



# Wisconsin Rapids Board of Education

510 Peach Street · Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494 · (715) 424-6701

## MINUTES

John A. Krings, President  
John Benbow, Jr.  
Troy Bier  
Larry Davis  
Sandra K. Hett  
Katie Medina  
Mary Rayome

July 13, 2020

### REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

LOCATION: Thomas A. Lenk Educational Center, 510 Peach Street, Wisc. Rapids, WI 54494  
Conf. Rm. A/B

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: John Benbow, Troy Bier, Larry Davis, Sandra Hett, John Krings, Katie Medina, Mary Rayome

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Craig Broeren, Daniel Weigand, Roxanne Filtz, Brian Oswald, Danielle Scott, Phil Bickelhaupt, Ronald Rasmussen, Nic Sydorowicz

MEDIA PRESENT: Kevin Bargender – River Cities Community Access

President John Krings called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

#### Special Presentation – Student Representative

Mr. Krings presented special recognition to outgoing Student Representative Jacqueline Sii, thanking her for her service to the Board during the 2019-20 school year. Mr. Krings then welcomed incoming Student Representative Rachel Marten, who will be serving during the 2020-21 school year.

#### Special Recognition – District Retirees

Mr. Krings presented special recognition to retiring professional staff members Lori Thompson and Mary Schultz, thanking them for their many years of service with WRPS.

#### Approval of Minutes

**Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by Larry Davis to approve regular Board of Education meeting minutes of June 8, 2020. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### Comments from Citizens and Delegations

None.

#### Committee Reports

A. Educational Services Committee – July 6, 2020. Report given by Mary Rayome.

Ms. Rayome reviewed the following consent agenda items brought before the Board through the Educational Services Committee, and asked if there were any motions to be held:

ES-1 Approval of the pupil academic standards that will be in effect for the 2020-21 school year as presented.

ES-2 Approval of the b.e.s.t. grant application for the 2020-21 school year.

- ES-3 Approval of Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Indian Education Grant application for the 2020-21 school year.
- ES-4 Approval of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Grant application for the 2020-2023 school years.
- ES-5 Approval of the purchase of 110 Acellus Academy licenses to be used during the 2019-20 LHS Summer School program.
- ES-6 Approval of the purchase of Seesaw for Schools for a three-year period at a total cost of \$35,268.75 from the technology and curriculum budgets, with 50% of total cost being paid in Year 1 and 25% of total cost being paid in each subsequent year for a total savings of \$1,856.25.

**Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to approve consent agenda items ES 1-6. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.**

Ms. Rayome provided updates and reports on:

- Roxanne Filtz, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, explained to the Committee that because of school closures due to COVID-19, schools were unable to complete End of Year assessments in math and reading; therefore, data is not available. A statement on the report was required by the Department of Public Instruction showing how the District provided off campus learning to students and which online resources, if any, were used to provide this instruction.
- WRPS has just completed year one of a two-year Behavior and Mental Wellness Grant. Dr. Scott provided an overview of how the grant was implemented during the 2019-2020 school year. Over 85 families were connected with mental health resources. Grades 6 and 9 students were screened with Signs of Suicide (SOS). Eight of our schools have a community mental health provider on site. Three parent/community nights were held, presenting on a variety of topics. During the 2020-21 school year more students will be screened and a refresher for those already screened will be offered.
- With the expiration of the contract with Preferred Driver Education in July of 2020, WRPS will no longer enter into a driver education contract with one company and will not list a preferred vendor for driver education courses. Students/families will be provided with a listing of local vendors who offer online instruction. All driver education agreements will then be between the parent/student and the private vendor with no connection to the school. LHS will no longer provide classroom space for in person instruction. LHS students may choose to complete their online driver's education coursework during any scheduled study hall. Students may also continue to complete their "Behind the Wheel" training during their scheduled study hall, if needed. No credit will be given.
- Craig Broeren, Superintendent, explained that the timing of a referendum may not be good given many factors – COVID-19, Verso closure, etc. However, regardless of other factors, the District is at a point where a levy override referendum to continue to fund necessary curriculum and technology expenditures remains. Board committee members were provided with background information containing details regarding the use of referendum dollars from the referendum approved by voters in 2006; a result of effective business management, curriculum and technology purchases were made through 2020 using those dollars from the referendum. The referendum dollars are now depleted making the need for another levy override referendum question to voters necessary. In addition, the District has been proactive with a fairly aggressive approach to debt defeasance, which saves taxpayers money, while significantly decreasing the amount the District owes. Based on the current school funding formula in Wisconsin, it can be somewhat advantageous to the District to have a certain level of debt payments. This fact, in conjunction with a need to modify and renovate entrances on all facilities that house students for additional safety and security (as well as significant modifications to the second floor of LHS and other areas), Mr. Broeren also outlined the possibility of asking voters an additional question for a possible bond issue referendum in the amount of \$20 million or \$30 million. Committee members were provided with tax impact scenarios for the levy override question as well as the levy override question and a bond issue question if approved. Mr. Broeren asked for input on whether administration should proceed, and if so, how to move forward. Options were discussed and it was agreed that this is something to bring before the full Board at the regular meeting scheduled for July 13, 2020, under New Business.

**Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to approve the balance of the Educational Services Committee report and minutes of the July 6, 2020 Educational Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

B. Business Services Committee – July 6, 2020. Report given by John Benbow.

Mr. Benbow reviewed the following consent agenda items brought before the Board through the Business Services Committee, and asked if there were any motions to be held:

- BS-1 Approval of 66.03.01 cooperative agreements for students attending the virtual program from the Adams-Friendship, Crandon, DC Everest, Kimberly, Port Edwards, Spencer, Stevens Point, Stratford, Tri-County, and Wautoma school districts as listed.
- BS-2 Approval of the purchase of 33 HP Z1 G5 computers from PDS, at a cost of \$32,802.00, to be funded from the 2020-21 Technology budget.

**Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier to approve consent agenda items BS 1-2. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.**

Mr. Benbow provided updates and reports on:

- Purchase of student management and food service software services through Skyward.
- A copy of the auditor engagement letter to the Board was reviewed.

**Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Katie Medina to approve the balance of the Business Services Committee report and minutes of the July 6, 2020 Business Services Committee. Motion carried unanimously.**

C. Personnel Services Committee – July 6, 2020. Report given by Sandra Hett.

Ms. Hett reviewed the following consent agenda items brought before the Board through the Personnel Services Committee, and asked if there were any motions to be held:

