

BOARD NOTES
May 24, 2010

The regular meeting of the School Board was held on Monday, May 24, 2010 with Al Williamson, Bernie Baltes, LuAnn Schwingendorf, and Dale Groves 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.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRESENTATION

- Senator Jim Arnold and Representative Tom Dermody gave an update on the short session.

Senator Arnold wanted to thank the corporation for asking them to attend their meetings. He said he will miss Dr. Bender. He said Dr. Bender kept in touch with him and Tom Dermody more than any other superintendent in the state. He would like to pay homage to the New Prairie Schools for voting for the 1% cut in order to save positions. He feels more schools should have taken the initiative to do what New Prairie did. Other schools around the state did not care about losing their fellow employees. They just wanted their raise.

Senator Arnold said he and Rep. Dermody have had the good fortune of working with Mike Babcock at the high school. Mr. Babcock has invited them to come in and talk to his classes about legislative issues.

Senator Arnold said this was a short session. They had to be out by March 15th and they finished very late in the morning on the 14th. They feel they accomplished some good and bad things. There were 811 bills proposed and 239 made it out of the house. There were 150 people trying to do the best job. He said everyone works hard.

For schools, there were two big issues – school funding for the CPF to be used for merit raises and utilities. We did not all agree, but we had to give schools relief.

Unemployment Insurance – We had to delay. You cannot cut people off without any jobs. We have to help small business people. We need to be sure people have jobs. We are working every day to try and get businesses here. We have been working on the intermodal for LaPorte. If you have concerns, please sign up for my e-mail – s8@iga.in.gov . You will get updates from my newsletters. He said times are not good. We have to work together. We will get through this. We hope Indiana will be a better place to live. We are always available to you.

Rep. Dermody would like to congratulate Dr. Bender on his new position. He enjoyed working with him. He said Senator Arnold covered what we have been through. Let's do what is right for our district. He had three bills that were not allowed to go through because his name was on it. He had to remove his name for them to get through. We need to get rid of the politics and do what is best. People are not working. We rely on taxes to generate monies. When people are not working, they are not buying and we are not getting tax dollars. We are \$900 million short that we are dealing with. Next year the federal government will be taking away over \$25 million in rebates from the pharmaceuticals. That is over \$3.5 billion the state will lose for Medicare in our state. We have to generate more revenue or make cuts.

The funding formula – New Prairie is third from the bottom in funding receiving \$5,300 per student. Gary and Indianapolis get \$9,000 per student. Because we do not have a large amount of poor children, we do not get as much. We have to take a look at who is getting what and are we getting the return for those dollars. They have to ask Gary and Indianapolis to justify those dollars. We need to show other legislators the difficulty of receiving only \$5,300. People are starting to spend more. We are preparing for more cuts in the budget. He has met with ISTA, ISBA members and the Superintendent's Association to see where we are and what do they need and what is important. He wants to know how we can help them. Over the next month, we will start looking at ideas on how we can help education. He and Senator Arnold worked hard on the cold storage in LaPorte. We just need them to sign the deal.

We have some difficult decisions to make with Medicare and the prison population. Indiana puts more people away than anywhere in the U.S. We need to find alternative housing. It costs \$25,000 to house a prisoner. As for Medicare, he goes to the emergency rooms and watches the abuse of the system. He watched a women come in with her son who had cut his chin. She was 9th in line to be cared for. She felt she needed more priority and walked across the street to Arby's and called 911 because she felt she would be moved up. That 911 call costs \$500 which we all will absorb in our insurance.

