



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

November 11, 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, Larry Davis, Sandra Hett, Mary Rayome

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Colleen Dickmann, Daniel Weigand, Kathi Stebbins-Hintz, Ryan Christianson, Trudy DeSimons, Phil Bickelhaupt, Ed Allison, Julie Marie

MEDIA PRESENT: Jesse Austin – River Cities Community Access, Nathaniel Shuda – *The Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

President Krings took a moment to acknowledge Veterans Day, and extended gratitude to those who are currently serving, or who have served.

Student Representative Report

Emily Morzewski provided updates and reports to the Board on the following topics concerning Lincoln:

- Activities for sophomores, juniors and seniors during Career Discovery Day held at Lincoln in October
- Video announcement boards were recently installed, and are functioning in the cafeteria area
- Winter athletics have begun
- Student Council is sponsoring a food drive collection for the local area food pantry

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to approve regular Board of Education meeting minutes of October 14, 2013; and special Board of Education meeting minutes of November 4, 2013. Motion carried unanimously.

Comments from Citizens and Delegations

None.

Committee Reports

A. Business Services Committee – November 4, 2013 – 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 the multi-year Skyward Contract Loyalty Program Renewal for school years 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 at a cost of \$38,554.00 per year.

The Board discussed the potential cost implications that a single vendor Statewide Student Information System solution might have presented, had it been implemented.

Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Larry Davis to approve consent agenda items BS 1. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Committee Reports (continued)

Mr. Benbow reviewed the following updates and reports provided to the Committee:

Donation – The Committee was updated on the donation of time and equipment by the Rudolph Fire Department to assist in changing lighting and wiring at the South Wood County Football Stadium.

Purchases – The Committee learned of purchases made for copy paper and virtual curriculum/services at Mead Elementary Charter School as part of their dissemination grant.

Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Larry Davis to approve the balance of the regular Business Services Committee report and minutes of the November 4, 2013, Business Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Personnel Services Committee – November 4, 2013 – Report given by Sandra Hett.

Ms. Hett noted that one item pertaining to a resignation request on the Personnel Services Committee agenda was tabled. Ms. Hett then 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 appointment of Heather Rasmussen (School Counselor/Virtual Program Coordinator – Vesper Community Academy).

PS-2 Approval of the support staff appointments of Paula Stolarczyk (Health Aide – Howe), Dana Freeman (Special Ed Aide – Woodside), Christina Strand (Special Ed Aide – Woodside), Tina Havitz (Kitchen Helper – Lincoln), Sara Bain (Kitchen Helper – Howe), Paula Rokus (Special Ed Aide – Vesper), Stephanie Bailey (Cleaner – Buildings & Grounds), Tami Drew-Huiras (Noon Aide – Woodside), Jodie Porter (Special Ed Aide – Washington).

Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Anne Lee to approve consent agenda items PS 1-2. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Hett reviewed the following updates and reports provided to the Committee:

Open Enrollment – The Committee learned that there are 205 open enrollment/66.030 transfers in for 2013-14, and 174 transfers out. When comparing ins and outs, a net gain of \$206,233.00 in revenue is realized for the District as a result of open enrollment and 66.030 agreements.

Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Mary Rayome to approve the regular Personnel Services Committee meeting minutes of November 4, 2013. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Educational Services Committee – November 4, 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 participation of River Cities High School in the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation Tree Orchard Grant.

ES-2 Approval of the renewal subscription for Atomic Learning in the amount of \$10,694.24.

Motion by Anne Lee, seconded by Mary Rayome to approve consent agenda items ES 1-2. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Ms. Lee reviewed the following updates and reports provided to the Committee:

Wellness Committee – Julie Marie, Director of Food Services, reviewed a report from the District Wellness Committee, noting that schools in the Wood County area are actively using locally grown produce. To date over 8,000 pounds of locally grown produce has been purchased and served. The Wellness Committee is involved in a variety of other health and wellness initiatives and will continue to meet and investigate ways to promote health and wellness to students and staff.

River Cities High School/Mid-State Technical College Great Lakes College Ready Grant – Ms. Kathi Stebbins-Hintz, Principal of River Cities High School, provided an overview of the grant program. Students from River

Committee Reports (continued)

Cities are able to take two introductory college courses, enabling them to earn six credits from Mid-State. The grant provides the cost of tuition and books. This is the third year of the program, and 20 students are enrolled.

Howe Spotlight School – Matthew Renwick, Principal of Howe Elementary School, shared that Howe Elementary was selected as a Spotlight School for the 2013-2014 school year. This award from the Department of Public Instruction is for schools who have received the School of Recognition at least three years in a row. As a Spotlight School, Howe will be hosting three site visits for other Wisconsin schools to hear the Howe story and learn from their success. Mr. Renwick invited Committee members to attend the upcoming site visits and distributed an invitation with the dates.

