



Wisconsin Rapids Board of Education

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

MINUTES

John A. Krings, President
John Benbow, Jr.
Larry Davis
Sandra K. Hett
Anne Lee
Katie Medina
Mary E. Rayome

July 8, 2013

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 Krings, Katie Medina, John Benbow, Anne Lee, Sandra Hett, Mary Rayome

BOARD MEMBERS EXCUSED: Larry Davis

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Dr. Colleen Dickmann, Daniel Weigand, Kathi Stebbins-Hintz, Ryan Christianson, Trudy DeSimons, Ed Allison

MEDIA PRESENT: Coltin Esser – River Cities Community Access

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Presentation on “Backpacks for Kids” Program

Barb Bondioli, School Social Worker at Grove Elementary, provided an overview of the “Backpack for Kids” program which was developed to assist families in poverty. A partnership with UW Extension, the United Way, United Healthcare, and River Cities High School has been formed to support the program. River Cities High School assists with housing the food and packing the bags which contain low sodium, high fiber items to prepare a meal. Families from Grove, Mead, Howe, and River Cities are currently served through the program. Recently, a Heart of Wisconsin leadership group adopted the program as corporate partners, which is allowing the program to be further enhanced. Ms. Bondioli explained that over the last 17 years in her career, she has witnessed more and more financial struggles for families in the community due to employment cutbacks, and felt the need to do something to help these families. The Board thanked Ms. Bondioli for her presentation, and for all of the entities and individuals involved in supporting district families through the Backpack for Kids program.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to approve regular Board of Education meeting minutes of June 10, 2013; and special Board of Education meeting minutes of June 24, 2013. Motion carried unanimously.

Comments from Citizens and Delegations

None.

Committee Reports

A. Business Services Committee – July 1, 2013. Report given by John Benbow.

The Committee had no consent agenda items for July, 2013. Mr. Benbow explained that the Committee was updated on technology purchases to upgrade the Lincoln High School and Washington Elementary School networking infrastructure over the summer. Also, a report on 2012-13 utility usage and snow removal was provided by Ed Allison, Director of Building and Grounds.

Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Katie Medina to approve the balance of the Business Services Committee report, and minutes of the regular July 1, 2013, Business Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Committee Reports (continued)

B. Personnel Services Committee – July 1, 2013. 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 early retirement request effective June 11, 2013 of Barbara Johnston (Grade 1 – Grove).
- PS-2 Approval of the professional staff resignation request effective June 25, 2013 of Amanda Oliva (Grade 4 – Woodside).
- PS-3 Approval of the professional staff appointments effective August 27, 2013 of Jodi Renwick (Grade 2 – Grove), and Brittnee Robus (Kindergarten – Grove).
- PS-4 Approval of the professional staff re-appointment effective August 27, 2013 of Kristin Mras (Special Ed EBD – Grove).
- PS-5 Approval of support staff appointments of Susan Faust (Special Ed Aide – River Cities), and Jamie Winters (Secretary – District Technology).
- PS-6 Approval of the support staff posting results of Crystal Fraundorf (Secretary – Washington), Sara Halbur (Student Services Secretary – Lincoln), Sally Nelson (Night Custodian – WR Area Middle), and Lynn Peterson (Head Cook – Howe).

Ms. Hett requested that Item PS-5 be held out.

Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Anne Lee to approve consent agenda items PS 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. Motion carried unanimously.

With regard to Item PS-5, Ms. Hett explained that the candidate recommended for the District Technology Secretary position has withdrawn her application. As a result, the only item needing approval is the support staff appointment of Susan Faust (Special Ed Aide – River Cities).

Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by John Benbow to approve the support staff appointment of Susan Faust (Special Ed Aide – River Cities).

Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by John Benbow to approve the regular Personnel Services Committee meeting minutes of July 1, 2013. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Mary Rayome to approve special open and closed session Personnel Services Committee meeting minutes of June 24, 2013. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Educational Services Committee – July 1, 2013. Report given by Anne Lee.

Ms. Lee 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 Board Policy 342.5 – Title I Programs for first reading.
- ES-2 Approval of the SPDG Professional Learning Communities Focus on PLCs Grant application for Grove Elementary School in the amount of \$16,000.00.

