

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meeting

August 9th, 2006

This Board of Ed Meeting was a “Regular” meeting. Silverman was absent for the first ½ of the meeting.

School Report Card

Mary Zarr (Executive Director for Instruction, Special Services and School Improvement) reported to the Board about test scores from the standardized testing in the spring. She said the ISBE cautioned the district not to release data because the test score data may change. She said they had 7680 scores across the district and that the scores themselves would not change, but the sub-categories were awaiting changes and corrections. Zarr said corrections could be available by 8/23 and that there were 42 scores missing, although those children had been tested. Zarr said they should have test score data to release by the end of September, but she indicated that a significant number of kids had moved from meets to exceeds and that overall test scores were high, with 86% meets-or-exceeds in reading, 89% in math, and 92% in science. McKanna mentioned he was frustrated that it was taking so long to get the data and that the district would be looking at alternatives to the current testing system.

2006-07 Budget

Kevin Nohelty presented the 2006-07 Budget (see [handout](#)). Nohelty said IL law requires that all school districts adopt a balanced budget, and if they are unable to do so, they must have a good reason and a plan to adopt a balanced budget within 3 years. Nohelty mentioned that D15 has not had a balanced budget for several years, but said the district was close to being able to balance the 2006-07 budget and he hoped to do so by the September 13th Board meeting where the Board was to adopt the final budget. The budget as presented has a \$3.3M deficit on a \$148M total budget, with a net increase in expenses of 3.42% compared to the 2005-06 budget. The actual expenses for 2005-06 were approximately 3.3% less than the budgeted expenses for 2005-06, which means that the new expense budget for 2006-07 is 6.94% higher than the actual expenses for 2005-06. Revenues in 2005-06 were estimated to be \$137.7M, but actual revenues for 2005-06 came in at \$145.1M, an increase of 5% over the estimated revenues. The estimated revenues for 2006-07 are \$144.9M, which is a 5.2% increase over the 2005-06 estimated revenues, but actually a 0.13% decrease compared to actual revenues in 2005-06. Boucher asked if the district had enough in the budget to cover gas cost increases; Nohelty said the district uses 25,000 gallons of fuel in a year and the current price estimated for fuel was \$2.50/gallon (the district does not have to pay taxes on their gas). Millar asked why fees from busing went down 25% compared to last year's budget; Nohelty said the last year the budget was substantially overestimated, and that this year's budget is close to the actual amount of fees received during the year.

Class Sizes

Jim Garwood presented information about class sizes in the district for this coming year and requested that the Board approve hiring 2.5 additional teachers. Earlier in the year, the Board directed the Administration to work toward class size averages across the district as follows:

Target Average Class Sizes
24 students for Grades 1,2,3
26 students for Grades 4,5,6
28 students for Grades 7,8

These average class sizes were averages across the district, not necessarily at individual schools or classes. In May, the Administration presented their 2006-07 budget that included hiring 22 new teachers to bring the district average classes sizes in alignment with these targets. Those hires would bring the district close to meeting the district targets, but Garwood presented three cases (Lincoln, Pleasant Hill and Jane Adams) where the administration was requesting additional teachers for specific situations where the administration believed those extra teachers were needed to meet target class sizes. At Lincoln, the 3rd grade was averaging 29.2, but adding a section would bring that average down to 23.4, close to the district's target of 24. At Pleasant Hill, the 1st grade was averaging 28.3, but adding a section would bring that average down as well. At Jane Addams, a section was removed in grades 4-6 and a multi-age classroom was used to keep the average size down to 23.6. However, Garwood said there were historical issues with multi-age classrooms at Jane Addams and the administration wanted to add a half-time teacher back to 6th grade. With the addition of these 2.5 teachers, the district wide class averages would be close to the district targets, as estimated today:

Estimate Average Class Size 2006-07

24.2 for Grades 1,2,3

26.0 for Grades 4,5,6

28.07 for Grades 7,8

Garwood mentioned that enrollment numbers have gone up, since the predictions made in the spring, and that the district needs to wait until the 6th day enrollment numbers to know for sure about class size averages. Zarr mentioned there are still some individual class sizes that are high and will have to be watched, including Lake Louise Kindergarten and Willow Bend's 1st grade. Jean Sophie said that Kindergarten is very hard to predict, that some schools are more volatile, but even within schools it is difficult to predict. Zarr said it is hard to re-section after school starts, but the district has re-sectioned Kindergarten classes in the past when necessary.

