

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meeting

October 25th, 2006

Mikula was absent.

A handout about the teacher contract details was available at the board meeting, but was not discussed. It can be downloaded at www.phpta.org/DistrictInfo.htm.

District Bid Process

Kevin Nohelty, Bob Piekarski (Business Services) and Sophie Klopp (Purchasing Agent) presented to the board regarding the districts' purchasing and procurement guidelines (see handout, available at www.phpta.org/DistrictInfo.htm). Said there were 3 methods of procurement: Bids, RFP's and Quotations. The handout listed all contracts and services that were exempt from bidding (according to the School Code, which is the law governing schools in IL).

Millar said he requested the current items not being bid, in order to look at lowering costs and increasing competition. Areas that Millar thinks should be bidding: banking (CD rates), gas/electric (more than \$1.9M per year, even saving 2% could be substantial money for more teachers), computers. Wanted an internet based system for smaller bids, to get a larger pool of bidders; try to bid as much as possible, while still having preferred providers when necessary. In bidding process, important to have everyone bid on the same day, to get good comparisons. Formal bid process can drive down costs and save \$ to be used in the classroom.

Nohelty said the district wanted to save \$ for taxpayers; he was planning on bringing back to the Board in December an extensive analysis of banking services. Said the district used an RFP for computers last spring. Boucher wanted to know how much wiggle room was in the formal bidding process? The district has rejected bids in the past; once you open a formal bid, you have limited ability to negotiate with the bidder.

Piekarski said that RFPs can open on the same day, and allow the district to get a better price. Boucher agreed that RFP can be effective way to get a very low price. Wanted to know if we can put items out on the website for items routinely quoted? Would be a way to get multiple people to quote.

Nohelty noted that the district is required to advertise 10 days in advance. Carlson noted that the district only has a ½ time webmaster, and that maybe that position needs to be expanded. She said she like the RFP because you can get a better price. Also said the district was trying to get women and minorities to bid.

Millar noted the downside to the RFP is that you don't get as many vendors. Keenan asked why the district can't include everyone who wants to be in the RFP? Piekarski replied that the district has an extensive vendor base. Keenan asked why didn't the district advertise. Piekarski said that the district does not always do that, but sometimes does. Boucher and Keenan agreed that putting it on the website was a good idea. Boucher suggested that under the business office section of the website, the district could list things bidding out or RFP.

McKanna noted that companies scan the paper and notify other companies of bids that are out there. Carlson suggested looking into personnel issue for putting on website. Nohelty said he could come back in November with that info.

Boucher noted that IASB is proposing to modify state rules to allow local bidders a leg up. Did the district want to do that? Would mean up to a 2% differential. Carlson noted that the idea was to maintain jobs locally, but that "local" to D15 includes more than one county. Keenan said that "local" should mean within D15 boundaries, but that would be limiting in terms of the number of vendors.

Out of Level Math and Gifted Committees - McKanna noted that Mary Zarr (Asst. Superintendent of Instruction) was recruiting stakeholders to participate in the out of level and gifted committees that she is forming.

Citizens Address the Board

Mary Flynn – Thanks to the Board for their efforts. I have been involved in the bargaining process, it's not easy. Sad to hear remarks questioning the integrity of teachers. Was teacher for 34 years, have 1st hand knowledge. The teachers worked without a contract and stayed on the job. Important relationship between teacher and child. What happens when Board member questions the integrity of the teacher? Nobody wants strike, yet 100% voted for strike – that should concern you. You have to understand that teachers had lack of trust, demoralized. Understandable that you have personal agendas but don't let it get in the way. Fiscal responsibility is important, but not the most important thing. You need to get past your anger.

Kathy Hyla – 5th grade teacher, Whiteley. Listening to people putting down what you do and listening to people questioning your integrity. Watching parents who were hurtful, cutting to people that care for your children. It was mean spirited. My heart was broken. Need to do so respectfully. What would children think if they heard what their parents were saying. Board members in the paper quoted saying they did not respect teachers. Breaks the team of parents and teachers apart. When the teacher bashing is all done, I will still be in the classroom doing what I do best.

Greg Armamentos - There is a nasty divide in our district. Where do we go from here? To the Board: We need healing and we need you to forge a community where we find value in different viewpoints and have unity in what is best for kids, but not uniformity where we all must agree. To the Concerned Parents: continue to advocate for Kids Must Count and transparency and a new Board; advocate in Springfield, where we are 49th in the nation in education funding for our children. To the Teachers: Take high road, hold head up high and teach: you are highly valued by your colleagues, students, community.

Keenan noted that IL is 2nd in the nation in total education funding and that most of that comes from local property taxes, which is why we are 49th in the nation for funding from state taxes.

Sally Kim - To the Board member that said the contract was "in the best interest of the district" – why not vote on the contract at a regular meeting, why a special meeting called? It was not a proud, responsible way to vote. To any Board member that supported this contract: should show factually that this contract does not exceed CPI. This was the best you were "willing" to do; 3 other Board members were willing to do more - if one more had not let fear, intimidation. To the Board member who said "negotiate the contract every day": calling substitute teachers, telling them not to work as caregivers is deplorable. The Board did not denounce this.

David Rongheim - Parent in D15. Thanks to Board, CTC, McKanna for reaching agreement. Negative comments do not represent all parents. Want clear information from all sides (Board, CTC). Next time, could be resolved better.

Kathy Carver - Thanks for getting the contract done. I do bidding for a living for Motorola, maybe we have best practices to share. Questions: Can D15 pool funds with D54 and D211, for similar products, get bigger bang for buck? Would be great to see what spend is overall. When will we be able to see the budget for the next 3 years?

Carlson: You can get that from Kevin Nohelty.

Proposed 2006 Tax Levy Truth in Taxation Act requires that 20 days prior to levy the district has to hold a public hearing (if the levy exceeds 105%), before 12/26/06. Nov30-Dec6 the district will publish in the newspaper. Dec 13 will have hearing. Our tax levy is limited to CPI or 5%, whichever is less. This year CPI = 3.4%. District will add an additional 0.5% to capture revenues from any new construction that occurs, for a total of 3.9%. This excludes Bond and Interest. District has levy projections to 2011. Millar commented that the district will be paying off some old debt. Boucher said they were retiring construction bonds from 20 years ago. Nohelty commented that there should be some more stability in assessments in the future.

The meeting was adjourned. There was no executive session.