THINK Academy Charter School Report – Tina Wallner, Principal of THINK Academy, and Amy Fuller, Governance Council President, provided an update on THINK Academy's second year as a charter school. Ms. Wallner shared the goals of the Charter, explaining that the school was dedicated to the development of a brain-based curriculum, a highly effective Governance Council, a high degree of parent and community support, and student satisfaction and participation.

Mead Elementary Charter School Report – Margie Dorshorst, Principal of Mead Elementary Charter School, reviewed the definition of a charter school, as well as why she believed maintaining charter status was important for reaching the school's goals. Tina Miller, Academic Coordinator, reviewed Mead School's accomplishments including reaching the standard of "Exceeds Expectations" on the School Report Card. As part of the Charter grant, Mead School is offering several visitation days for other schools to come and observe how they function as a school and learn from their success. Committee members were invited to attend any of the upcoming visitation days, and a handout was distributed with the dates. In addition, Mead will once again be offering the Summer Innovative Institute which will take place on June 16 and 17, 2014.

Educator Effectiveness Orientation – Ms. Stebbins Hintz provided an update as to how Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools (WRPS) is preparing for the implementation of the Educator Effectiveness Process in the 2014-15 school year. A video from DPI was shared, and it was noted that all district professional staff will view this video on the November 8, 2013 Professional Development Day. Elementary principals will share information with their Parent Teacher Organizations and the video will also be made available on the District website. The Quality Educator Committee is working to address how the new system coincides with our current professional development process, and plans to merge the two, making the transition more valuable for staff.

New Course Proposals and Modifications – Ms. Stebbins Hintz updated the Board on five new course proposals. The proposals are still moving through numerous committees for review before the final proposal will be presented to the Educational Services Committee in December. Implementation of the Business Communications and Food Science classes is targeted for the 2015-16 school year. Modifications to grade 10 and 11 social studies courses, and English 101 and 102 are targeted for the 2014-15 school year.

Several questions were asked about English 101 and 102, including the cost of tuition, if financial aid would be available, what colleges would accept UW-Wood County credits, and the advantages of this course over Youth Options. Ms. Hintz indicated she would get answers to these questions and share them with the Committee.

Motion by Anne Lee, seconded by John Benbow to approve the regular Educational Services Committee meeting minutes of November 4, 2013. Motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Referrals/Information Requests

Mr. Krings stated he visited the staff lounge at Lincoln during lunch earlier in the day to converse with staff, and felt his visit was well-received. He encouraged other Board members to consider visiting a building sometime in the future, if they are able to.

Ms. Lee requested that area legislative representatives be invited back to attend a Board meeting again soon. Ms. Hett suggested that perhaps one individual could be invited at a time, rather than all three, in order to focus better on each representative's position, share information, and also convey the Board's position on particular issues.

Mr. Krings requested that the Board discuss at a future meeting the new Board member "welcome" information that gets shared with new Board members. He would also like Board members to consider the possibility of mentoring any new Board members in the future. Mr. Benbow shared that he attended a seminar conducted by the Wisconsin Association of School Boards when he became a new Board member, and found the information that he received to be very helpful.

Legislative Agenda

Mary Rayome recently attended a Wisconsin Association of School Boards *Legislative Advocacy Conference* along with fellow Board members Sandra Hett and Anne Lee. Points of interest from presentations made at the conference include:

- Michael Ford, Assistant Professor of Public Administration at UW-Oshkosh, provided some history and an overview of the private school voucher program in Wisconsin. During a time when Mr. Ford held a non-profit sector job, he worked as a strong promoter of private school vouchers. He has since changed his position concerning vouchers, describing them as one of the most controversial changes in the state budget having the least effect due to the fact that 80% of the vouchers were provided to students already attending private schools. He believes districts will experience more impact from the *Tuition Tax Credit*, which is a significant state investment in private education. Charter expansion could have a significant impact on a district's tax levy as levies will increase as programs expand. Mr. Ford explained that a study on the Milwaukee Public School voucher program showed that little or no academic difference existed between choice and public schools. The program did not improve or decrease academic performance. Mr. Ford believes it is important for districts to show the public where their local tax money is going, documenting the percentage of the tax levy that goes to fund independent charter schools as well as the revenue limit impact of students switching. In his conclusion, Mr. Ford stated that the Milwaukee experience demonstrates that the statewide voucher expansion, and any future independent charter expansion, is of little educational merit. The early experience of the statewide voucher program demonstrates it is primarily a new subsidy to low-income private school students. He also shared that recent budget actions demonstrate a significant policy shift away from local control and towards state support of non-district students.
- Another presentation titled "Meeting the Challenge of a New Competitive Environment – New Perspectives on Community Engagement" was hosted by the Beloit and Green Bay school districts. Ms. Rayome stated that while these larger districts have communications coordinators and legal counsel on staff to accomplish their work, our district does many of the same things, but with fewer people to complete the tasks at hand. Ms. Rayome expressed appreciation to Ms. Dickmann and the WRPS staff for their efforts to accomplish what needs to be done. Key points made in the presentation include: the importance of shared collaboration among surrounding school districts; Board awareness of legislative topics; invitations of local legislators to Board meetings for discussions as well as Board attendance at local meetings hosted by legislators; fostering partnerships with the local business community; and showing integrity by always telling the truth, including an admission when mistakes are made.
- Key Legislators and Chairs of the Education Committees were present to share their viewpoints on many of the issues facing education today. Senator Luther Olsen (R-Ripon) and Representative Steve Kestell (R-Elkhart Lake) both shared that they believe increased student poverty is a large issue facing education. Rep. Kestell believes the quality of educators in the future is critical in classrooms. When asked about what voucher expansion might look like in the future, neither legislator would share what they believed it might look like. Rep. Kestell did share that he didn't believe the expansion would go as far as it did. If the cap on vouchers is removed, they are not certain of where the funding for it will come. In terms of accountability, they believe there should be a simpler measure for it. Both representatives believe the state should stay the course with Common Core as it puts Wisconsin in a better place.

Ms. Hett also attended the conference, and shared that legislators stated that voucher expansion is creating a two-tiered educational system when the state of Wisconsin cannot afford even a single tier system. Ms. Hett expressed concern that a great amount of out-of-state monies are being spent to influence legislators on the voucher system. Furthermore, strong accountability for voucher programs is not supported by voucher proponents.

Mr. Benbow expressed concern about burn-out and frustration by educators as they continue to be bombarded by all of the state led changes that have been implemented within the past three years. Mr. Benbow believes the health of our educators, both mentally and physically, needs to be a consideration in the Educator Effectiveness initiative as districts try to continue doing more, but with fewer people.

Bills

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to note October, 2013 receipts in the amount of \$321,347.74 and approve October, 2013 disbursements in the amount of \$3,375,963.94. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

New BusinessSupport Staff Early Retirement Request

Ryan Christianson, Director of Human Resources, presented a support staff early retirement request received from Suzanne Clark (Library Aide – Howe).

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by Larry Davis to approve the support staff early retirement request of Suzanne Clark effective December 23, 2013. Motion carried unanimously.

Office/Clerical and Aide Support Staff Employee Handbook Revisions

Mr. Christianson presented recommended changes to the Office/Clerical and Aide Support Staff Employee Handbook. The revisions pertain to *Appendix A*, which relates to insurance benefits. A few minor changes were included to lend consistency to the document, and a more significant change is being recommended to strike a line referencing pro-rated insurance premium payments based upon part-time status, which is contradictory to the wording defining the Board's eligibility requirements and contributions toward insurance. Mr. Christianson clarified that employees working more than one job assignment would have their hours calculated collectively for the purposes of determining insurance eligibility. Following are the changes being recommended in *Appendix A*:

Page 1 – Paragraph 3 (Dental Insurance)

Effective July 1, 2014, an employee who has an ~~individual~~ assignment of thirty (30) hours or more per week is eligible to participate in the District's dental insurance. Employees whose assignments are less than thirty (30) hours per week are not eligible to participate in the District's dental insurance and are not eligible for any District premium contribution.

Page 2 – Paragraph 3, 4, and 5 (Dental Insurance)

Effective July 1, 2014, for ~~regular, full-time~~, full-year employees working thirty (30) or more hours per week, the Board will pay 85% per month toward the single dental plan premium, 85% per month toward the family dental plan premium, with the employee paying the balance of the cost of such coverage.

For ~~regular, full-time~~, school-year employees working thirty (30) or more hours per week, the Board will pay 50% per month toward the single dental plan premium, or 50% per month toward the family dental plan premium, with the employee paying the balance of the cost of such coverage.

For employees whose regular scheduled hours vary from week to week, the hours per week shall be averaged over the normal two (2) week pay period.