Motion by Anne Lee, seconded by John Benbow to approve of consent agenda items ES1-2. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Lee provided updates and reports on:

- The Business-Education Partnership Committee which has worked throughout the past year to become informed about the needs of students, educators, and industry in the area. The Committee was formed in the fall of 2013 to address the skills gap and “silver tsunami” facing manufacturing and other industries in Central Wisconsin. Four sub-committees have been formed to continue this work:

- **K-5 Curriculum:** Infuse contextualized STEM information and experiences into the K-5 curriculum.
- **6-14 Curriculum:** Infuse contextualized STEM information and experiences into the 6-14 curriculum.
- **Apprenticeships:** Create Business/Education partnerships which afford certified apprenticeships, job shadows, mentoring experiences, internships, and other work experience opportunities for students.
- **Community/Parent/Educator Education:** Educate the community, parents, and educators about the opportunities available in our region.

A list of accomplishments and goals specific to how various schools in the district are working to close the “skills gap” was shared. The Business-Education Partnership Committee fits into a larger network of organizations within the South Wood County area.

- The Committee toured the Caring Closet located at East Jr. High School. The Caring Closet was opened several years ago in the basement of the Family Center in an effort to provide new and gently used essentials and clothing for WRPS students. The Closet was moved to provide easier and more direct access by WRPS staff members.

Motion by Anne Lee, seconded by Mary Rayome to approve the balance of the Educational Services Committee report and minutes of the July 1, 2013, Educational Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Referrals/Information Requests

None.

Legislative Agenda

Ms. Rayome provided an update on the state budget recently signed by Governor Walker which leaves intact the expansion of school voucher funding, state income tax deductions for private school tuition, a \$651 million income tax decrease, freezes tuition at the University of Wisconsin system campuses for two years, limits property tax increases on the typical Wisconsin home to about 1% in each of the next two years and eliminates the ability of school districts to impose residency requirements on district employees. The budget allows per pupil spending by most districts across the state to be increased by \$100 per pupil in 2013-14, and by \$150 in 2014-15. Governor Walker made 57 vetoes including a number related to K-12 education. He modified the expansion of the statewide voucher system to keep it in line with agreements made with key legislative leaders. The 2013-15 budget provides nearly \$300 million in additional funding for K-12 public schools; \$13.6 million for a new “Educator Effectiveness” system to evaluate teachers; and \$2.8 million over the biennium to continue and expand the use of the “PALS” reading screener for students in four-year old Kindergarten through 2nd grade. The budget also sets aside the award of the contract for a Statewide Student Information System (SSIS) to a single vendor. The budget requires the DPI through the Joint Finance Committee to instead be seeking out a multiple vendor solution.

Bills

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to note June, 2013 receipts in the amount of \$13,688,637.03 and approve June, 2013 disbursements in the amount of \$3,966,616.63. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

New Business

Summer Grounds/Custodial Appointment

Mr. Christianson explained that one of the individuals recently approved to fill a summer buildings and grounds appointment opted to accept additional hours at their current place of employment and withdraw from the District offer of employment. A new recommendation was made to hire Scott Killian to the position of summer grounds/custodial staff.

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to approve of the appointment of Scott Killian to the position of summer grounds/custodial staff working eight hours per day at a rate of \$8.25 per hour for cleaning duties, and \$10.00 per hour for grounds duties effective July 3, 2013. Motion carried unanimously.

Board Communication Strategies

President Krings explained that he brought this topic up for the agenda as he was trying to think of ways that as a Board or as individuals, members of the Board can interact more with staff. One thought would be through lunch room visits on occasion as it fits into the schedule of those Board members interested in doing so. By setting up an appointment with the building administrator prior to the visit, he envisions spending some time in

the building to view programs in action and perhaps sit down at lunchtime with staff members to interact and chat with those who might be interested.

Dr. Dickmann explained that she has been gathering information from building administrators concerning staff meeting times as this might be another venue for interested Board members to be able to connect with District staff.

Ms. Rayome suggested that she would like to see the Board somehow thank and show appreciation to staff members who take the time to come before Committee and Board meetings to make presentations, as was done by Barb Bondioli at this meeting.

Mr. Krings stated he believes there might be more ways for the District to be celebrating success stories and sharing more about the positive things happening in the District through venues such as Facebook or social media, although he recognizes utilizing these technology tools for communication can present a host of different challenges. Writing “Letters to the Editor” in the local newspaper to share the District’s story is another way Mr. Krings feels the community can become better informed. He suggested Board members interested might wish to take turns in order to have a monthly letter in the paper on school related topics of interest.

Ms. Lee expressed an interest in sending individual thank you notes to staff after visiting a building to attend programs or presentations. Mr. Benbow suggested that the use of the employee “Eclips” newsletter for letters from the Board to staff be continued, and perhaps used more to communicate. Also, as Board members volunteer at various buildings to judge contests or help with events, or go to concerts and sporting events, these can also be opportune times for Board members to convey their appreciation to staff members.

