

Minutes of the Swan Valley School District #92 School Board Meeting
March 12, 2014

1. Call to Order:

Chairman Hicks called the meeting to order at 6:02 and led the board and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call:

Board members in attendance: Chairman Tara Hicks, Vice Chairman Joseph Lundquist, and Trustee Bill Steffes. Others in attendance: Superintendent Dan Keck and Board Clerk Fran Howell

3. Patrons in attendance: Audi Sutheimer, Susan Mayberry, Lyle Mayberry, Mark Lundquist, Joyce Hincks, Rayni Kopp, David Page, Kate Johnson, Amy Page, Shawn Hamlin, Laurie Hamlin, Josh Hamlin, Sharon Hunter, Daryl Hunter, Ron Peterson, Joanne Hincks, Joy Jacobson, Blair Jacobson, Troy Vias, Melanie Jacobson, Jenny Lundquist, LuLu Lundquist, Mimi Lundquist, Joet Zohner, Blake Jacobson, Kelly Jacobson, Laura Baarda, Amy Sailer, Marie Hammon, Mike Allen, Jeremy Scholes, Jessica Poole, Jeff Ashment, Teresa Ashment, Andrea Ashment, Brandy Urrutia, Gage Hicks, Troy Hicks, Pauline Scholes, Babette Thorpe.

4. Agenda Adoption:

Chairman Hicks called for a motion to adopt the proposed agenda with an amendment to include closing comments from the Chair. Mr. Steffes so moved. Mr. Lundquist seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

5. After board review, the minutes of the 11/18/13 Board Work Meeting, the 2/12/14 Board Meeting, and the 3/3/14 Public Input Board Meeting were ordered to stand as read.

6. The board reviewed the accounts payable. Mr. Steffes asked about the cut-off valve expenditure. Mr. Steffes moved to pay the bills. Mr. Lundquist seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

7. The board reviewed the current budget. Mr. Keck informed the board that there would be an amended budget at the April board meeting. There were no questions.

8. Information Items:

a. Mr. Keck discussed the current, on-going Book Fair. He mentioned that some Ririe High School students would be participating in the National BPA Conference. He also indicated that the district was awarded a grant from the Beckman Foundation to help cover the cost of our music teacher.

b. The board discussed the on -the-table 14-15 calendar proposal. Mr. Keck indicated that most of the folks who spoke in favor of adding days to the calendar at the public input meeting were the same ones who spoke last year. Mr. Ron Peterson asked if any adjustments had been made to the calendar from suggestions in that public input meeting, which there haven't been at this time. Chairman Hicks commented on the Calendar Survey from last fall and referred to the feedback that the questions were poorly asked. She compared our survey to one she just took for Teton High School and noted that the questions were quite similar. Mrs. Hicks also indicated that she had called the parents in her Trustee Zone and asked several questions and then stated the results that she had found, which were similar to the survey results. Mr. Steffes indicated that he still had some calls to make, and is not opposed to adding more days, and perhaps some days could be moved around in the middle of the calendar. Mr. Lundquist indicated that he is having a hard time because he wants to please his constituents, but doesn't feel that the majority of people want more days. The adopting of the proposed 14-15 school calendar was tabled until April's board meeting.

c. Chairman Hicks indicated that the board is aware of strong feelings for both high schools, and that there wouldn't be substantial savings in busing costs. However, eliminating busing wouldn't eliminate options. Mr. Steffes said we'd lose John Rushton as a bus driver

if we went to just Ririe High School, that we would double gas usage with 4 vs. 2 runs a day, that we would wear a bus out doing that, and that he wants to leave the issue alone for now. Mr. Lundquist wondered about the options of just going to Ririe, and doesn't want to limit choice, but thinks there will be a budget problem in the future. He said discussions are good, but can we be more resourceful? Chairman Hicks asked Mr. Keck if he had academic information, to which he replied he wasn't ready to discuss that information tonight. The board decided to just continue discussions in the future.

