

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meetings

January 14th, 2009

This was a Regular Board of Education meeting. All Board members were present.

Capital Projects

Asst. Superintendent Rebecca Allard – She stated that during the Action Item portion of the agenda, the administration is asking for Board approval for the architects to prepare the documents needed to go out to bid for capital projects totaling \$3.9M. The projects are roof replacements – the balance of the roof at Pleasant Hill and Paddock, plumbing items at all buildings including replacement of the water lines at Plum Grove lower level, mechanical work to be done at Winston Campus, Paddock and Lincoln. These projects will be done by the architects. There are several projects that will be district driven: carpet replacement at Jane Addams and some plumbing items that can be done in-house. The \$250K for the parking lot pavement replacement at WC which is shared by the church is on hold until the lease comes back to the BOE for approval. Projects recommended to be funded from the district's reserves are the curtain walls at Winston Campus, Lake Louise and Hunting Ridge and the additional parking at Marion Jordan and sidewalks for MJ. She further stated that all of these costs are estimates.

Board member Sue Quinn – Is uncomfortable with the estimate for Paddock's roof. The original estimate was \$740K and now it is \$1.2M which is a 60% increase. All of the other roof estimates track back to the original estimate that was given. Why has the district allotted so much more money for Paddock over the original estimate? **Allard** – These costs are truly estimates as Quinn stated. We will know more when we are able to develop the bid specifications and bring them back for Board approval. It will be either greater or less than the \$1.2M.

Quinn – The district is allotting a large sum of money to use on capital projects which is appropriate and needs to be done. She thinks that a lot of these projects may come in lower especially the ones that we do in-house. She wants to make sure that the Board gets a full accountability. Also has a question about not just these projects (summer 2009) but the ones that are scheduled for further out. It states on the report that "all items from the Life Safety Survey will be completed by the end of 2009." There are a few items missing from the list. Most notable items missing are the "A" priority roofs that are not on the list to be done, except PH and Paddock. Those roofs are actually slated for 2010 and we have \$3.9M worth of (roof) work to do in that summer on top of the \$2.2M for this summer. Her concern is that the district is doing too much roofing at the same time, some is B roofing, not A; would like to get the A roofing done first ahead of B roofs and other B projects, for example the curtain walls. Quinn would like the district to revisit the schedule. **Board President Gerald Chapman** - It is likely that we will have to because we are not able to fund it all due to the aggressive nature of the plan.

Quinn – Part of what she asked for (at the last meeting) was to have some kind of longer term projection of roof repairs. On average, we have 20 roofs and they last 20 years, we should be doing one a year for approximately \$1M worth of roofing. Quinn would like a more structured plan so it doesn't fall all into one year, it is better for planning purposes. She would like to see that plan come back at some point. Also understands that approval is being sought to be able to bid for the curtain walls, they are identified as B. She doesn't think this Board is obligated to hold reserves (from the Life Safety bonds) for this particular item (curtain walls) if it decides other items have a higher priority.

Board member Tim Millar – Regarding planning, wants to make sure that we have 5 year projections to understand where we are at with our reserves to make sure what we can afford and at what time to make sure we are in the right place. Spending down our reserves is going to cost us interest income. The Board should plan everything out so it does not impact the services that we provide. Says that

category A or B doesn't really matter, the Board can assign categories or ask for an extension from the State, it is really what the Board prioritizes. Millar says that roofs are always category B or C. Our staff has to decide what is most critical. Regarding curtain walls, when it comes to holding money in accounts, it is all the same money. One concern he has is the plumbing items, Millar questioned the cost of plumbing items and whether they could be done in-house in order to avoid the architects' 7 1/2% fee (to develop specifications).

Allard – Stated that the other documents provided to the Board per a member's request is a plan for the completion of all A and B items from the Life Safety study that was approved in January 2006. It lists the projects by year and whether they will be done in-house by district staff or contractors. There is four years' worth of projects totaling \$16M.

