

# **Spotlight on the Board**

## **Notes from the District 15 School Board Meeting**

### **September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

Over 1000 people were in attendance at the Board meeting, a large number of whom were teachers, including CTC representatives.

#### **2006-2007 Budget**

The 2006-2007 Budget was presented (see [handout](#)). The budget as presented show a less than 2% deficit, with projected revenues slightly higher and projected expenses slightly lower than the tentative budget presented in August. The budget was approved by unanimous vote.

#### **ISAT Test Results**

Mary Zarr (Executive Director of Curriculum) presented preliminary results from the ISAT tests, with final results expected by November. She reported that of 7,656 District 15 students taking the reading ISAT test, 6,613 met or exceeded standards (86%). For math, of 7,654 tests taken, 6,879 met or exceeded standards (89.1%). For the 19 schools reporting AYP (Annual Yearly Progress), all 19 schools reported making AYP requirements.

#### **Superintendent Report**

Superintended McKanna reported that enrollment was slightly lower this year, with 213 fewer students (out of 12,582 in the district), and that average class sizes across the district had been lowered compared to last year, due to additions in staff:

<b><u>Grade</u></b>	<b><u>Avg Class Size 2005-06</u></b>	<b><u>Avg Class Size 2006-07</u></b>
1-3	27	23.41
4-6	28	25
7-8	28	28

#### **Classroom Performance System**

The administration demonstrated a new technology system called "Classroom Performance System". It consisted of remote answering devices which allowed members of the BOE meeting audience to answer questions displayed on a computer screen. The devices worked like remote controls "beaming" the answer to a receiving device, which then fed the answers into the computer. These devices allow teachers to ask multiple choice questions and have all children answer anonymously. The children and teacher get instant feedback on whether they were right, as well as how the other children answered. While answers are anonymous to the children, the teacher has a record on the computer of who answered which question correctly. The computer can instantly show the results in a variety of graphing formats. Three schools currently have this system in place. McKanna recommended that people should talk to their principal if they wish to have the system in their classrooms.

#### **BOE President Carlson's Speech on Contract Negotiations**

([Click here to hear Carlson's speech, 14min](#))

President Carlson noted she invited Jan Belzar, President of the CTC (Classroom Teachers Council), to join her in speaking at the podium, but that Belzar preferred to address the Board from the table.

Carlson spoke at length, reading from a prepared statement that is largely the same as the press release posted on the district's website (see [posting](#)).

Carson gave an overview of the negotiations, and noted that people can contact the board via email, addressing the Board at meetings, or by phone, and that there would be a 30 min comment period after she spoke. Carlson spoke about

recent negotiations on Monday (9/11), why the board was filing an “unfair labor practice” complaint, why the board froze salaries, and what the board was offering and the CTC counteroffering in negotiations. Carlson handed out two documents: one a comparison sheet of salaries of district 15 teachers and neighboring districts ([see handout](#)) and a summary of the position of the Board and CTC in the areas of compensation, benefits and retirement ([see handout](#)).

Carlson said the board realized that confidentiality was important in negotiations, but in light of the CTC’s impending vote to authorize intent to strike (scheduled for 9/18) that the Board felt it was time to share more information about the negotiations. Carlson commented that she was glad to hear the CTC say that, even though they would be voting on an intent to strike, that they had not scheduled a strike date, and that they had no current plans to strike. Carlson said Monday (9/11) night the negotiation teams resolved many issues. That night the Board agreed to two CTC proposals, which the CTC then refused to accept. Carlson said this non-acceptance of proposals the CTC had previously offered constituted an “unfair labor practice” and the Board would be filing a complaint to that effect. Carlson noted that the Board still hoped to get beyond these issues, and that another bargaining session was scheduled for 9/19. Carlson also explained that the Board decided to freeze salaries at last years’ levels, because it would be fiscally irresponsible to make a decision at this time, since salary actions were an item that were still on the negotiating table. She noted that teachers will still get the full salary increase negotiated under the new contract. The Board is offering a 9.25% salary increase over 3 years, whereas the CTC is asking for a 24% increase over 3 years. Carlson noted it was important to protect the fiscal integrity of the district, and a 24% increase over 3 years was not in the best fiscal interest of the district. On the issue of retirement, Carlson noted that the Board was offering a 6% increase each year during the last 3 years before retirement, because recent changes in state law requires the Board to pay penalties if they pay more than a 6% increase at that time. Carlson noted the CTC offered 3 different, complex proposals for retirement that would not meet the 6% cap, and would require the Board to pay penalties if accepted. Carlson asked the community to support the Board and the CTC during this time of negotiations, and hoped that the negotiations could continue to reach a fair and fiscally responsible contract while avoiding a strike.

