

BOARD NOTES
March 22, 2010

The regular meeting of the school board was held on Monday, March 22, 2010 with all board members present.

Rich Shail reviewed guidelines for speaking on agenda items.

The board adopted the agenda as presented.

Dr. Bender announced that he had guests from his Leadership Class he teaches at Notre Dame. They are required to experience a board meeting. Also in attendance were his students from his finance class that he also teaches at Notre Dame.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRESENTATION

- Clara Clark advised that a Broadcast program was created at New Prairie High School this year. The class submitted an application to the Obama Challenge. Chrystal Wilkeson and students, Tara Hillegonds, Ricky Cody and Alex Kutz reviewed the process and essay that was submitted on behalf of the NPHS. Rich Shail said this is why he is so proud to be a part of New Prairie.
- Clara Clark also advised that New Prairie High School has participated in the Harvest Learning Initiative led by Roberta Jansen. This program teaches leadership and business in gardening. There is collaboration between the following teachers – Marcy Kauffman assisting in business and careers; Bill Spier assisting in population growth; and Josh Bolakowski assisting in business involvement in the community. They also worked with the Leadership of Indiana, professors from Illinois, Stanz Foods, Solid Waste as well as the following customers – Jarka Produce, Grocers by Joe and Jennie Rae’s Restaurant.
- The board recognized the Vocal and Piano students who competed at the state level. The board also recognized Carol Shamory for her efforts.
- The board recognized the Instrumental Music students who also competed at the state level. Mark Belsaas was also recognized for his efforts.

- Two students were recognized for their art work as they were selected for national scholastic and art awards. Theresa Serry has worked with these students.
- The Prairie View Math Bowl students were recognized for placing second in state competition. Sue Koziel was also recognized.
- Rebecca Miko was recognized for her selection to the All State Band by the Band Masters Association.
- Yvonne Derosiers was recognized as a recipient of the Lilly Foundation Grant in the amount of \$8,000 for professional development. Yvonne advised that as part of the grant, they asked the individual to look outside the box of their current educational field. Yvonne has chosen to study guitar and will travel to Ireland, Michigan and other states to review concerts and increase her knowledge in the field.

CONSENT ITEMS

- The board approved the Consent Items as follows:
 - Minutes – February 22, 2010
 - Financial Reports
 - Claims
 - Payroll
 - Personnel Report as follows:

CERTIFIED

- Leaves/Resignations/Retirements
 1. Jennifer Smith – Revised leave of absence – Return date April 26, 2010 rather than approved May 3rd return date.
 2. Karen Lindley -Math Teacher - NPHS - Retirement effective at the end of the 2009-2010 school year
 3. Kathy Nova – PE Teacher - NPHS – ½ Time effective for the school year 2010-2011
 4. Dan Shead – Drafting/CAD Teacher - NPHS – ½ Time effective for the school year 2010-2011

- Employment - Extra-Curricular
 1. Diana Jones – RTI Co-Chair – Olive
 2. Allison Middlebrook – RTI Co-Chair – Olive
 3. Kristen Kleist & Rachel Chelminiak – RTI –Co-Member Pool -1/9 – Olive
 4. Leifschon Walker – RTI – Co-Member Pool – 1/9 – Olive
 5. Wendy Sundwall RTI – Co-Member Pool – 1/9 – Olive
 6. Linda Behm – RTI – Co-Member Pool – 1/9 – Olive
 7. Cindy Schuler – RTI – Co-Member Pool – 1/9 – Olive
 8. Linda Krick – RTI – Co-Member Pool – 1/9 – Olive
 9. Casey Gumm – RTI – Co-Member Pool – 1/9 - Olive
 10. Zeda Waszuluski – RTI – Co-Member Pool – 1/9 - Olive
 11. Jennifer Rose – RTI – Co-Member Pool – 1/9 - Olive
 12. Melissa Kobitz – RTI Chair – Prairie View
 13. Krissy Surma – RTI Chair – Rolling Prairie
 14. Melanie Cloonan – RTI Co-Member Pool – 1/6 – Rolling Prairie
 15. Vicky Mosson – RTI Co-Member Pool – 1/6 – Rolling Prairie
 16. Amy Surma – RTI Co-Member Pool – 1/6 – Rolling Prairie
 17. Gabriela Post – RTI Co-Member Pool – 1/6 – Rolling Prairie
 18. Melissa Kuczanski – RTI Co-Member Pool – 1/6 – Rolling Prairie
 19. Lisa Smiertelny – RTI Co-Member Pool – 1/6 – Rolling Prairie
 20. Sharon Bashaw – RTI Co-Member Pool – 1/3 – Prairie View
 21. Wendi Hemphill – RTI Co-Member Pool – 1/3 – Prairie View
 22. Sue Koziel – RTI Co-Member Pool – 1/3 – Prairie View

