - Reduce Library Supplies by \$3,000 per school
  - Eliminate field trips that require substitute teachers. If a group goes on a field trip and we have to hire a substitute, it will not be permitted.

Bernie said charging for buildings - 2 uses per week! Dr. Bender said we just threw that in. Would people that use the buildings would be included in this? Dr. Bender said yes - it could general income. You have to be fair as well. You have Girl Scouts, 4-H, etc. They do not have the money. Bernie said when that policy is put together, he hopes you will take those groups into consideration. Dr. Bender said it will probably take six months to put together. It is something worth looking into.

Al said he talked to Dr. Bender about the building usage and the fact that people pay taxes for a lot of things that we cannot use. It will not happen tomorrow. It will take discussions.

Bernie said he is glad we are working toward an energy audit.

The motion was approved 4-0.

- There was a motion by Groves, seconded by Schwingendorf to approve the Transfer Expenditures to Other Funds as listed. These are General Fund expenditures that can be moved to the CPF.
  - Eliminate Lunchroom Assistants from the General Fund and transfer to the Cafeteria Fund
  - Trash Removal to Contract Services in the CPF

- Director of Finance to CPF. Keith Dennis said previously, part of his salary was in the General Fund. We will now put it all back in the CPF.
- Central Office Receptionist - We terminated the Payroll person and Tina Bunch moved back to that position. We are reducing the receptionist to half-time. Tina was paid from the Technology Fund. The savings will occur in CPF.
- Converting the high school custodian that is retiring and replacing him through Performance Plus.
- Convert Middle School night custodian to CPF. We had a position and a half in the General Fund in the Middle School that we did not fill. We will not fill that position. This will be filled with Performance Plus.

Bernie said everyone knows how he feels about the CPF. We do not have that fund any more. He said the CPF was put in place to make improvements to the facilities. Prior to that we had the Cumulative Building Fund. New Prairie did not have a CPF Fund until we built the elementary schools. Then they put the CPF Fund in place. We could collect \$1.25 per AV in the old formula. We could only collect \$1.164. Then it went to 41¢. Last fall they eliminated over \$1 million from that fund. Now it is about 35¢. He said it bothers him that the state says they are cutting property taxes. They are just shifting the responsibilities. The facilities funds are now part of the General Fund. We have to go for a referendum if we need to do anything for facilities. The state should be taking care of this.

The motion was approved 4-0.

Dr. Bender would like to make a plea. What we are proposing tonight is half of what we have to do. Basically what we approved had the affect on the CPF projects and non-certified employees. The Governor said you can make these cuts without interfering with teachers. Not here. About 77% goes for teachers' salaries and benefits. There are ways to get around this. We had a meeting scheduled for Thursday with the bargaining team that was changed. At some point in time we have to make more reductions. Some will be non-certified. We are looking at retirements. We have three that we know of. The deadline is February 1<sup>st</sup>. We do not know if there will be any more. That would be a big difference.

Dr. Bender said he would like to make a proposal that everyone in this corporation look at the possibility of taking a 1% salary reduction. That reduction, along with the retirees, we could come close to not requiring the staff reductions. It would require cooperation from the Association. If

everyone takes a little piece of it, then not everyone has to take a huge piece. It is something that needs to be considered. Everyone needs to think about it. This is not going to change next year. The Governor made it clear it will not change for next year.

Another thing that could happen is people can come to work. In this corporation we could have saved \$32,000 if they would have come to work. People get sick and you need that. But, every time someone takes a day off, it costs us money. We had \$150,000 budgeted into an account for people who do not come to work. This is difficult to take, but that is reality. This affects everyone in the corporation when they do not come to work. I have harped on this before. This amount does not include bereavement, professional days or maternity leave. This is just sick and personal days.

We are open to any ideas that will save the quality education in this corporation. It will take creative thinking to keep people in jobs. This is not something we created. It is not new to anyone. We are not where we want to be. There are things we have to be thinking about. Dr. Bender will host a question and answer session on the budget on Thursday, January 28<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 in the high school and 3:30 at Prairie View. He is also trying to arrange a meeting with Tony Bennett and legislators to address this funding issue. We are trying to provide avenues to share your personal thoughts and ideas. We need everyone's ideas to get us through. There are quality people in this room. People work hard to do what is best. It makes you sad when you have to do these things.

### **BOARD COMMENTS**

- Dale Groves would like to thank Olive and Sherry Bailey one more time for the 4-Star Award. He would also like to thank the parents who send their students to that school. It would not have happened if it were not for them. Bernie agreed.
- Al Williamson wanted to say how tough this was tonight. We have a quality education program here, with the graduation rate thru Clara Clark. We have received notoriety. There is not a single board member that has not been hit by this. We have a great leader here doing everything he can. Bernie is working with the legislators. We need to all work together. When this happens, it hurts students and board members. Elections are coming up. It is cuts that none of us want to do. We need to weather the storm.

On a motion by Baltes, the meeting was adjourned at 7:06.