Superintendent Daniel Lukich – Wanted to say that he, Allard and the architects are not recommending this (long-term capital improvement) plan for approval. He said it is similar to a "first reading" of a Board policy, the district may not get to the 2nd or 3rd reading until 6 months or a year from now. Lukich thinks that the Board has to look at this document carefully as they work with the architects on a long term plan for the district. Depending on the long term plan for the district, pages of this (capital improvement) document may be cut out. Quinn already identified some omissions (in the document), those will be filled in.

Transportation Update

Allard – The department is asking for approval to purchase 33 buses – 27 71-passenger buses and 6 wheelchair buses for the 2009/10 school year. She said that by updating the district's fleet, they will be reducing their maintenance costs. With the new buses and those purchased over the last several years, they will be able to eliminate one mechanic. They are not recommending any changes to the school start times. Transportation will continue to find efficiencies and incorporate them into the system for the 2009/10 school year.

Quinn – Appreciates that the number of buses (to be purchased) has gone down (from 60+ buses presented last month) but as she stated at the last meeting, thinks that the appropriate number is 16 because the district has a 160 bus fleet. If there is a 10 year replacement cycle, then 16 or 17 would be replaced per year. She would like the district to purchase consistently every year rather than purchase a large number in any one year. It is not only for consistency, planning and cash flow purposes but some of the buses proposed to be replaced have only 100K to 150K miles on them. One of the buses proposed to be replaced had only 87K miles. They are from 12 to 15 years old, understands body work needs to be done, however, she thinks the district can stand to wait a little longer and just purchase 16.

Board member Kelly Keenan asked again for a report showing the advantages of purchasing new buses vs. maintaining old buses. **Allard** referred back to slides that were provided to the Board about maintenance costs for particular ages of buses.

Quinn – Stated that the information Keenan is seeking is available. The labor hour rate (for a mechanic) is \$20 and the number of hours required to maintain the bus is provided. When it is analyzed, it shows that the (financial) trade off comes somewhere between 10 and 15 years (of the bus). **Chapman** – New buses costs \$70K roughly. The State amortizes them over 5 years. Depending on State funding, we should get back around 80 to 85% back. Chapman said that if the State is going to provide (reimbursement) funding for buses that is a state-wide issue. He agrees with Keenan's earlier statement that it is taxpayers' money (used to reimburse). He further stated that "if we don't get our fair share, that is money that our local taxpayers are not getting back in return for money that they are paying." Chapman said "in other words, we are paying taxes into the State government and this (purchasing buses) is an opportunity to get some of that back".

Keenan – Just because you are entitled to it doesn't mean you should just take, take and take.

Chapman – It cost \$70K to buy a bus. We get 80% of that so our cost over 5 years is \$14K. If you look at the difference between a bus that is 15 years old and one that is new, it is \$7K a year additional just in materials (to maintain). \$7K over 5 years is \$35K. If we don't get those monies from the State, somebody else will. **Keenan** – Not necessarily. That is old thinking. You don't have to think that way. Just because it has been done all the time that way, doesn't mean we have to do it that way. They (State) could not increase your taxes by that amount of money. There are also environmental costs to junk buses and keep buying new ones. There are a lot of costs associated with just buying new buses. She is just asking for an analysis to figure it out. Doesn't think it is not doable.

Board member Nancy Lee Carlson – Our buses are not junked, they are sold. We keep our buses in very good condition. The safety of our kids is worth something. It makes economic sense to transport our children on newer buses that are more efficient in terms of fuel supply, better safety features. We can save on repair costs, save on mechanics by getting new buses. Carlson would rather have the children on newer buses than old. Some wheelchair buses have been here for an extremely long time and are not in great shape. She looked at it (purchase of # of buses) in terms of cost, reimbursement and also the factor that is not based on money – that is safety of kids.

Quinn – Wants to make the point that our buses are very well maintained and safe. There are no kids in our district that are riding around on buses that are not maintained. They are safe. We have ample mechanics that take care of these buses to keep them in good shape. It is not a safety issue, we are quite capable of taking care of the buses that we have. Quinn is not suggesting that the district not get new buses, she is suggesting that the district purchase 16 new buses. If we did that (purchase 16), we would be getting rid of all of the 15 year old buses and almost all of the 13 year old buses. The ones left (on the list to be purchased) are mostly 12 year old buses with low mileage. Those can be replaced next year. She is not suggesting that the district let kids go on buses that are not maintained. Quinn thinks the district should get on a regular replacement schedule. If that was done, the district could easily do with one less mechanic, maybe more. She said that if you look at the industry average vs. District 15's average ratio – it could lose 2 or 3 mechanics before it even get close to the industry ratio. Quinn doesn't want the district to be spending money in transportation that it doesn't need to.