Bernie said for the benefit of everyone here, Tom and Jim do more for the people in LaPorte County than any other legislators in the state. We can be very thankful for the time they put in. Dale Groves has proposed a bill suggestion. He said in Michigan, school employees are able to purchase years of service and based on the percentage you make for the best five years. You can work 25 years and have five extra years of service and retire at an earlier age. He wonders if people could retire earlier, it may save money down the line. A teacher with burn-out may be able to retire earlier if they choose and still get the full service credit. Jim Arnold believes this is already in effect in Indiana. Dale is not sure of the money issue, but it may save money down the line. Tom Dermody said the pre-96 retirement plan in the state is very underfunded. He would have to see if that would put us further in the hole. The new post-96 plan is well funded. In the 96 plan, you have to pay 7% to the retirement. In July, it was going to go to 7 ½ %. His bill allowed us to stay at 7%. Teachers were upset, but it saved money for schools. Dale said the program is not free. He had to pay a few thousand dollars to buy the years. He said it might be better to allow some people to leave. Tom asked about insurance if they would leave early. He said he will look into that.

Dale asked if Tom has the cost to administer the ISTEP in Indiana. Tom believes it is about \$45 million between the ISTEP and Remedial testing. Dale asked if there is something we could do to administer this on-line. Dr. Bender said they are working on putting this on-line; however, even with our advanced technology at New Prairie, he does not know how it would work. We could not get it to move fast enough with our high tech here.

Bernie told Jim and Tom that anytime they need someone to testify for anything, they should contact us here at New Prairie. Tom said when you talk about getting more dollars for New Prairie, you are taking more money away from Gary and Indianapolis schools. They have a large political group and they will fight for the money. This is what we have been up against.

Dr. Bender said the Department of Education is making changes in the Title I distribution at the state level. Those dollars have been sent to us over a period of a year. Now, rather than sending the money to us first, we have to pay for the services up front and send the monies to them two times a month. Why did the administration and state superintendent decide to do something like this? Tom said he knows this will drain the cash flow of the corporations. He just heard about this on Friday. He has a question submitted to the DOE for an answer. It would put cash in their pockets. He believes there are some federal requirements. It will take some small schools out of the federal reimbursement. Those schools do

not have the manpower to keep up with this. Dr. Bender said our school corporation does not have the manpower to keep up with it. Tom said he believes it is a cash flow benefit. He said please understand what you are saying. We are trying to determine who is mandating this. We have been told some of it is coming from the federal levels. Dr. Bender said anything you can do to find out about this would help. We have teachers that would get paid from that funding. It is the manpower and the pinch we will feel with the money. Jim said sometimes they do not know these things are going on until it is out there. Tom would like everyone to work with them on ideas. They need help.

BOARD RECOGNITION

- The board recognized Tina Bernth who was selected as R.O.C.K. Supervisor of the Year. Dr. Bender said this is an after school program that Tina has administered for many years. She does what is best for the community and the students. He would like to recognize her for all the areas she works with. This award was brought to my attention by one of our other schools that Tina does not even serve.
- The board recognized the Prairie View Student Council who was awarded State Honor Council. Jemiah Feece said there were only 20 groups that were recognized. Prairie View was the only school recognized for the first time. Jemiah said the students have worked very hard this year, making this one of their goals. They have raised money for the Children's Hospital and Ronald McDonald House.
- Allison Middlebrook was awarded the 2010 Age of Excellence.
- Amy Myers, Melissa Kobitz and Rachel Ralston presented the Literacy Program. Angie Hambling would like to compliment these three teachers for the classes they have taken and the time it has taken to become the Literacy Coach. Each school has a team of 7-8 teachers who have attended training. Next year they will all be coaching individual grade levels. At Rolling, they will work with grades K-1 and at Prairie View they will have K-3. Bernie said it ties in with the school improvement plans. Dale said with the information distributed by Tom Dermody, this program will help improve reading skills in grades K-3. New Prairie is ahead in this area. Melissa said she is very excited to introduce this with their students. Dr. Bender said the board has signed off for another year for this program. Dr. Bender would like to thank all the teachers and principals for working on this program.

CONSENT ITEMS

- The board approved the consent items as follows:
 - Minutes – April 26, 2010
 - Financial Reports
 - Claims
 - Payroll
 - Personnel as follows:

CERTIFIED

- Resignations/Retirements
 1. Dr. Philip Bender – Superintendent – Resignation effective June 30, 2010
- Employment
 1. Jim Schwingendorf – PE/Health Teacher – NPHS – effective with the start of the 2010-2011 school year.