### **CTC President Jan Belzer addresses the Board**

[\(click here to hear Jan Belzer’s comments, 6min\)](#)

Belzer referred to the crowded gym when she commented that 800 professional members were in attendance in support of the CTC. She commented that after 14 months of negotiating, progress had been made and some tentative agreements reached. She confirmed that Monday 9/18 the teachers will vote to authorize the intent to strike. She said it had been 24 years since the CTC has authorized a strike, and that the CTC takes this step only as a last resort, due to unfair and unjust Board positions, putting politics and short term, short sighted positions ahead of the school district the CTC serves. Belzer said the inability to come to a fair agreement puts the entire community in jeopardy, straining relationships. She commented that the last three years have been difficult with the failed referendum, cutbacks in personnel, programs, loss of teachers and administrators and decline in morale. Belzer said the teachers work hard to provide a quality education and provide role models, resulting in the high ISAT scores reported today. She said the teachers have held up their end of the bargain, yet are being frozen on last year’s salaries, which is why the CTC is filing an “unfair labor practice” complaint against the district. The CTC wants a fair, just and equitable contract, a quality contract that takes into account teacher dedication, experience, and nationally recognized service to the community. Belzer said the CTC wants the board to put aside their personal agendas, and work for the good of the teachers, students and community. The CTC wants to do the hard work necessary

to settle the contract, so can focus on providing quality education to students of district 15. Belzer said the current situation cannot go on much longer, and the CTC wants to resolve the situation so that the quality of the students is making headlines, not the tension that divides us.

***At this point, Jan Belzer stood up and exited the auditorium, along with the CTC supports with her at the table. The vast majority of teachers in attendance stood to leave as well, requiring a 15 minute break to clear the room. When the session was reconvened, the remaining Citizens that wanted to address the board spoke.***

### **Citizens Address the Board**

Carlson apologized to the remaining speakers for the CTC/teacher walkout, and invited the remaining citizens to address the board.

**Scott McDermott** – parent with 2 children at Jane Addams. His son was asking him what a strike was. McDermott commented that people move into D15 for the schools, and quality instruction. He said we need quality teachers and that a failure to negotiate a fair contract would ruin everything. He said people are either not negotiating in good faith or not trained in negotiating. It was inconceivable to him that the groups had not been able to come together. He said the power lies in the boards hands, even a vote of intent to strike is a failure. What kinds of message is the board and the CTC sending the kids when there are 2 different reports of what is being offered. He is extremely happy with his teachers and would not remain in district 15 without quality teachers.

**David Valentine** – Virginia Lake. Excellent schools and district. Said quality education takes investment and was disappointed that it took until tonight to get what the negotiating positions were. He kept looking at the CTC and district websites, but wasn't getting any information about their positions. He knows the board and teachers are intelligent and passionate about education – wanted to know why it has gone on this long, implored the Board and CTC to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

**Peggy Babcock** – Plum Grove Jr. High. Saddened by state of district, with lost teachers and administrators. We are facing the real possibility of a strike. Can we replace them? Yes, but what will we lose in quality? The Board and CTC don't seem to be negotiating in the same room. State funding is the real problem we face. Implored the Board to speak candidly and compromise so we can teach our children.

**Karen Shutz** – Pleasant Hill. No one wants a strike, we love our teachers at Pleasant Hill. The reality is we didn't pass a referendum. Everyone has suffered. She supports the Board and the CTC and wants them to continue to search for a realistic and fair contract. Keep searching for a compromise.

**Laurie Asban** – Paddock. Loves teachers and the district, but disappointed and blindsided – all of a sudden the teachers want to strike. A lot of people in the community are upset. The board has been fiscally irresponsible, and now want to take it out on our teachers. If a strike happens, people will be very upset with the board and will be looking to replace board members.

**Pat Jandura** – Pleasant Hill. Very disappointed in the lack of respect and professionalism in what happened here. Parents and Board volunteer many hours to help make school district what it is. Teachers can't do it without us or our children. Working in the business world, shocked by the salaries being received. Not anti-teacher just expect fiscal responsibility. Thank you for not accepting pay increases for teachers that would put our district in financial trouble.

**Pat** – Thank you to Nancy Carlson. She is disappointed in the CTC. Would like to see a flyer like the flyer the district handed out from the CTC. Doesn't always agree with the Board, but our company was lucky to get ½ - 1% pay increase this year. We pay our own health care. Our co-pay is the same that the Board is offering. We have no pension. She believes in a just wage. She is sad and hopes the board can come to a resolution. Parents are not going to be supportive if teachers strike. Our salaries do not match this.

### **Action Items**

#### ***Personnel Report***

The Board unanimously approved the personnel report. Boucher commented that after 3 years of cutting, we finally have a balanced budget. Thanks to the staff for being able to do this by relentless cost-cutting, streamlining administration, without making sacrifices to the kids. Boucher commented that even with balancing the budget, the district has decreased class sizes, refreshed technology and math resources and maintained life/safety requirements. The district faces a number of challenges, including revenues that are restricted by CPI and fund balances that are low. Boucher noted any expenses that are greater than CPI will run down our fund balances even further and that the board wants to maintain a balanced budget.

#### ***Consent Calendar***

The consent calendar was unanimously approved, with item F. (Scope of Services – Versa Trans Efficiency Routing Study) pulled for discussion and separate vote. Keenan objected to spending money on this now. Voting on item F was tied (Yes: Boucher, Mikula, Carlson; No: Millar, Keenan, Rowden; Silverman: abstain), which defers the item to a later date.

The Board adjourned; there was no closed session.