Chapman – This issue will be revisited during the Action Item portion of the agenda.

Citizens Address the Board

Jane Van Wolvelear – Palatine resident

She stated that she has spoken before the Board before and will continue to do so until something changes. There needs to be a dialogue between the school board and the residents. The Board chooses not to respond to her or the concerns of the parents. In September, a parent spoke and brought petitions concerning class size. Van Wolvelear has learned that the parent did not receive a response. At Palatine Village council meetings, residents can state a concern and receive a response immediately. Asked why this Board chooses to not respond or give any interaction to the residents and parents? She spoke to the Board before with concerns of how high level students are handled within the district and the curriculum director did respond. She believes that the residents do not feel that they can address the Board and get a response.

Quinn – Commented that although the Board did not respond directly about the class size issue, they did put it on the agenda for a Board meeting at a later date. At that time, there was considerable Board discussion.

Committee of the Whole Meeting Draft Agenda – January 28th, 2009

Ref: www.fcwpta.org/pdf/d15_COW_jan_28_09_agenda.pdf

Quinn – This is not the agenda she would like to see, wants to make sure that the Board is asking the right questions in this whole planning process. Quinn thinks there should be some Board consensus as to what our process will be in this planning facilities heavy endeavor that it is undertaking. The major educational issues in the district are: meeting AYP for our ELL students and meeting our growth targets

so all students can learn – our advanced learners, slow learners and ones in between. She would also like the Board to bring some math, science and technology focus in our teaching so our students are truly 21st century learners.

When Mary Zarr (Asst. Super for Curriculum) came before the Board (November 18th) and talked about the list of new programs to be researched and developed such as all-day kindergarten, Magnet schools, etc. Quinn sees those falling under three large umbrellas – early childhood (all day kindergarten and some ELL programs), middle school and 21st century learning (science, math, technology, Magnet schools). She would like to see the Board tackle those ideas in a Committee of the Whole meeting. She doesn't see anything on this draft agenda like that, would like to get the Board started by putting it on the agenda, have the administration start their discussion with the Board. It is a discussion we need to have as a Board and administration as to what our goals are. Then we can be looking to answer the right questions – What are the educational goals we have? How can we fit our facilities to the kids and not the kids to the facilities?

Understands that our architects want to come back and talk about capacity issues. Fine with that, but doesn't want that to be the end of the discussion or even close to the end. Doesn't want it to set the tone or frame the discussion. Discussion framing should be from an educational sense.

Keenan – What we (*Note: it was unclear as to whom she was referring to and when*) talked about last time with the architects was to take those three umbrellas and put it on paper. For example: If there was all-day K and expanded preschool in conjunction with having a 6/7/8 middle school, there won't be enough room in the buildings. However, if you take the 6th grade out (of the elementary schools), then more room would be opened up in the building.

The current junior highs might not have enough room but there is the (vacant 40 acres) Ela Road property. There are so many different (issues). We are just looking at seeing what our facilities look like, what would they look like with these different scenarios. Then after that, the Board can go through the merits of all-day K and middle school. Then the administration sees how to best do that. Can it best be done with a 6/7/8 curriculum? She suggests taking the whole (facilities) study and seeing how each scenario would fit in the each building. It would be great to say we want all-day K but if we don't have the capacity to do it, we don't.

So what we were going to do at the next meeting was to have the architects lay out what the buildings would look like with all of these different scenarios. Then with our 20 year goals, look at the district's finances and say this is what we want. For example: if we are going to do this, then we need another middle school. Then you start the financial planning for the middle school. The first thing we are going to do is look at it in totality. How will the district look with all-day Kindergarten? Maybe that is the only decision the Board decides to make.