NON-CERTIFIED

- Leaves/Resignations
 1. Robert DeMeyer – Bus Mechanic – Leave of absence beginning April 28, 2010 for approximately 6-8 weeks.
 2. Heather Alva – Secretary – Middle School – Leave of absence beginning June 11, 2010 to September 2, 2010.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- Dr. Bender advised that we have large issues with the federal monies. We will have to see how we work through this. It is another example of putting something back on us.
- PLTW – We received national recognition. Clara said as part of our initial agreement, we had to be reviewed after several years. We were reviewed last week. We received the recognition for our program. They originally said the grant was not approved. Now they said they will fund it at 1/3 the level we received before. We will receive about \$10,000.

- Textbook Collections - The percent of non-payment is the lowest it has been in the past. The figures at the top are what the collection agency has collected. The real benefit is those that we have pursued. Keith said people that did not pay in the past have indicated that no one ever did anything about it.
- Year-to-Date Attendance Summary for 2009-2010

Dr. Bender reviewed the attendance summary from August to date – 168 working days. We have spent \$145,707.00 for substitute teachers only. Only \$18,000 of that amount was for professional leaves. We are well over from last year. Dr. Bender said this is a large issue. This is the cost of two teachers. He understands teachers get sick and there are family illnesses. Our teachers are in the classroom about 85% less than students. It is a hard sell to the public when people want to go on vacation and we cannot get our staff to be here. It happens around the state. It has to do with the buy-out in the past, but it does not happen like this.

Dr. Bender said another piece is the Family Medical Leave Act. These areas put a crunch on schools. He addressed this to the teachers at the high school and they resented it. Here are the facts. We have dedicated people that come to school every day. We are going to have to look at this.

A parent asked if there is a point system. Where he works, if people miss work, it goes on a point system. Dr. Bender said in the world of education, we award and accumulate sick days. Teachers have the ability to accumulate those days. We have a number of people who will request sick bank days when they are out of their days. Unfortunately, we do not have that piece and it would have to be negotiated. It is an antiquated system that needs to be looked at. These numbers cost the school.

Dale asked if on any given day we could see a percentage of staff off. Dr. Bender said the day before spring break was high because this year they did not get penalized two days for one prior to spring break. Then we had the snow make-up day in May. Friday became the four-day work week. There were many days off there. Sherry said Fridays in May are very difficult to find substitutes because of so many days off.

- Current Enrollments for 2010-2011

Kindergarten enrollments are moving up. We have closed enrollment at the 6th grade from outside the corporation. Since funding is not coming with the number of students, we cannot add staff like in the past. Enrollment is at 2754 which is about 29 ½ more than the ADM count. The Olive kindergarten and third grade has been closed. We still have issues at Prairie View. We may have to add a teacher back there, but we need to be cautious before doing this. Kindergarten enrollment usually jumps at Rolling. We still have two Riffed teachers that could be filled by that. Dr. Bender has asked Keith to be aware of this additional staffing possibility.

- Field Trips and F/R

We have a number of children – 37% on free and reduced. This is better than 1/3. This is the highest it has been at New Prairie. When we do field trips, we need to spread them out more. The middle school and elementary schools have 27 field trips in 17 days. We must offer a hot lunch for any student on free and reduced. We are estimating lost sales in the food service at \$4,000 in wages. When we have students go on field trips and only a few teachers are left back, they are not sent home without pay. Our food service employees do not get paid if they do not work. The food service department is run independently and they work in the black. It could be a general fund issue if we do not run that program in the black. That is what could happen. We need to balance some things out.