REPORTS

- Superintendent's Report

Dr. Bender gave an update on the financial issues. He said he is very pleased to announce that our financial outlook for this year and next year looks good. We have nine retirees which has helped us. Clara Clark is in the process of redesigning the schedule at the high school using the Block 8 and routine scheduling. Departments will decide how they want to schedule students. All Math classes will meet every day. Science will work on a block schedule. There will be flexibility to the departments to make this work. Dr. Bender said we believe this is the right direction to go. It is in the best interest to have exposure to Math every day. It has been an area of concern.

We have two retirees at the high school which will not be replaced. Two retirees – Math and Vocal Music will be replaced. We also have two teachers at the high school interested in going half-time to help our situation. Those positions are Industrial Arts and P.E. Another teacher is looking at a Sabbatical and the Association will approve the Memorandum of Understanding to pursue this request. We may also have an adjustment in English that may also help.

At the Middle School, the Principal and Assistant Principal have been working on a new schedule similar to other middle schools. The 45-minute team will no longer exist. Those teams will now meet two days per week that will allow for core teachers to have six periods per day. There will be very little alteration. We have three retirees in the middle school, but no one from outside the corporation will be hired. Adjustments will be held within. One teacher will go to the elementary school. Classes will be at about 30 students. We will watch the enrollment in the building. Dr. Bender said he wants to commend the administration at the Middle School. It is a huge savings to the corporation and it is in the best interest of the students.

In the Elementary Schools – enrollment has stayed about the same at Rolling Prairie and Olive. At Rolling, we have teachers funded from Title monies. Until we find out what those monies will be, we will have to wait to make adjustments. Three new teachers will be placed on RIF. That RIF will include kindergarten. There were four fulltime kindergarten teachers this year. We hope to have that for next year. Because of timelines, we will have to RIF.

We have two additional changes at Prairie View because of numbers. We currently have enrollment of about 365 and we are anticipating 300 students for next year. We will look at reducing two teachers from that building. The number levels are close. If those numbers increase, they will be brought back. In the past, with healthier times, we would not have reduced them. We feel comfortable that we will be able to bring a number of those individuals back. We will not be able to make those projections at this time. One teacher was paid from Title II funds. Because of enrollment, we were able to pay the teacher. Those funds will have to go towards full-day kindergarten. We hope to be able to place those teachers for 2010-2011.

Overall, this is very good news. We are very fortunate we made drastic moves early which helped. We are looking at how we are delivering curriculum. Keith Dennis and I feel confident moving into the new year and hope we will not have to have further cuts. We wanted to give that information to the board and public. What some schools are beginning to face, we have completed.

Bernie said what also has helped us out is the employees taking a 1% reduction. Dr. Bender said many of you know that teachers took a vote for a 1% reduction in pay. We are proud that everyone understands the situation. That vote would apply to all employees including certified, non-certified, administrators and board members. Those individuals who have had their positions cut would not take this additional reduction. People want to sustain what we have here. This will carry this corporation through.

