

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meeting

November 9th, 2005

Next Meeting: Preliminary Budget Numbers

The Board of Ed meetings were videotaped for broadcast on local public television. Videotapes of the Board meetings will be archived in the three local libraries as well.

Clubs/Activities

Rowden asked that the Board vote on whether a parent could run a club or activity during non-academic time (before school, lunchtime, afterschool) without a "certified" teacher supervising. She said the Principals were looking for direction from the Board. Boucher, Carlson and other board members were concerned about background checks and liability. Rowden amended her proposal to say that the parent would be under the auspice of the PTA. There was still disagreement, Rowden called for a vote, and the proposal passed with Silverman abstaining and Boucher voting no.

District Web Site

The Board voted to put a wide range of Board documents on the district website and in the 3 public libraries serving the district, including:

- Directory index of public records
- Description of how to read salary schedule, along with the salary schedules
- Board documents posted for agenda items
- Board meeting videotapes at libraries
- "Hot Button" topics up on the web in a timely manner
- Board Policy
- List of benefits for different positions within the district

No timeline was given for when these documents would be available.

District Vision/Goals 2010

Karen Hindman, Exec. Dir. For Curriculum presented the curriculum goals of the District, a part of their 5 year plan. The District collected 2000 responses from stakeholders throughout the community in developing their district plan. The plan has three main goals:

1. D15 students meet or exceed learning standards
2. Close performance gaps for subgroups
3. Ensure meeting/exceeding students are still improving academically

Each school will have a "School Improvement Plan" that should be up on the website within a week. There will also be "Outcome Statements" that indicate the expected targets for the School Improvement Plans.

Kelly Keenan noted she thought there should be an attempt to look at COGAT and ISAT scores to determine if kids are performing at their potential. Keenan wanted a report to the Board at the school level of the difference between kids potential and performance as indicated by these tests. Hindman said the district has a "data warehouse" that they can pull that kind of data out for the Board to see.

Hindman wants to train staff to differentiate instruction and wants to use the test results to do this. Keenan wants to change the benchmark from meeting/exceeding a certain performance level to having each child meeting his/her ability level. Rowden noted each school has individual needs and that we should be looking at tailoring classroom size to meet special needs. Carlson noted that ultimately it would be good to have IEPs for everyone.

10-year Life/Safety Study

There was some contention on the Board as to whether they should accept the

Life/Safety report as-is, thus obligating the District to perform the life/safety tasks listed as “urgent” in the report. Keenan was especially concerned that the Board did not have a “second opinion” about items that should or should not be on the “urgent” list. The Building Maintenance Director concurred and agreed that he would review each item on the list and give his recommendations to the Board by the next meeting as to which items should be included on the “urgent” list and which items they could take back to the architectural firm that wrote the report for reconsideration. The Building Maintenance Director indicated about 10% of the items on the “urgent” list could be handled by existing maintenance personnel. Mr. Nolte, Asst Superintendent of Business, presented four options for funding the Life&Safety items (total \$35M, with about \$5M urgent):

1. Fund from Operation and Maintenance Budget (not really an option due to lack of funds)
2. Restructure Long Term Debt
3. Referendum – Nolte did not recommend this option
4. Levy 5 cents (max rate) for \$1.7M - > this option, due to tax cap limitations, means the money will come from another fund

Approving the study was tabled, pending the Building Maintenance Director’s evaluation of the “urgent” items.

Citizens Address the Board

Sue Jetson, Robin Sarafino, Yvonne Harr – three Virginia Lake parents separately complained to the Board about the challenge the large diversity at VL poses, especially with larger class sizes. They emphasized that equal funding for support staff (building assistants, library personnel) is not equal support for schools that are larger and with more diversity.

Ken Koweskowski – Lincoln School – noted an improvement in Board meetings. Wanted more information on the internet, should follow D211. Concerned about too much emphasis on test scores.

Joe Heater – Spinnaker Cove – never had children in district, senior volunteer @ Sundling. Wants more info on web site: public has right to know, cost effective method to get informed debate; transparency engenders trust; informed citizens make the right decision.

Eva Michelowski – Foreign Language afterschool program at schools. Changes in rental fees make program not feasible, can’t afford rental fee.

Amber Daniechek – Community Member (also D15 teacher) – loyal to D15 but disappointed that has reinstated clubs and sports rather than increase in class sizes and reduction in LRC staff.

Lisa Kolby and others – three parents protested bus safety issue and new bus driver at Marion Jordan. Complained no response from the Transportation department director – want a change in bus stop, not safe in winter. Boucher replied that someone from the administration will call them.

Terry Storino – Need to focus on what is best for all students. Disappointed about clubs and sports – should focus on class size. What is the plan for 1-5 years?

Building Use Fees

Dr. Sophie proposed having a 3rd tier for fees for for-profit groups that provide “valued” services for the kids. She proposed these groups meet the following criteria to pay reduced fees:

1. Require minimal space
2. Do not require school services
3. Do not meet when school is open

4. Affects a lot of students
5. Leave approval to discretion of schools, so the long-term commitment to the students can be considered

Carlson requested that the groups provide discounted classes to kids with low-income/free lunch needs. The Board approved the 3rd tier fees.

Tax Levy

Kevin Nolte, Asst. Superintendent for Business, showed that due to a CPI increase, the District will be able to levy higher taxes, and collect more revenue, for 2006. Last year the levy was capped at 1.9%, this year it will be 3.3%. At the next Board meeting he said the Board would be required to hold a "Truth in Taxation" hearing because the actual tax rate would be greater than 5% (although the 3.3% cap is on existing property, new property is not capped and Nolte estimates an increase in 2% in new property, which increases the actual tax rate above 5%). Actual dollar increase should be around \$4M, but this does not include possible losses due to PTAB appeals. Keenan wants the tax levy information put on the website.

U.S. Cellular Tower at Plum Grove Jr. High

The Board asked Nolte to start negotiations for a cell tower at Plum Grove Jr. High, which would bring in an estimated \$1800/month lease.

Budget Committee Formed

Millar and Silverman will form the new standing Budget Committee on the Board. The Board also discussed changing the Board meeting format to 2 meetings per month, one for discussion, one for action.