- Summer Projects – Greg Dudeck

Greg reviewed the following projects that will be completed during the summer:

- Repair some drain sumps at the high school
- Auditorium lighting
- In-house maintenance on compressor, etc. which could save us about \$4,000 - \$5,000.
- Exterior doors
- Valves at Olive
- Wallpaper replacement at Olive
- Playground repair at Rolling
- Hot water heater replacement – in-house repair (about \$2,000 labor savings)
- Corporation asphalt at all buildings except middle school
- Roof maintenance

- Bleacher service
- Gym floor re-surfacing
- Re-keying
- Water testing
- Wireless connection repairs

ACTION ITEMS

- The board approved the Textbook Fees for the 2010-2011 school year as follows:
 - Kindergarten - \$60
 - Grades 1-2 - \$91
 - Grades 3-5 - \$93
 - Grades 6-8 - \$130
 - Grades 9-12 – Based on course selection

- The board approved the School Improvement Revisions for all schools for the 2010-2011 school year as presented.

AI asked if there is anything they need to know in the plan changes. Sherry said they have a K-2 Literacy goal which goes along with the literacy framework that we saw tonight. Marcia said you will find that in all three elementary schools. Angie said they are pleased with the progress they have made. All elementary schools have worked hard together. Bernie said that was not always the case in the past.

- The board approved the student handbooks for all schools, including the athletic handbook for the 2010-2011 school year as presented. Bernie wanted to clarify the early start and those students that qualify for the state fair. Clara said we always make sure they can attend. Bernie asked about drug testing. We have it for students, but what about the employees. Dr. Bender said you would have to research that with Bill Kaminski. It may be a union issue. He is not saying right or wrong, but we do a lot of background checks on employees. The board may want to address this.

Angie said she will put the general handbooks on line rather than printing them. We will only print the individual books. If they want a hard copy, they have to ask us. That will save a lot of money.

Marcia said Prairie View applied for school-wide Title II and they may have to make some changes.

Sherry said she will put the newsletter on e-mail. Al said he would encourage that as a parent. Marcia said Prairie View did a survey and 80% of the parents prefer a hard copy for handbooks, report cards, etc. It is difficult to change. Sherry agreed.

- The board approved the second reading and adoption of Board Policy 2261.01 – Parent Participation in Title I Programs.
- The board approved the donation of a printer for the middle school from Lisa Crawford-Tuszynski.

DISCUSSION

- Keith Dennis indicated that the School Facility Committee made up of 25 members met about five times. The group shifted and changed. We discussed financial items and toured facilities. We had a voting device at the final meeting. The voting results are as follows:
 - 88% favored the cafeteria renovation at the high school
 - 81% favored the technology
 - 79% favored the kitchen renovation at Rolling Prairie
 - 32% for the administration office complex. That type of project garners very little support around the state.
 - 8% for the parking improvements – no support

Keith felt we had good support for the five projects. We have submitted an application for a qualified school construction bond which is due by June 1st. This was submitted for the cafeteria project and the Rolling Prairie kitchen project. This is an interest free bond. This is a 17-year maximum bond limited to under \$2 million. You do not need any public input for anything up to \$2 million. The state has \$183 million from the stimulus money. Of that amount, \$100 million is for over \$2 million projects and \$83 million for under \$2 million projects. There are 27 applications and they can fund 40. All of those projects could be funded. We hope we get it. We will know by June 30th.

Keith asked if we should proceed with the referendum with the rest of the projects in case we do not get this funding. If you decide to do this, you must do a 1028 hearing by the end of June. Dr. Bender said the board should decide whether to go with the referendum. Those schools that passed the referendum were from corporations with growth and higher income areas. Those that did not pass were those areas struggling with job issues, etc. It would take a huge education to the public to understand the financial funding. Bernie does not feel we are prepared to go with a referendum at this time based on what he has heard in the community. If

you fail, where do you go from there? There is a lot of negativity. Bernie said his people were not in favor of the \$20 million project. It would take a large selling job and we are not there. Dale has not heard anyone say anything to him. He said he mentioned this previously that this is not the right time to do this. He agrees with Bernie. He is keeping his fingers crossed that the \$2 million project will go. He still does not support the projects with all of them in there. Educating the community is essential. Keith said from what he hears, it takes one year to educate the public. We tried it in five months and it set us back. Dr. Bender does not feel we had any take-charge members to bring this forward. After the 1028 hearing, we cannot be in charge. People want to see the superintendent visible on these projects to be successful.

