

# **Spotlight on the Board**

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

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

This Board of Education meeting was a "regular" meeting. Carlson was absent for the first 15 minutes of the meeting.

#### **Public Hearing on the Proposed 2006 Tax Levy**

Handout titled: 2006 Tax Levy – Collection 2007 was made available to attendees. Board Vice President, Linda Silverman opened the Public Hearing. No requests were made to address the Board. The Public Hearing was closed.

#### **Science Curriculum Presentation**

Sundling and Winston Campus Junior High science teachers and students presented information on their participation in the Journey North program - a web based project. It meets four national standards in science education. Red emperor tulips were planted at both schools in November. The bulbs' progress is monitored by the students and will be recorded on the Journey North Web site. Weekly updates are given and the students can actually "see" spring as it migrates through North America. Sundling has been a part of this program for the past five years and Winston Campus Jr. High joined this year.

#### **ISAT Update**

Mary Zarr, Department of Instruction announced that she received news of the official ISAT final results this afternoon by phone. All 19 schools made AYP (average yearly progress). She has been assured that the scores posted on the Internet are final. Zarr will deliver the report at the January 10<sup>th</sup> BOE meeting even though the paper copies will not be back yet. The results indicate the following:  
86% of District 15 students as a whole met or exceeded in Reading  
89.6% of District 15 students as a whole met or exceeded in Math

#### **Superintendent Report**

Dr. McKanna spoke about how the decision was made to close District 15 schools on Friday, December 1<sup>st</sup> due to snow. He indicated that the decision was made after speaking with superintendents from surrounding districts, Board Members, transportation and others. The information was posted on the district's Web site by 5 a.m. Questions had been raised as to why the school automated messenger system was not used to relay the information about closing the schools. McKanna stated that the messenger system is a tool for individual school buildings. Based on the system's capacity, it was estimated that it would have taken seven hours to deliver the message to the roughly 12,500 students.

#### **No Citizens Addressed the Board**

#### **ED-RED Council/Legislation**

Paula Mikula reported on current legislative issues in Springfield. Two big issues addressed were the minimum wage increase and utility rate freeze.

#### **District 15 Educational Foundation**

Paula Mikula reported that recipients of mini-grants have been notified. The 12 grants range from \$286 to \$3,000. Invitations are being mailed this week for the Hearts of Gold benefit scheduled for Saturday, February 3, 2007

## **First Reading – Board of Education Policy**

### **New – Proposed Web site Policy**

A copy of the Web Site Linkage Policy Subcommittee's presentation was made available to those in attendance. Dr. Jean Sophie explained the reason for the committee's formation. There had been an issue with a PTA Web site that raised the need to develop a policy for external Web sites linking from the District 15 Web site. Committee members outlined the steps taken in developing their purpose, initial findings, extensive research and actions taken. Key issues addressed in the committee were student privacy and external links. With changing technology, the committee concurred that the district needs an updated privacy policy to allow an "opt in" option to protect student privacy. This new option is more restrictive and would offer 100% privacy protection if chosen. Sophie addressed the external links issue. She indicated that an implementation committee will be formed and as they move forward teacher Web sites will be looked at.

Privacy issues were a big concern for Board Members. Issues discussed included whether student names and pictures should be posted on the district's Web site, trying to find middle ground versus an opt in/opt out policy and PTA Web site guidelines. Dr. Sophie then recommended that item B – Privacy be pulled and that full discussion by the Board be done at the January Committee of the Whole meeting. This allows time to get the new committee together by January and be ready for a final answer at that point.

Also of concern was the "policing" of external links – namely PTA. Sophie reiterated that the district will not be policing PTA Web sites. It was stated that the majority of District 15 PTAs are more stringent with their own Web sites than the district is now. Each PTA should be making its own policy decisions. The district's policy can be used as model. The committee will come back for the January Committee of the Whole meeting for more discussion.

## **Board of Education Policy Manual Review – First Reading**

Presented by Dr. Sophie. Majority of changes were in legal references. Carlson commented that there is a new superintendent for Cook County and they will be sharing this manual with him.

### **2:80 Board Member Ethics**

Attorney advised to delete the previous policy and insert the ISAB (Illinois Association of School Boards) Board member ethics.

### **2:90 Board Member Self-Evaluation**

Instructed by attorneys to remind all Board members that they must self-evaluate at least once every two years. All current Board members did that one year ago.

### **2:140 Communications To/From the Board**

Sophie wanted to make a comment on this section because all district staff members already know this. They are in the process right now of working on a new acceptable use policy on communications for all district staff and students. The policy committee starts next month and they will be reviewing that and bring it to the Board for approval in February. This will directly impact this particular policy.

### **2:150 Committees**

Sophie put several school districts' policies on Board committees in the back of the booklets under miscellaneous. Many school districts have 3 to 4 committees on policies, facilities, etc. The policy committee will be considered a Board committee starting in January.