Bid Process

Millar wanted the Board to solidify its bid process, to know what contracts must be bid, and which exceptions can be made. Millar said there was some contention in the board this year about different bidding issues, and he wanted to have the bidding process clarified. Millar mentioned that with \$20M in purchased services, even small amounts of savings could be important to class sizes, and that the bidding process can help the district save money. McKanna said the school code currently has a \$10k threshold, above which items must be bid out, and did Millar want that changed? Millar said no, he really wanted to know which goods and services would be exclusions to the bidding process altogether, for example, architectural services, commodities, banking, legal and other services. Millar wanted the bidding process to be clear and noted that bidding in services is now a prevalent practice. Carlson said she thought the bidding procedure as set by the state is fine and thinks the process is working and does not need to change. Keenan asked what was the point of not bidding out, that there was no advantage to not bidding out. Boucher answered that the district is given latitude to negotiate with vendors, and would not get as good of a price if the district had to bid it. Keenan said that the district does not have to automatically take the lowest bidder, that the district could accept the lowest "qualified" bidder and negotiate after that. Mikula asked if the district had asked the auditor to review the bidding process. Nohelty said it was not specifically called out, but it could be added for additional cost. Carlson wants the accountant to review our bidding procedures. She commented that the district had never had a lawsuit about their bidding process, and disagreed that it was a problem, but thought it was prudent to have the accountants take a look at the process. Millar said he appreciated that compromise, but did not think accountants were going to tell you if the process is saving money or not. Millar wanted the procedure to have clarity so it

was not contentious on the Board. McKanna suggested that the administration make a list of things that the district bids and does not bid and bring it back to the Board. Carlson, Mikula agreed that was a good compromise, that the district should bring it to the October meeting. Keenan said she was concerned about savings, not legality. Rowden commented that she wanted a rationale for why the district was or was not bidding.

D15 Ed Foundation

Mikula reported \$38,762 was raised in the Read-a-Rama last year for the Ed Foundation. Boucher was appointed delegate to the IASB Annual Conference. Keenan may attend, but declined to be a delegate.

Action Items

Personnel Report

The Board unanimously approved the personnel report, which included the addition of 2.5 teachers to address class size issues.

Bids

Bids for Refuse/Recycling Services and Food Products and Non-food Supplies were unanimously approved. Millar asked why the district did not use Groot since they already pickup in Palatine. Nohelty said the district sent out 6 bid requests and received 4 bids. He suggested Groot may not be competitive with Waste Management because Waste Management already has containers in place, and that may be why Groot did not submit a bid. Boucher noted that the district took the higher bid from Echo Lab, and Nohelty said that was due to quality of products, that the district was unhappy with Borden.

Consent Calendar

The consent calendar was unanimously approved, with items H. (Second Reading –BOE Policy) and L. (Destruction of Executive Session Audio Recordings – Jan 12 and Feb 9, 2005) pulled for discussion and separate vote.

H. (Second Reading –BOE Policy) – Sophie suggested holding off on approving policies 2:220 and 2:460 because of the previous bidding discussion. She mentioned that the district needs to review their policies before the compliance visit from the state in October. Carlson noted this was a state requirement. Boucher wanted to know what the objection to 2:220 was. Keenan said the change of requiring unanimous approval (from minority approval) to get an item on the agenda. Boucher said it was from Roberts Rules, and only applied to the day of the board meeting. Sophie suggested waiting to review all the policies together. The board voted unanimously to approve all policies except 2:460.

L. (Destruction of Executive Session Audio Recordings – Jan 12 and Feb 9, 2005)
Board approved 6:1 (Keenan “no”).

Correspondence

Tim Millar made a FOIA request for the district’s natural gas bills.