Chapman – We asked the architects for a number of things. The one piece of that study that is missing/not completed is - what the facility impact would be on these program changes. What this (draft) agenda does is bring us (Board) through that loop of finalizing the facility information we have. Then the intent was to go through the other scenarios. Doesn't think we have identified all of them but did receive a good list from Mary Zarr (Curriculum). He would like to have the whole facility thing wrapped up first.

Board member Wendy Rowden – Believes that what the Board needs to figure out first is what we need (not what we have) to bring our students up to the level of our expectations in addition to creating 21st century learners. The first conversation should be: What types of educational programs best suit our students' needs now and in the future? Once the Board prioritizes that, then we figure out a way to make our facilities fit into that.

Keenan – If the Board decides on certain programs, if the district cannot financially have it done or have space for the program to be done, then the conversation is moot. If you can't house all-day K for the district, it is great that the Board decided to do it but we can't do it because we do not have the building space. We may decide that this is a goal we want and save our money to build a building to have this be a goal. Without understanding what your capacity is or the building restrictions, you can't say you want a certain program. Where will you put them all?

Rowden – She is referring to the way the district delivers education services, not just programs themselves. If the district decides it needs all-day Kindergarten or middle school, we don't say that this is in the best interest of our students, it is best practice, we know it will bring all of our students ahead into the 21st century and then say we can't do it because we don't have the resources. We make the resources work for us, make the buildings work for us. The Board does have some understanding of our capabilities and our capacities. This is not diminishing the fact that the architects are going to give us their review of the buildings' capacity. But we shouldn't be looking at our buildings and ruling out any possibilities because it doesn't fit in a building.

Chapman – We have received a significant amount of information including what we asked our staff to do (list of programs). This is the only part of the architectural report we have not received. This would bring closure to the architectural firm. We have also identified some areas where we will be having some dialogue. The question is – Do you want to start the dialogue on educational issues at this meeting? Or do you want to hear the architectural report at this meeting? (January 28th) They have not yet reported on how various programs would impact different buildings.

Quinn – Doesn't disagree with what Chapman has said, doesn't think anyone is disagreeing, believes the Board all have the same idea about this. She hopes that the architects will come back again when the Board needs to mull over these program issues when we get into the details of debating these different options. At that time, the Board is going to need access to that information. She would like the Board to do both – see us cap off the architectural report, let the architects give their final piece and get started on the Board's first task – first umbrella. She has no problem expanding the time out to enable that. She is under no illusion that we will finish that night. Just get started and get some chunk of the discussion going because she doesn't want this to drag out forever. It is going to be a long enough process anyway.

Keenan – Asked Quinn if she thought this Board should be making those decisions? She is not running again for BOE and doesn't think that she (Keenan) should be making the decisions.

Quinn – This Board can't make those decisions but doesn't want to delay it. She added that there are candidates that are going to run for the school board, some incumbents and some that are new. This current Board has done a tremendous job of moving in a positive direction with these tough issues and she hopes that all of the candidates will make the same commitment to continuing that. Quinn hopes that they (candidates) make a commitment to attending these meetings, participating and getting up to speed (on the issues).

Rowden – Said that it is important to get started now because the Board is constantly changing every two years. Things move slowly in education and if you are always postponing until another time – whether when you are done with contract negotiations, or until you have the new Board members – you never get anything accomplished. These are conversations about direction, they are not decisions. So while she agrees that people sitting here now might not be sitting here in four months, it doesn't mean that we should slow the conversations down.

Rowden wanted to clarify one point. She is concerned that the presentations (from the architects) will come out like this: "We have looked at this option and this option and your facilities will not allow you to do it." She thinks the conversation should be: We (Board) think this is what we need; you (architects) find a way to make our facilities do it. If that means changing boundaries, or changing buildings or building new buildings, Rowden said that all of the decisions should be made based on the needs of the students not fitting the students into our current facilities.

Board member James Ekeberg – Stated that if Chapman is looking for consensus (from the Board), he is comfortable with the draft agenda.