### **2:160 School Attorney**

Advised to just go back to the old policy. The old policy, without the ISAB revision that was never adopted, worked for the Board.

## **2:240 Board Policy Development**

No changes.

## **3:20 Organizational Chart**

The organizational chart of the district office. Sophie commented that the organizational chart is half of what it was five years ago.

## **3:60 Administrative Responsibility of the Principal**

Many revisions recommended by the ISAB but not mandatory. Advised that we go back to the policy we had before.

## **4:60 Purchases**

Discussion covered the following topics.

### **Bidding services not required by School code**

**Rowden** - Doesn't believe that it is in our fiscally responsible best interests not to bid. Cited electricity as an example. The district bid it out and it saved money. Wants to see different language in the policy. Asked Kevin Nohelty to explain differences between formal bid and RFP (request for proposal).

**Boucher** – Referred to last sentence in policy – the Board in its discretion may seek bids. Cited an example that districts can do better negotiating prices with vendors than actually going out to bid. Can find out additional information and be able to work the price down. Thought it much better than going out and anticipating what a district should be getting. He confirmed that computer, architects, any professional services that districts do not have to bid – can be bid out if chosen to, but do not have to. This policy does not preclude the district from doing that. The Board gives direction to our administration – Board can't be involved in every single thing.

**Millar** – This policy sets direction that staff has the option to bid not the Board. Issue regarding the annual budget, the language here says that once the budget is adopted, the superintendent can purchase those supplies, equipment or services. If an emergency comes up, the Board needs to be able to say that the district is not going to buy something. Board doesn't know what is in the budget in detail until it comes out for bid.

**Keenan** – Wants to look at this in another way. Doesn't want to get into situations where these things are just automatically done. Board meets once a month and hard to stay on top of everything. Doesn't want to just go on autopilot without checking it – that's how districts spend more money than they have.

### **Advance Notice of Items**

**Mikula** – Regarding architectural fees – these proposals are always in the Board packet before approval.

**Rowden** – Indicated that on many occasions the Board was given items 3 days ahead of a meeting that needed to be decided right away. Board is often in a position where it is too late to bid it out. Stated that this is an issue for districts across the state. Want to make sure that the district is using their dollars wisely.

**Boucher** – The reason for bidding has nothing to do with saving money. It has to do with the fact that Springfield doesn't believe that districts can't do this without somebody having their hand out or some kind of kickback. It is about a lack of trust. Bidding exists to not necessarily get a low price but to keep districts honest. Boucher does not have a problem with this. The school code has exempted certain things because a district can get a better price negotiating those than necessarily getting a bid. Indicated that the district may not be able to write the bid specs for something like legal services.

**Silverman** – This policy allows latitude to go either way.

### **Electricity Bid**

**Kevin Nohelty, Business Department** – Confirmed some policies already in place. Anything over \$10,000 required a formal bid but there are exemptions. Per school code, the district would follow an RFP process. That was done with electricity. It wasn't a formal bid but certain guidelines had to be met. Scenarios were presented to the Board and the decision was made. Recommends that the district follow school code but that doesn't prevent the district from still going out to bid.

**Keenan** – Concerned that the district wasn't going to do a bid for electricity initially. Just going to go with the consortium. It is one of the district's biggest expenses.

**Noehly** – His recommendation would be to work with our legislators to change school code.

**Millar** – Suggested an opt in/opt out policy. District saved 32% in electricity over what another school district is paying. What the district saved was the cost of restoring the teachers this year. Business office did a fantastic job. Referred to the insurance pools. Doesn't know if they are competitive. Didn't bid on insurance this past year. Always gone with the pool but sometimes they do not save you money.

### **Giving direction**

**Boucher** – Believes Board members are all saying the same thing. Need to give direction to our administration – especially the business office. Look at the consortiums and put together RFPs for those. Board can tell them to do that today. This policy does not preclude the district from doing that. Says direction should be through the Board. Tell administration that every two years they should check all of the consortiums the district is in and make sure the district is getting a good price. Should be a routine review. Add language to the policy.

**Millar** – Believes direction should come through policy. There will be different board members in the future – hard to remember unless it is policy. Thinks there are a lot of good ideas – need committee to study all of the different angles to this that we don't know.

**Carlson** – Doesn't argue with anything that has been said. Thinks Board should have a committee to develop some policy. Here to govern not micro-manage. Have a study committee develop a laundry list of ideas. District doesn't have the staff to bid every single item.

**Silverman** – Offered a suggestion. Attended an ISAB session that offered a Quality Tool. Questions that Board members can ask about policies, etc. This is just a tool to use – has nothing to do with ISAB's thoughts.