Page 2 – Paragraph 8 (Health Insurance)

Effective July 1, 2014, an employee who has an assignment of thirty (30) hours or ~~greater~~ more per week is eligible to participate in the District's health insurance. Employees whose assignments are for less than thirty (30) hours per week are not eligible to participate in the District's health insurance and are not eligible for any District premium contribution. ~~For regular part-time employees, the Board will make premium payments on a pro-rated basis.~~

Page 4 – Paragraph 5 (Long Term Disability Insurance)

Effective July 1, 2014, an employee who has an assignment of ~~at least~~ thirty (30) hours or more per week is eligible to participate in the District's long-term disability insurance. Employees whose assignments are less than thirty (30) hours per week are not eligible to participate in the District's long-term disability insurance and are not eligible for any District premium contribution.

Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Anne Lee to approve of the proposed revisions to *Appendix A* of the Office/Clerical and Aide Support Staff Employee Handbook effective immediately. Motion carried unanimously.

Food Service Employee Handbook

Mr. Christianson presented the recommended Food Service Employee Handbook, which was developed utilizing language similar to other employee handbooks approved by the Board. A team of individuals was formed to review the Handbook content. Once completed, a draft of the Handbook, along with the new-hire salary schedule previously adopted by the Board, was presented to Food Service employees. The employees learned about any changes affecting their employment, and had their questions answered. The meeting generated positive feedback from the group. Since the Handbook is similar to what has been developed for other employee groups, District legal counsel had no recommendations for change after reviewing it.

Mr. Christianson highlighted portions of the Handbook, including a few minor editorial adjustments similar to those just approved for the *Appendix A* section of the Office/Clerical and Aide Support Staff Handbook. Mr. Christianson pointed out that the Food Service Handbook does not contain a recommended insurance level benefit, at this time, for the health insurance changes that will take effect on July 1, 2014. He anticipates that the recommendation (which would go into effect on July 1, 2014) would be at a similar level to what is currently in place, with the only adjustment likely being to bump the minimum number of hours to 30 hours per week as required under the Affordable Healthcare Act. As the administration continues its discussion concerning this, Mr. Christianson anticipates bringing a recommendation forward to the Board in the spring for each employee group. Essentially, there would be a new *Appendix A* brought forward for each employee group for the Board to consider.

The Board discussed the Food Service Employee Handbook recommendation. In consideration of the paragraph related to “Gambling” on page 13, a suggestion was made to include the words “scheduled workday” in the first sentence so that it reads: “*Gambling during the employee’s scheduled workday on or off District property is prohibited.*”

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to approve the Food Service Employee Handbook as presented, including the noted revisions. Motion carried unanimously.

Other Post Employment Benefit (OPEB) Report

Daniel Weigand, Director of Business Services, provided a report to the Board on the District’s OPEB Fund. The fund began the year with a balance of \$1,002,254.85. Throughout the year, the investments declined. In May, 2013, Mr. Weigand changed the investment, and it continued to decline through the end of June, 2013. The total decline for the year was \$95,450.19 with the fund dropping to \$906,804.66. Since June, the new investment has increased by \$73,582.00 through the end of October, leaving the total amount that the fund is down from last year at \$21,867.00. Mr. Weigand expects the new modified investment to continue to grow. Ms. Dickmann pointed out that the place where the funds were drawn away from has continued to decline, reaffirming the decision to seek out other investment options.

Total expenditures out of the fund equal \$2,867,233.00 to cover retiree health insurance benefits, including their “implicit rate subsidy,” which is the calculation made of the District’s additional cost that the health insurance would be for individuals of that age if they were to get the insurance on their own, rather than obtain it through the District group plan.

Total contributions made by the District to the fund total \$3,061,504.00. Contributions by individuals equaled \$171,209.00, while the District contribution was \$2,890,295.00. The investment firm managing the investments is Morgan Stanley Smith Barney.

The Board questioned what affect the Affordable Healthcare Act will have on OPEB costs. Mr. Weigand stated that the impact will be that the District will either need to modify the health plan or the costs will continue to grow, causing the District’s contribution to increase. The General Fund would need to contribute more money to cover the increased costs for retirees. When asked whether Mr. Weigand projected any savings as a result of the Act, Mr. Weigand stated that long range, he anticipates that the total cost will continue to decline as older retirees reaching Medicare eligibility are removed from the plan. Older retirees had a richer benefit plan than newer retired employees of the last two years. Ms. Dickmann clarified that the impact of the Affordable Care Act on retired employees is not yet known since only active employees are being affected at this time. Decisions regarding retirees have not been determined at this time. Questions on whether the benefit will be viewed as discriminatory in nature still need clarification.

Ms. Hett requested that the Board receive a hard copy of the numbers referred to in Mr. Weigand’s report.

Calendar

Calendar items were reviewed.

John Krings adjourned the meeting at 6:58 p.m.