- PS-1 Approval of the professional staff appointments of Sara Kolo (Equity Coordinator – District), Madeline Brueggemann (Teacher – Mead/Washington/WRAMS), Thao Xiong (Teacher – WRAMS), Gavin Baade (Teacher – Mead/Woodside), and Lindsey Blanke (Teacher – District).
- PS-2 Approval of the support staff appointments of Angela Wirth (Head Cook – WRAMS), Bonnie Olson (Kitchen Helper – Woodside), Lindsay Manternach (Special Ed Aide – WRAMS), and Angela Francis (Youth Apprenticeship – PAC).
- PS-3 Approval of the 2020 Summer School staff appointments of Machel Anderson, Carole Pfahning, Barb Enright, Cheryl Burmeister, Joanne Dachel, Ashley Worzalla, Amanda Mrozek, Michelle Diebel, Carrie Schultz, Tania Halbersma, Holly McMiller, Patty Halbur, Kathy Melville, Nicole Crowley, Trisha Svoboda, Dawn Sylvester, Nichole Goetz, Morgan Benedict, Emily Hartjes, Madisyn Hasenhof, Yanassa Quilanta, Payton Rehberg, McKenzie Schuld, Destinee Steinhafel, Fina Gaugert, Jillian Alekna, America Arts, Tessa Atwood, Casey Christensen, Jillian Engelbright, Hannah Felker, Logan Felker, Kiralyn Felts, Megan Gawlitta, Zoe Gilmaster, Ellie Heiman, Marlene Holtz, Sarah Korte, Madeline Krzykowski, Grace Mortenson, Elizabeth O'Connor, Isabelle Pechinski, Adam Price, Elliot Schultz, Tyler Schultz, Kayelyn Schulze, Becca Sneen, Elizabeth Sonnenberg, Josie Staven, Maggie Weiland, and Paige Wogahn.
- PS-4 Approval of the non-represented support staff early retirement of Wayne Jaworski (Information Technology Support Specialist – District).
- PS-5 Approval of the professional staff resignation requests of Samantha Svoboda (Teacher – WRAMS) and Trevor Hoth (Teacher – Mead/Woodside).
- PS-6 Approval of the recommended changes to the addendum for the following Employee Handbooks: Custodial and Maintenance Staff, Food Services Staff, Office/Clerical and Aide Support Staff, Professional Staff, Administration and Non-Represented Staff, and Substitutes.
- PS-7 Approval to hire a Digital Media and Audio Visual Coordinator position for the District with a salary based on skill and work experience and not to exceed \$60,000.
- PS-8 Approval of a five percent academic co-curricular Livestream Advisor position at Lincoln High School.
- PS-9 Approval of a \$1,500 stipend for the 2020-21 school year for the elementary Library Media Specialist position. The stipend will be reviewed annually.

Sandra Hett requested that consent agenda items PS-1 and PS-6 be held out.

**Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Mary Rayome to approve consent agenda items PS 2-5 and 7-9. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.**

With regard to consent agenda item PS-1, Ms. Hett stated that Thao Xiong declined the District's employment offer, and will not be part of the motion.

**Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Mary Rayome to approve of the professional staff appointments of Sara Kolo (Equity Coordinator – District), Madeline Brueggemann (Teacher – Mead/Washington/WRAMS), Gavin Baade (Teacher – Mead/Woodside), and Lindsey Blanke (Teacher – District). Motion carried unanimously.**

With regard to consent agenda item PS-6, Ms. Hett stated that the Board did not receive the revisions to the Handbook changes as suggested at the Committee meeting in ample time to review them prior to approving them at the Board meeting. As such, rather than vote on PS-6, the item will be tabled and brought back for approval in August.

**Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Mary Rayome to table consent agenda item PS-6. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Mary Rayome to approve the balance of the Personnel Services Committee report and minutes of the July 6, 2020 Personnel Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### Agenda Referrals/Information Requests

Larry Davis made a suggestion for everyone to think about ways in which the anxiety and stress of students can be addressed in a positive fashion to mitigate long term negative effects on them. Ms. Rayome mentioned anxiety and stress levels in staff should also be considered. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) was mentioned as a possible resource to help, and groups such as the LHS Cool to Be Kind student organization do a great deal to promote empathy, kindness, and positive school climate.

#### Legislative Agenda

Troy Bier shared the following information:

- The Assembly Education Committee held an informational hearing in June, 2020 to take testimony from school leaders on returning to in-person instruction this fall. The testimony gave lawmakers a picture of the challenges and decision-making that will go into what school looks like this fall.
- Former Governor Scott Walker's veto in the 2017-19 state budget that changed a one year moratorium of the school district energy efficiency revenue limit exemption to a 1,000 year moratorium was upheld by the Wisconsin Supreme Court. In a separate decision, the Court struck down three partial vetoes by Governor Evers in the 2019-21 state budget including one that eliminated a grant program for school buses, replacing it with funding for electric vehicle charging stations and to replace municipal buses.
- Senate Bill 4112 was introduced which is the Coronavirus Child Care and Education Relief Act (CCCERA). The proposal would provide higher overall education funding than the House-passed HEROES Act taken up in May.
- June has been a quiet month on Capitol Hill, but an emergency COVID response bill is anticipated to be taken up prior to the scheduled recess in August. WASB urges school districts to be engaged and monitor the situation closely.
- WASB and other K-12 groups have been working with *The Wheeler Report* on a series reviewing issues impacting K-12 education in Wisconsin from when schools were closed statewide in response to the health emergency up to what potentially lies ahead for the fall. The most recent Part V series focuses on "*Going Forward*" and what districts are wrestling with in terms of budgeting, staffing, student safety, PPE purchases, technology, cleaning requirements, and more.
- Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul has joined several other state attorneys general in filing a lawsuit in opposition to the Interim Final Rule issued by the U. S. Department of Education that would reroute millions of dollars in coronavirus aid money to K-12 private school students.

- The DPI has released July 1 aid estimates for public school districts. With the full effect to state tax collections from the COVID-19 pandemic still unknown, there is much uncertainty as to whether school districts will ultimately receive what is estimated.
- The Office of School Safety has announced the release of “Culturally Responsive” webinars available for school districts.
- The DPI has released newly revised model academic standards in English language arts, personal financial literacy, and physical education.
- The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) and DPI are partnering to distribute cloth masks and infrared thermometers to school districts using a formula based upon enrollment.
- Governor Evers announced more than \$80 million in financial assistance to Wisconsin’s K-12 schools and higher education institutions to assist with the challenges faced relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Bills

**Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by Troy Bier to note June, 2020 receipts in the amount of \$12,207,519.51 and approve June, 2020 disbursements in the amount of \$4,861,939.67. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.**

### New Business

#### Employee Appointments and Resignations

Brian Oswald, Director of Human Resources, presented the following professional staff appointment and resignation recommendations:

#### Professional Staff Appointment

Lori Harmsen	Location:	Grant Elementary
	Position:	Teacher (1.0 FTE)
	Education:	Certification – UWSP – May 2021 Bachelor’s – UW Oshkosh – June 1987
	Major/Minor:	Special Education, Elementary Education
	Date of Hire:	\$41,500
Anna Woehlke	Location:	WRAMS
	Position:	Teacher (1.0 FTE)
	Education:	Bachelor’s – UW Eau Claire – May 2020
	Major/Minor:	Broadfield Social Studies
	Salary:	\$41,500

**Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of the professional staff appointments of Lori Harmsen and Anna Woehlke as presented, effective with the 2020-21 school year. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### Professional Staff Resignation Requests

Christine Skogg	Location:	River Cities High School
	Position:	Teacher (Reading Interventionist – 1.0 FTE)
	Effective Date:	August 25, 2020
	Date of Hire:	July 7, 2020
Lynette Simonar	Location:	Mead Elementary
	Position:	Teacher (Social Worker – 1.0 FTE)
	Effective Date:	July 13, 2020
	Date of Hire:	August 28, 2018

**Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of the professional staff resignation requests of Christine Skogg and Lynette Simonar, pending receipt of liquidated damages. Motion carried unanimously.**

Amendment to 2019-20 District Budget

Daniel Weigand, Director of Business Services, presented a recommended amendment to the 2019-20 District budget. Changes to the Special Project Fund, Capital Projects Fund, and Employee Benefit Trust Fund 73 were explained.

**Motion by Larry Davis, seconded by Katie Medina to approve to amend the 2019-20 District budget as presented. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.**

District Telephone System Upgrade

Phil Bickelhaupt, Director of Technology, presented a recommendation to upgrade the District telephone system. The current Mitel phone system was installed in 2010 and while still functional in some sense, the system is no longer able to accept software upgrades in its current state. The physical phones are starting to fail at a rapid rate, requiring the purchase of new Mitel phones for a system that has reached its end of life. Three options were considered for replacement: 1) Update the current Mitel phone system, 2) Proof of Concept with Fortivoice phone system, and 3) Hosted solution with Solarus. Pros and cons for each solution were explained. Mr. Bickelhaupt reviewed costing that was received for each system from Marco, Heartland Business Systems, and Solarus. The solution presented by Heartland Business Systems will best meet the needs of the District, and came in with the lowest cost at \$157,080.62. The administration recommends approval of the upgrade solution presented by Heartland Business Systems. The Board had an opportunity to ask questions.

**Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by John Benbow to approve of the purchase of a District telephone system upgrade from Heartland Business Systems as presented at a cost not to exceed \$165,000.00, to be funded through Fund 46. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.**

Update on Reopening Committee Progress

Superintendent Broeren provided an update to the Board on progress the Reopening Committee is making as the upcoming school year approaches. There are three models being considered which include 100% in-person instruction, a hybrid model that has cohorts of students attending in-person and also learning virtually, and a third model where students would attend 100% virtually. Currently the preferred plan would be to have students back in person for five days per week instruction in all grades, 4K-12 with precautionary measures put in place. However, local circumstances may lead to a change in this recommendation if COVID cases continue to rise. Should that occur, it is possible that an alternative schedule for grades 6-12 level will be recommended. This "A/B" alternative schedule would have half the students attending on Monday and Tuesday (Cohort A), with the other half attending on Thursday/Friday (Cohort B). Days when students are not attending school would be virtual learning days. There is less concern for students at this level to be home on their own compared to elementary, so the community wide impact on parents working outside the home and needing to find supervision for their child(ren) would not be as great. Data and research provided to the committee by medical advisors suggests that the spread of the virus among younger children under age 10 is not as prevalent. The ability to cohort at the elementary level is much greater than at the upper grade levels due to the dense population of students occupying those buildings. It is possible that the District may need to switch in between models of instruction based upon COVID activity within the community that could potentially impact schools. A suite of options for parents to choose from is being developed in case they are not yet comfortable with sending their child(ren) back to school in person. Buildings are also working on operationalizing their plans so that parents gain an understanding about what the return to school will look for their student(s).

Face coverings have been a topic of discussion as of late since public health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), have come out with a recommendation that they be worn when physical distancing is not possible. With respect to face coverings, the District could legally require all students to wear them, but would likely need to also provide exemptions for medical, religious, or personal conviction. Since there has been a lack of leadership at the local, state, and federal level surrounding the pandemic, Mr. Broeren shared concerns about the school building becoming a battle ground for students whose parents believe masks should be worn versus those who do not. It puts kids in a very uncomfortable position. At the moment, the recommendation for face coverings to be worn by students is that they will be highly encouraged, and required of staff members when they are unable to physically distance themselves from others. Dr. Amy Falk has been working with the District to write a grant request to the Legacy Foundation to provide masks for each student. Research is currently being conducted in summer school to gauge the level of participation in wearing face coverings.

Health protocols to be utilized in buildings are being developed by District nurses in conjunction with local public health department personnel and medical consultants. Survey information is being gathered around what parents will encourage their students to do with regard to the precautionary measures being encouraged. Transportation data is being gathered to determine which families are able to transport their child(ren) to reduce the number of students riding on buses.

As the school year draws closer, a final recommendation will be developed for consideration by the Board in August. The Board had an opportunity to ask questions. They expressed their appreciation for the work and communication that has occurred up to this point.

#### Future Levy Override and Bond Issue Referendum Questions

Superintendent Broeren explained that the last levy override referendum occurred in 2006, and through frugal spending by the District over the years the curriculum and technology dollars have been stretched to last up to the current fiscal year. The dollars are mostly depleted now, and the timing is right for the District to request another referendum; however, unfortunately the timing isn't the best in light of the pandemic and local economic circumstances tied to upcoming job losses in the community due to the Verso paper mill closing. Unfortunately, the District is not in a position financially to continue funding technology needs and curriculum acquisitions without support from another referendum. Technology equipment in District classrooms is becoming obsolete, and the technology acquisition cycle is not on an aggressive timeline with purchases occurring on an eight-year cycle.