Mr. Krings suggested that the Board develop a spreadsheet with opportunities for various Board members to sign up to participate in a variety of communication strategies such as *Letters to the Editor*, *Eclips* newsletters, appreciation notes, and building visits. Organizing it in this way would lay out the opportunities at a glance. Mr. Krings would like to see this in place by September, when staff are back in their respective buildings. Dr. Dickmann offered to coordinate the communication opportunities and sign-ups for Board members through the Superintendent’s office, perhaps through Google Drive. The Board agreed that this method would be most helpful.

Custodians, Maintenance and Computer Technicians Employee Handbook

Ryan Christianson, Director of Human Resources, explained that the “Custodians, Maintenance and Computer Technicians Employee Handbook” has undergone revisions and editing in consultation with District legal counsel. The Board has had an opportunity to review the suggested language, and Mr. Christianson invited the Board’s questions, comments, or suggestions concerning the Handbook.

The Board questioned the wording of the first sentence in Part IV – Sick Leave Definitions and General Provisions in which the wording states, “*Any payments received under the Worker’s Compensation Act may be payable to the Board by the employee shall in lieu thereof receive sick leave benefits as defined herein.*” The wording is not clear, and needs to be rewritten to clarify intent. Mr. Christianson will review the language and makes appropriate changes or deletions.

A question was raised about the removal of the “Bulletin Board” section language in the Handbook. Mr. Christianson explained that it is not the District’s intent to not allow sections of bulletin boards to be used by employee groups as has been the practice. The bulletin board language is a carryover from the collective bargaining era, and the District controls the use and placement of bulletin boards in its buildings. Legal counsel has suggested that the administration can define items such as the use of bulletin board space through memos to employees, rather than have language in the Handbook. Handbook language is intended to be more about employment practices and procedures.

With regard to the “Uniforms/Shoes” section of the Handbook, the Board questioned how the administration intends to change disbursement of uniforms in light of the recommended language change. Mr. Christianson stated that there is no intention to change how things have been done before with respect to uniforms; however, the District may find that in a given year only two sets of uniforms can be provided under budget constraints. The less restrictive language allows for flexibility and discretion by the Director of Buildings and Grounds to determine what will be provided in this area each year.

A question was raised concerning the practice of Custodians/Maintenance/Computer Technicians in transporting students since these sections have been deleted. Mr. Christianson explained that this particular

employee group does not transport students. The intended practice would be to have other staff available to transport students when these occasions present themselves.

The Board noted that the “Probationary Period” section of the Handbook was removed, and requested that this section be placed back into the Handbook with a six (6) month probationary period established.

With references to the term “seniority” being removed from the Handbook, the Board questioned whether the practice of utilizing seniority goes away. Mr. Christianson explained that length of service for employees will continue to be tracked, and is referenced in other sections of the Handbook. For instance, under “Reduction in Force,” length of service *may* be one of the items considered when a workforce reduction occurs in this group. Vacation scheduling is another area in which length of service will be utilized.

Another section of the Handbook removes most of the wording under the “Work Assignments” section. Mr. Christianson clarified that legal counsel has suggested that it is better practice to have the Director of Buildings and Grounds clarify work assignments for employees through memorandums and departmental documentation, rather than have these details in the Handbook.

Mr. Christianson reviewed other sections of the Handbook with the Board to highlight some minor changes being recommended. A more significant change occurring with this employee group is the elimination of unlimited accumulation of sick leave days in the “Accumulation of Sick Leave” section. Employees hired prior to July 1, 2013 who accumulated more than 120 days of unused sick leave will be allowed to keep the additional days (beyond 120) they have earned through the end of the 2012-13 fiscal year. These days will be banked, and may be used either toward sick leave if their normal sick leave accumulation is exhausted, or toward health insurance benefits at retirement. Specific language to address this topic has been added to the “Accumulation of Sick Leave” section of the Handbook.

The employees in this group have begun paying the employee’s share of the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) contribution, and health insurance contributions by employees have been raised to 15% for everyone in the group to bring them in line with other employee groups. Additionally, the 100% payment of insurance premium benefits for employed spouses has ceased as of June 30, 2013.

Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Sandra Hett to approve of the Custodians, Maintenance and Computer Technicians Employee Handbook, with noted changes. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Calendar

Calendar items were reviewed.

John Krings adjourned the meeting at 7:11 p.m.

John A. Krings – President

Maurine Hodgson – Secretary

Sandra K. Hett – Clerk