

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meetings

June 13th, 2007

This was a Regular Board of Education meeting.
Board Member Nancy Lee Carlson was absent.

Public Hearing – Community Consolidated School District 15 Budget Appropriation Ordinance 2007-08

Reference: www.fcwpta.org/pdf/PublicHearingFY08Budget.pdf (handout)

Mary Flynn – Palatine resident, former teacher

Has a couple of questions and understands that this is not going to be voted on tonight. Was surprised by that because a balanced budget was presented over a month ago. Is a little concerned and wondering if it is not going to be voted on tonight, there must obviously be some sort of concern about the financial future? How does that impact the delivery of education? In addition - for Operations & Maintenance, Flynn said there is a quite a drop in what was budgeted - how was that going to affect the operation of the schools? Is also a little confused about Working Cash – there was nothing budgeted for this coming year. Was wondering what expenses come from that and what happens due to the lack of that? Asked if the District is going to spend down what it has?

Board Member Kelly Keenan – Replied that the Board is not voting on the budget tonight because this current financial year has not ended yet – not until the end of June. The Board is waiting for all of the final numbers to get in so they can do “fact-based budgeting” and then the Board will approve the budget after the books close. It has nothing to do with unexpected income, no bumps in the road or anything like that.

Superintendent’s Reports

2007-08 Student Assignment Plan and Demographic Report

Robert McKanna, D15 Superintendent – This is a document that the District keeps using and it will be updated as the year goes on. When school starts, there may be some surprises – some schools get a few more students than other schools. If the District needs to make some changes in staffing, it will be brought to the Board right away. A section may need to be added or as in the past, the District has taken a section away if there is a drop in enrollment. This will be looked at again in August.

Board Member Sue Quinn – Commented that it will be interesting to see what the District’s 6th day enrollment is for Kindergarten this year. There has been declining enrollment and is interested to see if that continues.

Jim Garwood, Asst. Superintendent for Administrative Services – Kindergarten registrations in April were higher than last year. Garwood isn’t sure if the District did a better job at getting the word out or more parents registered their children early this year.

Quinn – Was encouraged to see (on the report) that the District’s class sizes were dropping. Said that is partly because of declining enrollment and also because the District is adding some staff. Asked the rest of the Board members what they thought of posting this report on the District’s Web site or an abbreviated version of the report.

Board President Tim Millar – Thought the report would raise a lot of questions from parents because people have different perceptions of percentages. If the District has an average of 24.2 students in a grade level – some classes may have 28 or 26, or it may have only 20 students. **Garwood** – Didn't think that there was that much of a difference. Class sizes this year are more conservative.

Board Member Kelly Keenan – Noted differences in a few schools (from the report). One grade level of 80 was divided into 3 sections, while another school (same grade level) divided 75 students into 4 sections.

Garwood – Emphasized that individual buildings (schools) decide on the number of sections per grade level. If they add another teacher to a grade level that is higher than the average, it may drive the average class size down pretty far. Buildings have to look at how they assign teachers in those grade levels. Are they going to have a 3rd grade that is a little bit larger and keep a second grade smaller? Or are they going to try to do a multi-age class? Some buildings have a history of doing multi-age and others have a history that they don't want to repeat doing a multi-age class. Garwood said that if the Board sees a grade level (in a particular school) that is over the average, he guarantees that the grade level above or below that one (in that school) is below the average – so it all works out.

Garwood – Replied to Millar's question about Kindergarten enrollment. Garwood said that last year was unusual because there was a big dip in numbers. This coming year's enrollment is more in line with what the District had prior to last year. He anticipates roughly 1,200 kindergarteners in the District. The demographic report put together by **Joe Kiszka** states that. Kiszka has been putting it together for many years, has it down to a science and comes extremely close to the actual numbers.

Quinn – The demographic report seems to say that there is a demographic change of declining enrollment – not just in District 15 but the general region. **Garwood** indicated that it is a gradual decline, not even a ½% change a year. **Quinn** – Glad to see that Garwood is revamping the format of the report. Sees value in posting it on the District's Web site so people can get a perspective.

Board Member Wendy Rowden – Is concerned with posting the report online. Would like to find a way to do that without having the public misunderstand the numbers. People need to understand the site-based decision making that goes on. Said that different schools have different demographic makeup's. As some grade levels move along in a particular school, the building may make the decision that fewer staff (sections) is needed for those children. Would like to find a way to give some information to the public along with the report.

Garwood – Commented that a building may have a grade level of kids that overall are above average. Then there may be a grade level that overall needs more intervention.

Quinn – Suggested an executive summary of the report with useful information, but not confusing or misleading.

Board Member Jerry Chapman – Thinks the issue of whether or not the report should be on the Web site is a policy issue. Chapman is not comfortable with the Board taking a position on this issue. Thinks the Board should ask the Superintendent for a recommendation and perhaps there may be a middle ground. Quinn's point about having an executive summary makes a lot of sense to him. Chapman would be more comfortable with having the Superintendent coming back in the fall or at the next BOE meeting with a recommendation. It would be from an administrative perspective on whether or not that is good/wise information to be put on the Web site and also the amount of work involved with doing that.