- d. Laurie Hamlin request: Mrs. Hamlin expressed a desire to have a counselor at the school, which she feels would improve school safety and behavior. She suggested counseling in the morning and then having that counselor work in the afternoon preparing the middle school students prepare for high school and college. She feels Mr. Keck has too much to do to handle counseling. She's reviewed the budget and had a couple of ideas from which funding could occur, and stated that it would be for the betterment for students and teachers to have a counselor here. Mr. Keck thanked Mrs. Hamlin for her remarks, and also indicated that the school is using a program in lieu of a counselor. Chairman Hicks stated that she isn't against a counselor, and would weigh things out in the budget. There were no comments from the other board members.
- e. Posting of the Budget Update: Mr. Keck stated that the district is working on coming into compliance for posting the budget on our website, and that next month's meeting would include an amended budget.
- f. Public Comment:
 - i. David Page informed the board he had spent two hours speaking with Mr. Keck about the miscommunication occurring in the district. Speaking for himself and others, he said that they feel that their opinions are not being heard and are brushed aside and taken lightly. He wants everyone to work together; feels that communication is a problem, and that personal attacks need to end. He asked that he be listened to and communicated with. He also indicated that there may be an elimination of staff positions and board recalls at the instigation of him and others.
 - ii. Ron Peterson abstained from commenting.
 - iii. Laurie Hamlin stated that she doesn't understand the budget, and proposed that an index of what each line item means be created so she can understand them. She suggested attaching them to the budget.
 - iv. Joyce Hincks agreed with David Page, and that the conflicts need to end. She said that friendships have been lost, and we should work together. She supports Mr. Keck and thinks he is a good man, and also thinks that the school board is doing a good job.
 - v. Jessica Poole stated that she sees a problem with Mr. Keck being a counselor because he is also the disciplinarian, and that kids aren't comfortable talking to Mr. Keck because he is the disciplinarian. She feels kids would be more willing to talk to a counselor. She also feels that our school should be the very best, a 5-Star facility.
 - vi. Mr. Keck expressed appreciation for the public input. He reiterated his invitation for people to come in and visit with him or to please come in and spend some time in the classrooms.
 - vii. Marie Hammon then asked to speak about the calendar. She indicated that the Teacher Work Days are important, and that the proposed calendar was prepared very thoughtfully.

9. Action Items:

- a. Chairman Hicks called for a motion for a resolution calling for a School Plant Facility election, with the amount to be discussed. Mr. Steffes so moved, Mr. Lundquist seconded.

Chairman Hicks led a discussion. She stated that bus depreciation is now being tracked, and talked about the recent school maintenance projects. She stated that money has been spend carefully, and initially felt that the current \$30,000.00 levy may be sufficient. Mr. Steffes, in discussing a bus purchase, feels that there is a lack of safety with a van-type bus, and that there is zero reimbursement for non-conforming buses. He spoke of the recent roof replacement, duct cleaning, and the need for a levy. Mr. Lundquist supports a raised levy amount. Mr. Keck was asked to go over the numbers again. Pauline Scholes stated that she would support an increase. Ron Peterson said he would also support a raised amount. Mrs. Joyce Hincks thinks a raised amount would pass. Chairman Hicks then suggested that the district go for a \$40,000.00 levy. Mr. Lundquist expressed a fear that we wouldn't lose the whole levy by upping the amount. David Page said he would support a raised amount. Laura Baarda asked if the allowable expenditures in a plant facility levy would be posted on the website, along with projected tax dollar amounts. Joanne Hincks told the board they are doing a great job. Chairman Hicks had Board Clerk Howell read the resolution with a \$40,000.00 amount. Mr. Steffes moved for a resolution calling for a School Plant Facility Election in the amount of \$40,000.00 a-year for 5 years. Mr. Lundquist seconded. The roll call vote was: Tara Hicks, yes. Joseph Lundquist, yes. Bill Steffes, yes.

10. The Board held the first reading of proposed Policy 1120 (addition), 1100 to replace 1105, 1110 to replace 1111. Chairman Hicks called for a motion to accept the first reading of policy 1120 as an addition 1100 to replace 1105, and 1110 to replace 1111. Mr. Steffes so moved. Mr. Lundquist seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
11. The board skipped action on the calendar adoption, which is tabled until April board meeting,
12. Upcoming events include: a teacher workday 3/21, Spring Break 3/24-28, Parent Teacher Conference on 4/3.
13. April board meeting was set for April 9, 2014 at 6:00 pm.

Chairman Hicks read some closing comments. They were:

"Closing Comments from the Chair

March 12, 2014 School Board Meeting

In closing, I have some things I would like to say. I have written them all down in hopes that I don't leave anything out.

It is difficult to see change especially in a small community and I feel that a lot of the negative emotions in the community started when these changes started affecting personnel at the school. You have to know that doing away with the full time IT position and a custodial position was extremely difficult to do, knowing that it was going to directly affect my friends. The board's decision was made in regards to the custodial position to be better stewards of tax payer dollars. We were paying two benefit packages, which was not very efficient from a budgetary standpoint. As for the decision on the full time IT position, the board made the decision to do away with the full time position, which cost the district around \$60K. We then added a part time testing and data coordinator position for \$9,000. Then we engaged in a three year contract with iSchool to provide the networking infrastructure, iMac lab, speaker system, iPads, and tech support for about \$50K/yr for three years. I'm sorry that these decisions were taken personal for some but we as a board felt it was a direction we wanted to go for our students. Mr. Keck is doing exactly what has been asked of him by the board. We have a long way to go but I know we are on the right track.

In regards to our budget, there is a perception out there that we are in financial crisis, due to unneeded spending on many items, one in particular iSchool. To clarify to all you patrons out there, as a board, we never indicated in any way shape or form that this program was going to be paid for by a grant. We always had this program accounted for in the budget. Everyone should know that a grant is never a guarantee. We did apply for some grants in hopes to get assistance but never planned on these funds.