**Keenan** – Concerned that if the Board takes something out of policy and puts it in another binder, it gets lost. Referred to items getting lost during teacher negotiations because policies were in different places. Special efforts were made to get everything in one place during the negotiations.

**Dr. Sophie** – Thought Silverman's idea was good. Board members agree, need to come together and use this tool to provide an opportunity to work on this policy.

**Carlson** – Asked Silverman to give 5 minute presentation of this ISAB quality tool at the January meeting.

### **5:200 Professional Personnel – Terms and Conditions of Employment and Dismissal**

Clarifies doctorate stipends for administrators. We will follow the PhD, EdD agreements. They are being drafted now. All stipends should be given Board approval.

## **Board Member Roles and Responsibilities**

**Millar** asked that this item be put on the agenda. He wants to discuss what roles that special people on the Board might play in selecting vendors. In one case, an attorney that the Board did not approve was hired for the policy manual and cost the district \$35,000+ instead of using our own Board attorneys. Millar learned that our own board attorneys are actually experts in that field. Doesn't believe that anyone on the Board, including the Board President should be able to select attorneys and use them for purposes that are not Board business. Not sure if this should be discussed in open or closed session but stated in general, attorneys were hired for this particular policy manual without Board approval. He stated that our own attorneys do a lot of policy manuals and sit on the ISAB committee for policy and the district also gets a lot of this service for free. Millar said that it is disturbing because the district could have hired a Program Assistant or two with this money which would have had a positive impact on children.

**McKanna** responded and stated that he recalled when Jose Behar (attorney) was in an Executive Session for literally 1 hr. 45 minutes with the Board. He spoke on the OCR issue and other aspects of what was going on. There was not a formal vote when they came out of executive session. McKanna thought that there was some agreement for him taking a look at our policies. McKanna stated that Behar said to make sure your policies are in compliance with OCR (Office of Civil Rights).

**Millar** said that the agreement was for one policy, a very small segment not an entire manual. He said that the tape was reviewed and it was understood to be one very small item. This attorney is not our General Counsel and he is being used for other items not related to policies or the other issue.

**Carlson** stated that they need to have this discussion in Executive Session.

**Keenan** disagreed – said that one of these is in our checkbook; we are being asked to pay for it. She was concerned that there were phone calls to this law firm. Keenan spoke with Mike Loizzi (attorney) who confirmed that any Board member can call our General Counsel but when it gets outside our General Counsel – the Board has to vote before we get into any discussions with them. Keenan continued that when going through the bills, she found a bill that we paid that was discussing an investigation into possible criminal violations.

**Carlson** interrupted and wanted to take this up in Executive Session. She noted a provision to go to Executive session for "possible litigation" and would not discuss this in open session.

**Keenan** disagreed. She has no problem notifying the people that we are being investigated for criminal violations.

## **Action Items**

### **Personnel Report**

Motion to approve the Personnel Report minus the amendment item  
Approved 6:0 with Keenan abstaining

### **Board of Education Policy Manual (updated legal references)**

Motion to approve except for items discussed during the first reading  
Unanimously approved.

**Request for Proposal – Salary Study/Nonunion Staff**  
**2007-08 Tentative School Calendar**  
**Authorization for Certificate of Tax Levy**  
**FY 2007-08 Budget Guidelines and Budget Development Calendar**  
**Bids – Custodial Supplies**  
**Bids – Two-way Radios**  
Motions to approve items above were all unanimously approved.

**Consent Calendar (14 items)**

Motion to approve **all items except C & L**

C. Report of Payroll Vouchers and Invoices

L. Letter of Understanding – Amendment to Educational Support Personnel Negotiated Agreement  
(Crisis Interventionists)

Unanimously approved.

Motion to approve **Item C** of the Consent Calendar

Before the vote, Keenan stated that it should not be approved per Board policy.

Check #209701 did not have Board approval.

Approved 5:2

Yes – Rowden, Silverman, Boucher, Carlson, Mikula

No - Millar, Keenan

**Correspondence**

**FOIA – Freedom of Information Act request**

One request from a resident of Palatine for the district’s employee benefit package

**Information Items for Future Meetings**

2005-06 Audit

Transportation Study

**Executive Session**

Motion to move to Executive Session was unanimously approved at approximately 9:10 p.m.

The Board reconvened later in the evening to vote on an amendment to the superintendent’s contract.

**Amendment to Superintendent’s 2004-2009 Employment Contract**

Amendment included changes involving the length of the contract; compensation for school years

2006-2007 and 2007-2008 as well as disbursement of the 2006-07 increase.

Approved 4:3

Carlson, Boucher, Mikula, Silverman voting “yes”

Keenan, Millar, Rowden voting “no”

*Source: Mrs. Pat Campbell, District 15 Board of Education Secretary – January 3, 2007*

*Amendments to Superintendent’s 2004-2009 Employment Contract dated April 13, 2005  
and December 13, 2006*