

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meetings

April 25th, 2007

This was a Special meeting held at the Kiszka Educational Center at 9 a.m. to discuss duties and responsibilities of the District's architect related to school improvement projects. Board members in attendance were **Scott Boucher**, **Kelly Keenan** and **Tim Millar**. Also present were Dr. Robert McKanna, D15 Superintendent; Craig Phillips, Manager of Environmental Services and Kevin Noehlty, Asst. Superintendent for Business and Auxiliary Services/Treasurer.

Craig Phillips distributed a memo titled, "Architectural Services for District 15 Life Safety Works" which outlines the projected costs for architectural services pertaining to the District's Life Safety Study conducted last year.

Copy of the memo is available at: www.fcwpta.org/pdf/D150425ArchitecturalServices.pdf

Reference: Funding of Life Safety Projects report dated 2/8/06

www.fcwpta.org/pdf/Funding_Life_Safety_Projects_02_08_06.pdf

Operations & Maintenance 2006-2007 Tentative Budget Presentation

www.fcwpta.org/pdf/O&M_2006_07_tentative_budget.pdf

Comments/questions concerning the memo -

Keenan – Asked what Phillips would have to do differently to have the District oversee the carpeting portion of this contract instead of Gilfillan Callahan Architects?

Phillips – Stated that if the District took the carpeting portion out of the contract and had decided to do it in-house, he thought it doubtful that the District could have negotiated a 7.5% fee down from 9.5%. This is because of the lower dollar amount of the construction budget for the life-safety category. Phillips went on to explain what was happening in the District during this timeframe. Last summer, the District had two major events – putting in new labs at Sundling and Winston Campus. It didn't leave him time to do his job as custodian supervisor, prepare the documents for bidding and to put the summer schedule together. Phillips stated that there is roughly 40 days to do work during the summer months. This is due to summer staff taking their 3 to 4 week vacation time, one-third of who take vacation in June. Staff are not allowed to take vacation time in August.

Keenan asked for the details regarding the carpeting portion of the contract and the role of the architects.

Phillips – Documents are prepared, specifications are written as to performance of the product – type of bonding, carpet threads, how the carpet is to be applied, etc. Then it goes out to bid. Afterwards, the work is monitored.

Keenan – Asked why the District needed to pay an architect to monitor the work.

Phillips – Stated several reasons that he couldn't do this himself: staff resources, his job commitment to what he has already been contracted to do for the District and liability. Phillips said that two years ago, when he was available and the District had limited resources, he did do the roofing bid for Winston Campus. Phillips is an architect.

Concerned about liability and insurance issues if he performs work as an architect for the District.

Phillips – Said that in an architectural service agreement, the District is not only paying the firm to go out and do the field investigations, prepare the base documents and put the info/specifications together. The firm is also responsible for the follow-up, in terms of the work being put in properly.

Boucher – Stated that it is not an architect doing the work, but rather an architectural firm acting as a general contractor. Said that Noehly was able to negotiate Gilfillan Callahan Architects down to 7.5%. Further stated that if the District took out the simple work (carpeting), they may have paid a 9% or 9.5% fee. Boucher said to look at the differences then. At 9%, there is only a \$18K difference in the firm's fees. At 9.5%, there is a \$10,700 difference in fees. Boucher said that the District is paying the firm maybe an additional \$10K for handling the carpeting bids. District has to pay the fee one way or another, someone has to do the prep work, and someone has to produce the document.

Millar – Said he has been involved with commercial work for three years, manages commercial buildings. His neighbors who are architects, one who was with Gilfillan Callahan Architects and another who worked with District 211, thought D15's life-safety report was inflated.

Keenan – Commented that at the school conferences she has attended, 60% to 70% of the exhibitors are architectural firms. She believes that these firms make large profits in this field. Stated that the commercial sector doesn't pay these amounts. Keenan believes that \$41K to spec out carpeting and have someone monitor the installation is just too high. Says the District is in the business of educating children. She would rather hire two program assistants or a teacher for that amount of money.

Phillips – Stated that his staff did carpeting and roofing projects two years ago and said it is possible to do it again in the future. Says that a professional must do it – someone that understands the process, the materials, etc. Not as simple as you would think. Phillips is not trying to justify the \$41K, he knows it looks high, is atrocious. In Phillips' memo, he tried to show the overall costs and that he thinks the architectural firm is not making lots of money.

Keenan – Thinks the reason the District is paying these fees is because it is tied into life-safety and fell under that umbrella. Stated that Phillips is right that roofing and carpeting were done before by the District and these items were not under the life-safety umbrella. Said the fees associated with the life-safety report is what is inflating everything else. The fees associated with this life-safety report are way out of line with any other projects the District is doing.

Boucher – Said that assumption is false. Said that Gilfillan Callahan Architects was selected independently of them performing the life-safety items. Said if the Board wanted to hire another architectural firm, that is in their venue to do that. Said the Board could put out bids for architectural firms. Said the chances of getting a 7.5% fee were slim. Said that the District has to outsource the work. Cited liability issues if someone falls, etc.

Phillips – Mentioned five year summary of life-safety items. Next year there are a lot of mechanical items involved. Represents approximately \$4 to \$5m. Only \$1m available. Board has to make a determination based on input as to what will be done. Gave example

of \$100K liability issue at Winston Campus. If that item fails, there would not be air conditioning in the building.

Millar – Says there needs to be a financial taskforce. District does not have any financial committees.

Boucher – Stated that the Board knows what the District's finances are, must recognize the reality.

The meeting concluded when two Board members left at approximately 9:30 a.m.