Al feels if we put this out there now, we will lose it for 2-3 years. Let's get our ducks in a row before going forward. Dr. Bender said if we get the \$2 million, we have to use this piece to educate the community. School deterioration will destroy a community. People have to understand how important your school facilities are. Those are things that would have to be put out to the community. The responsibility depends on your facilities. Quality facilities are the selling point for this corporation.

Bernie said about six months ago there was an article in the South Bend Tribune about Michigan schools and the transients 7-8 years ago. River Valley had a referendum that failed. They were losing students because of the facilities. When the facilities deteriorate, the student population goes down. LuAnn said she talked to an individual and agrees.

BOARD COMMENTS

- Dale would like to thank Kregg VanMeter for the work he has done at the Activity Center. He had an opportunity to work with him and his program. He works very hard with those students.
- Dale said his son just finished his first year at New Prairie. He and his wife could not be happier with his experience.
- Bernie said at the Top Ten dinner, of all the years he has attended, the type of teachers the students select indicates that it is not just what happens in the classroom but how that teacher relates to the students on a personal level, coaching, etc. that makes the difference. It is not always the 2 + 2 in the classroom. That is something we need to stress for the impact on what they have on a student that is not just in the classroom. We have no way of recognizing that. ISTEP does not do justice to those types of things. He said "hats off to those teachers."

- Al said he accepted a letter of resignation tonight that saddens him. He is sorry to see Dr. Bender go. We are going to miss him. Dr. Bender said the board will go into executive session this evening to review applications. We have about 18 applications. The Board decided not to work with a selection team. They decided to solicit applications and we have received a number of quality applicants. Sherry Bailey said they will have pretty big shoes to fill.

2009-10 School Year-to-date Attendance Summary

08/11/09 - 05/14/10

Certified Staff

177 working days

	# of staff	Sick Days	Family Illness Days	Maternity/ Medical Leaves (not incl. in sick day count)	Other: Jury duty, Days w/o pay, Bereavement	Personal	Professional Leaves	Grand totals
High School	52							
Total Days:		212.5	47	23	31	102	70	485.5
Cost for Substitutes		\$ 14,489.00	\$ 3,045.00	\$ 6,960.00	\$ 2,135.00	\$ 6,009.00	\$ 4,007.00	\$ 36,645.00
Middle School	35							
Total Days:		174	70.5	123	43	83	41	534.5
Cost for Substitutes		\$ 11,375.00	\$ 4,693.00	\$ 16,126.00	\$ 3,340.00	\$ 7,150.50	\$ 2,404.00	\$ 45,088.50
Olive	22							
Total Days:		70.5	28.5	0	4	36	71	210
Cost for Substitutes		\$ 4,427.50	\$ 1,603.00	\$ -	\$ 259.00	\$ 2,208.50	\$ 3,535.00	\$ 12,033.00
Rolling Prairie	25							
Total Days:		80	27	69	25.5	73.5	89.5	364.5
Cost for Substitutes		\$ 4,336.50	\$ 2,068.00	\$ 8,143.00	\$ 1,725.00	\$ 4,123.00	\$ 4,854.50	\$ 25,250.00
Prairie View	18							
Total Days:		89.5	30.5	68	48	46	81	363
Cost for Substitutes		\$ 5,771.00	\$ 1,883.00	\$ 7,246.00	\$ 3,755.00	\$ 2,897.50	\$ 5,138.00	\$ 26,690.50
CORPORATION TOTALS:								
Total Days:		626.5	203.5	283	151.5	340.5	352.5	1957.5
Cost for Substitutes		\$ 40,399.00	\$ 13,292.00	\$ 38,475.00	\$ 11,214.00	\$ 22,388.50	\$ 19,938.50	\$ 145,707.00