Another hot topic seems to be our superintendent contract, with the attacks against the contract amount and the immediate cease and desist order demanded by a patron at last week's meeting for accused illegal actions. I would like to clarify that our school district has historically paid for the health benefits for our superintendent's family members. We (the school board) set up the contract with Mr. Keck, offering him the same benefit as superintendents prior. I felt this benefit was important to provide for the same reason we offer a higher pay scale for our certified teachers. This is a difficult area to bring in quality people, with the location and cost of living. We pay Mr. Keck the premium for his family's health benefits as an addition to his paycheck for taxes to be taken out, by doing this it satisfies the IRS audit. Then we pull that premium back out of the paycheck after taxes have been paid and we then pay the benefit premium. I spoke to surrounding districts business managers and they too offer the same benefit to their superintendents and pay the benefit the same way we do. We are not performing any illegal activities.

It has also been suggested that we get a part time superintendent and place a head teacher in the principal position. In regards to that, Mr. Keck is in fact a part time superintendent; he also acts as our principal. In addition to his Superintendent duties he overseeing teachers/staff, taking care of teacher/staff development, regular teacher/staff evaluations and meetings, student disciplinary tasks, overseeing the safety and maintenance of facility, grounds, transportation, food service, and technology. We also included in his contract the position of Special Ed Coordinator for \$10K, we had previously paid \$15K. When we as a board hired Mr. Keck we put a lot on his plate and in addition to the above we asked.

1. Higher expectations of our teachers and staff
 - Job description and hours expected of them
 - Inventory all aids/staff and effectiveness of them
2. Unity of our school, staff, students and patrons
 - Regular staff meetings, assemblies
 - Community outreach
 - Teacher development
3. Expectation of students
 - Follow rules, respect one another and staff
 - Discipline- equal and consistent
4. Need of informing the board of test result and growth of students
5. The need for knowing the success of our students after they leave Swan Valley Elementary
6. Step up the sports program
7. Oversee PTO and annual audit
8. Importance for creating a realistic budget.

We are asking a lot of Mr. Keck and I think he is doing a very good job. I think pulling a certified teacher away from the students is a big step in the wrong direction.

In addition to all those additional tasks we have asked of Mr. Keck there is also the task of reviewing policy. As a board we need to review all our policies annually. Some of you patrons have brought to our attention some deficiencies in some policies and problems with some of our procedures. We appreciate the time and efforts you have put into making sure things are done properly and I thank you, but in the manner that some of this has been done has been very offensive, this has resulted in the need for us to confer with legal counsel and to date we have spent over \$10K with attorneys. As a result we have had to update some policy and we had to reverse a motion and turn back around and restate the motion. In the end, yes, we updated policy and improved our procedure, which is and will always be an ongoing venture. I will admit I am not an accountant or an attorney, so I am not very familiar with policy and procedure but I as well as the board are trying very hard to learn and are very open to learning. We are attending board training as well as Mr. Keck is continually attending conferences and meetings. We

are continually trying to increase our knowledge of the budget, policy and procedure. I would like to clarify that NO I am not "embarrassed" and NO we are not trying to "hide" anything. I am proud of where we are and where we are headed!

I think there is also a perception out there that we as a board and administration don't listen to the public. I want to ensure all of you that I, along with the board, administration and staff, **do** listen. We are trying to improve ways for public input, but this is what we need to see from you folk, we need to see your faces at the school.

- Come in-sit in class
- Come in-see how engaged the students are and what they are achieving
- Come in- visit with Mr. Keck about what is on your mind
- Come in- see the amazing art the students are creating
- Come in- see the students perform at assemblies, sports and Missoula Children's Theater

Don't just hide behind an email, text or social media, making accusations and sarcastic comments about the school, don't hide behind a phone call, don't just come to a meeting and state statistics, state statutes and make big assumptions without coming into the school before and seeing what is actually going on. I know this would help to alleviate a lot of the misconceptions out there about what is taking place at the school. We need all of you to be part of our school. We need to find a way to work together in a positive constructive manner, because the way things are going now is creating a lot of tension. Things are heard in the community, at home, and at school, which are affecting the students, staff, administration, board, and community members. It is imperative that we change the mood and misconceptions in this valley. We need to put our emotions aside for past happenings with personnel, positions and patron's organizations, that is, in my opinion fueling a lot of the negativity towards the operations here at the school. Every one's main focus should be the education of the students, let's not let personal emotions get in the way.

I am very confident in saying your students are getting an excellent education here. Your student is also very safe here. We have an amazing staff that is very dedicated and passionate about the education of these students. This staff is being lead by a very qualified, passionate and strong superintendent and principle, which cares for each and every student and their success, as well as the success of our district. I think deep down we all want the same things we just need to learn how to work together. We have a lot of work to do so let's get to it.

I thank you all once again for coming tonight. I call this meeting adjourned! Tara Hicks"

14. The meeting was adjourned at 8:01.



Chairperson



Attest



Date