With regard to the amount of referendum funding needed, Mr. Broeren explained that a \$2 million levy override would have a very slight impact on the mill rate for taxpayers moving it from 9.10 to 9.25. The impact to a home owner of a \$100,000 property value is \$15.00 per year. Other scenarios that could be considered, such as a \$1.5 million or \$1.0 million levy override, would decrease the local tax burden.

Mr. Broeren explained that if a referendum is being entertained, it may be the right time to also consider a bond issue question which would be different and separate from the levy override question. Bond issues are typically utilized for building and construction or renovations. The bond issue dollars would be utilized to upgrade building entrances across the District to enhance security, and to renovate science classrooms at Lincoln High School due to their age, size, and relevance in teaching science currently. Should the science classrooms be upgraded, the media center at Lincoln would need to move, and the plan would be to relocate it to the first level near the office location and make it contiguous with the current commons area. The area would be converted to give a more comfortable "coffee shop" vibe for students, and also be utilized for presentations. Incorporating all of the changes discussed would require a \$30 million bond issue. A \$30 million bond issue with a 10-year maturity and \$2 million levy override would increase the mill rate to a projected 10.60, which would equate to an increase of \$150.00 per year in taxes on a property valued at \$100,000. A 20-year maturity rate under the same scenario would increase the mill rate to 10.01 and equate to a \$91.00 increase in annual property taxes on a \$100,000 home. Alternatively, a \$20 million bond issue with a 10-year maturity to only take care of secure entrances and a few modifications at Lincoln, along with the \$2 million levy override would increase the mill rate to a projected 10.15 which equates to an increase of \$105.00 per year in taxes on a \$100,000 home. A 20-year maturity rate under the same scenario would increase the mill rate to 9.76 and equate to a \$66.00 increase in annual property taxes on a \$100,000 home.

The administration is bringing these referendum options to the Board for their consideration without any assumptions about what the Board might feel is feasible under the current local circumstances. Of the two questions being considered, the levy override question is the primary question that is imperative to pass should it go to voters. However, if the Board is interested in having the administration explore community interest around the topic, information would be disseminated and a survey developed to gather community sentiment around potential referendum questions. Board resolutions to place a referendum question on the April, 2021 ballot would not need to be adopted until January, 2021.

The Board had an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Benbow noted that the administration has been very frugal in making the 2006 referendum dollars last fourteen years when it was a five-year referendum. The Board expressed interest in having the administration develop a referendum recommendation for future consideration by the Board.

**Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of the administration exploring options for two potential levy override and bond issue referendum questions in the future, bringing back a recommendation for Board consideration in the future. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### Facility Use Request from City of Wisconsin Rapids

Mr. Broeren stated that the City of Wisconsin Rapids has sent a formal request to utilize the East Jr. High facility as a polling place for future elections, with the first election occurring in November, 2020. The polling place they had been using near the old Shopko facility has become unavailable. Since the East facility no longer houses students which is the main factor involved in moving polling places out of schools in the first place, Mr. Broeren would like the Board to consider whether the request should be granted. The City would pay for any operational

expenses they incur while using the space. The Board discussed the request, and came to a consensus that the facility could be used for this purpose.

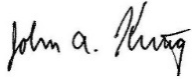
**Motion by Larry Davis, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of the request from the City of Wisconsin Rapids to utilize the East Jr. High fieldhouse as an election polling place beginning with the November 3, 2020 election.**

**Motion carried unanimously**

Calendar

Calendar items were reviewed.

President Krings adjourned the meeting at 8:01 p.m.



John A. Krings – President

Maurine Hodgson – Secretary

Larry Davis – Clerk