

Minutes of the Special Board of Education Meeting ;
Willow Springs School District 108
Saturday, January 30, 2016

President Kent called the meeting to order at 9:12am.

Present: Jesse Estrada, Lauren McSweeney, Mary Ellen Weeg, Cindy McSweeney, David Kent

Absent: Doug Ciota, Renee Ristic

Also present: Lori Smuda, Principal; Frank Patrick, Superintendent

The President led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion 15-183: Weeg moved and L. McSweeney seconded that the Superintendent's Agenda be accepted as presented.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Finances

The superintendent reviewed the finances of the District. The District is in a healthy financial condition despite declining EAV and hitting the Tax Cap ceilings in the levy. The strategies the Board has employed are effective to meet the needs of the District.

Mr. Patrick also highlighted some other financial items to keep an eye on: pension reform, General State Aid, and cost savings from staff retirements.

Academic Progress and Programs

Mrs. Smuda and Mr. Patrick reviewed the academic progress of the District. The Illinois School Report Card was used as one snap shot. Highlighted were the high percentage of 8th graders passing algebra and the PARCC scores. As a whole, the PARCC scores were disappointing. However, the 3rd and 4th grades scored very well. The Winter MAP test data was also shared with the Board. These scores showed the significant growth are students are experiencing.

As math scores, in particular, seemed to be of the greatest concern, particularly in the upper grades, it was highlighted that our 6th – 8th graders receive 10+ minutes less of math instruction daily compared to the State average. The Administrative Team presented a schedule that increases math instruction daily by 11 minutes. The downsides are: 11 minutes less of instruction for art and music daily, 11 minutes less of instruction for one semester for Spanish (Mr. Patrick reported that Mrs. Benitez, the Spanish instructor, is not concerned about this lessened time. She feels she can more than adequately cover the material as most programs are 2 years long and ours is 3); as we group for mathematics instruction to allow for Algebra instruction, because of the rigidity of the schedule, students will be grouped by ability for the entire academic day (This will, however, allow for staff to more appropriately challenge our academically talented students); an increase in math minutes requires adding additional staff – a part-time math teacher, estimated at a cost of \$30k.

The Board discussed the program change and was requested it be brought for Board action at the February meeting. The changes will be shared with parents prior to the Board meeting via a forum and followed up in writing to those who would not be able to attend.

The superintendent also presented the savings that could be incurred by doing our own special education preschool program. This school year, we are spending about \$188,000 in tuition costs for these 9 students in an AERO program. Hiring our own staff would cost an estimated \$90,000. The breakeven point for a full-time instructor and paraprofessional is 4 students. This proposal will also be brought forward for Board action at the February meeting.

Facility Needs

The long term building needs prepared by ARCON in 2011 will be completed with the gym floor replacement project in Summer 2016.

Other projects to consider with time: stainless steel railings on the external stairwells; bathroom replacement in the 1954 and 1975 buildings.

Personnel

There were 8 new staff members hired for this school year. There are 4 staff members retiring this year. This amount of change is a lot of work to lead new staff into the Willow Family.

The superintendent plans to advertise for a new PE teacher and reading specialist in late February/March. He would also like to contract directly with the Special Education Coordinator rather than through the AERO Special Ed. Cooperative.

Wish List

The Board created a wish list of items. They will be reviewed and prioritized at the February meeting. Items on the list: teach keyboarding (when? How?); STEM co-taught with math and science; install an athletic field; create a road/drive from the parking lot to Vinewood; offer foreign language prior to 6th grade (after school club?); more active/busy kids; expand the band program (music in our schools program); install video surveillance; extending the school day; employ a lunchroom supervisor; work on replacing any other aged PE equipment; 1:1 devices; make sure curriculum is driving use of 1:1 devices, not used as a babysitter; offer WIFI at Sterling; install an electronic sign outdoors.

MaryEllen Weeg left the meeting at 11:45.

Motion 15-184: With the work of the Board completed, Kent moved and L. McSweeney seconded that the meeting be adjourned.

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

President Kent adjourned the meeting at 12:25pm.



David A. Kent, President



Cynthia McSweeney, Secretary

CM/fcp