Chapman – We are going to talk about it (educational programs), it is just a matter of if we talk about it in January, February or later. **Millar** – What capacity options are we going to be specifically looking at? **Chapman** – The impact was identified by contractors was if we had all-day Kindergarten and the impact of middle school for 6/7/8th. It is meant to give us an idea, a starting point. He thinks

Quinn/Rowden's points are valid and he agrees that he doesn't want to slow down the process either. Chapman hopes that this (draft) agenda does not reflect that.

Quinn – Stated again that she hopes all of the candidates will attend these meetings. Also thinks it is important because it is a long, ongoing process. The Board members that are not leaving should mentor any new Board members. It is an involved process; there is a lot to come up to speed on. Wants the Board to say to the administration that yes, you are going to have this on the agenda in February. Start working on it now.

Lukich – Would like the Board to confirm the February Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting agenda at the January 28th COW meeting. It will give the administration time to ramp up. They have been sort of ramping up since December but doesn't think they are ready to talk about these topics now. Asked that at the 1/28/09 meeting that the Board give the administration direction as to what they want to hear at the February, March and April COW meetings – that at least gives them 30 days.

Authorize Summer 2009 Capital Projects

A request to amend the original motion to exclude some plumbing items that a Board member thought could be handled in-house failed 5:2 (Millar and Quinn voting yes). The original motion to approve the summer 2009 capital projects totaling \$3.9M was **unanimously approved**.

Authorize Curtain Wall Replacements

Millar – Wants to reiterate his concerns over the district's cash flow position. He stated that this is a very large expenditure, the district also has a proposal to purchase 33 buses and without knowing where the district is at on a five-year projection and our cash reserves. We are getting late payments from the State as it is now. These expenditures (capital projects and curtain walls) along with the buses (purchase) amounts to about 20% of our reserves. That is a pretty big drop which will also impact our income from the interest (it would generate). He thinks it is "putting the cart before the horse" on some of these items. He would rather see where the district would be on the long-range projections (first). **Quinn** – Agrees with Millar. Wants to say again that these curtain walls are items we need to do next year. **Chapman** – Said that given the fact that we have had leaks and he has had the opportunity to observe those, Chapman thinks these are significant projects (curtain walls) that should not have been put off as long as they have had.

Approved 4:3 (Yes: Carlson, Chapman, Ekeberg, Keenan and No: Rowden, Millar, Quinn)

Bid Award – School Buses

The recommendation from the business and transportation departments is to authorize the purchase of 33 buses.

Quinn – Made a motion to amend the original motion to 16 buses (instead of 33). Keenan seconded it.

Chapman – Thinks it is foolish to limit the number of buses. He understands why Quinn would want the number of buses spread over the years but given the fact that we saw how much it is costing us (maintenance) and that we have 80% reimbursement, he thinks it is reasonable to accept the administration's recommendation. This is significantly less than the first recommendation (60+ buses).

Ekeberg – He agrees, thinks it is a safety issue.

Keenan – Said that the Board has asked before and transportation people have indicated that it is not a safety issue. We can disagree on it but we have gone over that (safety issue). If you don't agree with purchasing 33 buses, it is not because you do not have the children's safety in mind.

Millar – Stated that the industry average is 12 years on the smaller buses and 15 on the larger ones. We really do not have the true detail on what the cost is (to maintain). The list given is standard maintenance items. He is not disagreeing with Chapman but it is a lot of capital to be putting out (right now). **Chapman** – Agrees, but we are going to replenish most of that capital over a five year period.

Millar – Added, "if the State pays". **Chapman** – Agreed.

Motion to amend thereby reducing the number of buses from 33 to 16

Amended motion passed 4:3 (Yes: Keenan, Millar, Quinn, Rowden; No: Carlson, Chapman, Ekeberg)

Chapman – The motion before us now is to purchase 16 buses instead of 33; however if you look at the recommendation made by the administration – the award based on unit pricing is \$71,552 per bus. Said that the unit price goes up for Central States and now Midwest Transit is the low bidder. Advised Quinn that in her motion there was not a breakdown of buses: 71-passenger vs. wheelchair. In her previous dialogue, she indicated that would be an administrative decision. Chapman thinks the Board has to give direction to the administration. **Chapman** – Asked if a Board member would be willing to do a modified motion that the Board would authorize the purchase of “not to exceed 6 wheelchair buses” to Central States and “not to exceed 16 71-passenger buses” to Midwest Transit. The total number of buses would not exceed 16 (from both sources). **Motion moved and seconded.**

Amendment to allow the administration to purchase up to 6 wheelchair buses from Central States at their unit price and up to 16 71-passenger buses from Midwest Transit at their unit price with the total bus purchase not to exceed 16.