ACTION ITEMS

- The board approved the second reading and adoption of the following board policies: #1521, 2221, 2700, 3121, 3142, 3430.01, 3437, 4121, 4430.01, 4437, 7440, 7440.01, 7540.03, 7540.04, 7542, 7543, 8121, 8315, 8330, 8351, and 8600.
- The board approved the 2010-2011 school calendar – Draft #4 as presented. Bernie feels this calendar is a step in the right direction. He liked students getting out of school prior to Memorial Day. He also liked the idea of starting later. He feels if we could extend the day, we would be able to condense this more. He said he wished the legislators could do that for us. The cost savings would be tremendous.

Dale feels this is a step in the right direction. He has concerns because he does not see Parent/Teacher conferences. He said in his opinion, it is an important link between the school and home. We are missing some things if we do not have this. Students and teachers will miss that. Also, starting after Labor Day – individuals have asked him why we do not do this. They do this in Michigan. He said he would be interested in seeing what savings we might see in August with air conditioning, etc. Because of that, he said he will not support this calendar.

Dr. Bender said he made approaches to the Association about Parent/Teacher Conferences and there was no discussion. We looked at a start date after Labor Day and it would extend the end of the semester into January. Also, it would extend the ending date to June 17th. With no snow days included, we could go to June 24th with make-up days. We did look at this. We felt like we should take baby steps this year. There are

86 days for the first semester. It is usually 90 days. Teachers felt it was doable. Students are in school about a week later. We tried to match the calendar with LaPorte and Michigan City. We need to plan accordingly. All schools are looking at the Labor Day issue. The work day and In-Service in December is also a change. Parents always talked about students having the Winter Break and then the additional days off after the New Year. We have contractual obligations with two days at the end of the semester. This year, students will be back in school on January 3rd. The work days will be December 20-21. This draft was proposed by the teachers. Legislators advised us that we need to be looking at starting later. One reason is to keep the legislators out of it and having a local control of the calendars. We did not want that mandate from the start. We are approving the calendar for one year at a time. ISTEP is in the spring now.

Bill Kaminski spoke with the local legislators about saving money with the late start date. Going with a required number of student days makes it impossible to be flexible. He said we do not want days – we want minutes. The legislators felt it was difficult for this session. It is not out of the question yet. It will be discussed. We can work out many issues if we can work with minutes rather than days. Bill said he has discussed this with the legislators.

Highlights of the calendar are:

Teachers 1st Day – August 12
Students 1st Day – August 16
Fall Break – October 15 (no school)
Thanksgiving – November 25-26
Teacher Work Day/In-Service – December 20-21
Winter Break – December 22-31
Martin Luther King Day – February 17 (No school)
Spring Break – April 4-8
Good Friday – April 22
Last Student Day – May 26
Last Teacher Day – May 27

- The board approved the summer band program as presented. Dr. Bender advised that he met with the band director and understands we must run those programs. Mark Belsaas was able to reduce the number of hours by 45 hours and by 39 hours for Gail Bannister. Dr. Bender appreciates their movement to reduce the number of hours for the band program. He is pleased with what they are trying to do. Bernie agrees with what Dr. Bender said. He wants Dr. Bender to make sure that Mark Belsaas and Gail Bannister are aware of their feelings with making the reductions.

BOARD COMMENTS

- Dr. Bender said at the end of the legislative session, Bill #1367 allowed for school corporations to make fund transfers. Because of the amount of increase in steps for certified personnel, it does not put us in line. You could not reach 2% and our step and lane reaches up to 3%. There will probably be changes in the future. With finances, we do not need to make any transactions.
- Bernie said there was a negative comment made recently about “living in the middle of a cow pasture.” He distributed a copy of an article called “Listen Up, City Slickers!” “The Rules of the Country Are as Follows.” He said every person alive is involved in agriculture. If people want to negatively regard agriculture, they better read the article, because that is where it all starts.
- Al wanted Dr. Bender to send something to every member of the staff for helping us out of this crisis. We all decided to make cuts. The cuts made at the high school and middle school – we could not have done this without you. Al said he cannot thank you enough. You made our jobs so much easier. We had many sleepless nights over this. Plymouth took the 1% reduction. LaPorte is really struggling. Thank you from me and the board.