Amendment to the motion unanimously approved. **Chapman** – The amendment passes. He is now looking for authorization to do the purchase as the amended motion states.

***Authorize the administration to purchase as the amendment above states**

Roll Call – Yes: Rowden, Carlson, Chapman, Ekeberg, Keenan . . .

When Millar’s name was called, he wanted to ask a question (thus interrupting the vote).

Millar – Questioned the number of buses (even though the vote was already taken for 16).

Chapman – Said Millar could make another motion. The vote was to authorize 16; if Millar wants to authorize another 9 he can do that. **Keenan** – Questioned whether this could be done under *Roberts Rules of Order*.

Ref: Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 10th Edition, page 408

INTERRUPTION OF VOTES. *Interruptions during the taking of a vote are permitted only before any member has actually voted, unless, as sometimes occurs in ballot voting, other business is being transacted during voting or tabulating.*

(**Note:** Per the above rule, the Board Secretary should have been advised to continue with the vote count and the authorization would have been approved by 5:2, 6:1 or 7:0 depending on the Millar and Quinn votes.)

Millar continued and made a motion to approve an additional six (6) buses.

Rowden – Asked for his rationale. **Millar** – His rationale is to basically get enough so that the district can reduce the need for mechanics. That is really his rationale.

Quinn – She wanted to address the mechanic issue. If you add up all of the hours that is needed to maintain the buses including the 32 maintenance vehicles, it comes up to approximately 10K mechanic hours that are needed to service our fleet. The district currently has 11 mechanics at 2K hours a year equals 22K mechanic hours. The district is flush with mechanic hours. We can reduce by mechanics by one or two (now) and still have enough mechanic hours. Purchasing 6 additional buses is not going to get you another mechanic (to reduce).

Motion to authorize 6 additional 71-passenger buses for Central States at their unit price.

Approved 4:3 (Yes: Carlson, Chapman, Ekeberg, Millar; No: Keenan, Quinn, Rowden)

Discussion ensued over whether the original motion (*) to purchase was properly completed. During the roll call, Millar interrupted with a question and amended the motion. Therefore, he and Quinn did not actually vote on that particular motion.

Millar – Per Roberts Rules of Order, anyone on the prevailing party of the motion can **reconsider** it at the same meeting. So he can bring up that he would like to reconsider the 16 buses and made a motion to make that 22 buses (instead).

Ref: Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 10th Edition, page 304

RECONSIDER – enables a majority in an assembly, within a limited time and without notice, to bring back for further consideration **a motion which has already been voted on**.
The purpose of reconsidering a vote is to permit correction of hasty, ill-advised, or erroneous action, or to take into account added information or a changed situation that has developed since the taking of the vote.

Motion to increase the bus purchase from 16 to 22

Keenan questioned the validity of this motion and whether they were authorizing an additional 22 buses. Chapman said that the original motion was invalid because an amended motion was made before two Board members had voted on a motion.

Motion approved 4:3 (Yes: Chapman, Ekeberg, Millar, Carlson; No: Keenan, Quinn, Rowden)

Adjournment

The Board did not go into Executive session and the meeting ended at approximately 10:15 p.m.

Summary of Board Actions

For this meeting and most past Board of Education meetings can be found at:

<http://www.ccsd15.net/AboutDistrict15/BoardOfEducation/HTML/BOEMeetingDates.html>

Official minutes, including vote counts, are posted after they have been approved at a Regular Board of Education meeting.

Board Meeting DVDs Available to the Public

A DVD of the Regular and some Special meetings will be available for checkout typically the Monday following the meetings. To request a copy of the meeting DVD, please contact June Becker, Board of Education Secretary at beckerj@ccsd15.net or 847-963-3208.

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