McKanna – Said the summary idea is a good one. The report is confusing and it is important. The District gets more questions about class sizes than other questions. It is an important topic that the District needs to share. McKanna is sure that Garwood can come up with an informative executive summary that the Board can use. Believes that the District can get it on the Web site before school begins in August.

Keenan – Doesn't want to underestimate the ability of people to comprehend this information/report. Said that it does take some time but it is not beyond what people can understand.

Garwood – Would like to get some direction from the Board for the executive summary. What like to know exactly what things the Board would like to see? **Quinn** – Said that this is the kind of issue that should be discussed in a committee with a few Board members and a few District cabinet members. The committee can make a recommendation and then the Board as a whole can vote yes or no – instead of hashing it out in open session during a BOE meeting.

Other

McKanna wanted to introduce two key people to the Board. He stated that their names were on the Personnel Report that the Board would be voting on this evening.

- **Christie Samojedny**, the new principal for Lincoln School

www.ccsd15.net/WhatsNew/NewsReleases/HTML/Archive/CCSD1505_31_2007.html

- **June Becker**, the new Board of Education Secretary (replacing Pat Campbell, who is retiring next month).

Board Discussion and Reports

Board Committee Assignments

Communications – Sue Quinn and Tim Millar

Policy – Wendy Rowden and Jim Ekeberg

Facilities/Architecture/Real Estate – Jerry Chapman and Kelly Keenan

Finance – Tim Millar and Sue Quinn

Legislation – Jerry Chapman and Wendy Rowden

Wellness (encompasses emotional/social/nutrition) – Kelly Keenan and Nancy Carlson

- Note: Carlson has not given her okay yet but has expressed an interest in the past.

Liaison – Articulation with D211/D214 – Wendy Rowden and Kelly Keenan

Keenan – Mentioned that the plan was to assign committees and then over the summer, develop a plan for each committee, its mission and bring it back in August for the entire Board's input and approval. Stated that the Wellness Committee is going to be an ad hoc committee (for a specific purpose), not a permanent standing committee.

Quinn – Would like the Communications Committee to get started over the summer and gave her vision for the committee. The general charge of the Communications Committee would be to improve communications to and from the School Board to both the public and school communities. School community includes parents and staff. The committee would come up with ideas for improving processes like that, develop those ideas and then bring them to the Board for a presentation. Would like to see what the Board thinks of that general idea and then move forward.

Chapman – As discussed during the IASB workshop - when the committee comes back with the recommendation and if there is a cost to the District – the committee should sort that out and tell how the task would be done and also any additional costs that may be

associated with that task. **Quinn** – That is why other staff would need to be involved with the committee, not just Board members.

Chapman – Thinks Quinn is asking if the Communications Committee can meet this summer based on the information provided but Quinn will still come back in August with a formal recommendation – just like the other committees.

Rowden envisions the Articulation Committee to be D15 Board members working with Board members from other districts. Thought they could talk about global issues that concern our area – what pieces of legislation we might have in common, what legislation D15 would or wouldn't advocate for. Still needs to be discussed between Rowden and Keenan.

Financial Report Card

Quinn – This is an initiative of the Communications Committee. The idea of a Financial Report Card is basically to give the public an overview of the status of the District. Would like to see something simplified and up on the District's Web site and also going out to constituents. It would have a history of the District's expenditures and revenues and a five year forecast. Imagines it to be a snapshot in time of where the District has been and where the District is going in the future. Quinn would like to see some detailed explanation for next year's expenditures and revenues. Also, what kind of hiring is the District looking at? What type of technology is planned? Wants to give the public an idea of what District 15 is doing in the next year and what they can expect to see coming in the future. The Financial Report Card would also show whether the District has a balanced budget, if the District is running a surplus, or a deficit and explanations for either of those situations. There would be a financial overview status, total debt cap, etc. It would state what kind of bonds the District has outstanding.

Quinn continued that the ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) has some information on their Web site (www.isbe.state.il.us/) and is available as a handout tonight (see link below). The ISBE information gives an idea of the relative financial health of a school district, guidelines and targets. Quinn sees this as a communications tool for District 15 to communicate its status to stakeholders. She would like the Communications Committee to refine this Financial Report Card. Find out what the Board wants to see in or out of the report. The committee would have to wait for the actual numbers for this year until the books are closed (June 30th). Those numbers are a necessary part of understanding where the District is at now.

Reference: <ftp://ftpfinance.isbe.state.il.us/AFRProfile/2006/14016015004.pdf> (**handout**)

Rowden – Thinks that it is important to educate the entire community as to the District's status financially now and in the future – how the District can maintain the quality of services the District has become accustomed to with what the District can expect financially.

Quinn – The Finance Committee would be involved with the Communications Committee in developing the Financial Report Card. Wants to communicate the correct financial information. Wants to have some meetings over the summer to get started and come back to the BOE meeting on August 8th with a recommendation. Quinn also proposed a change to Policy 4.10 (Fiscal and Business Management) which sets out the parameters of the proposed budget. It would have to be changed to take the Financial Report Card into

account. Quinn has made some changes to this policy, wants to send it to the Policy Committee to review along with the lawyers and bring it back to the Board.

Reference: **Policy 4.10 Fiscal and Business Management**

www.ccsd15.net/AboutDistrict15/BoardOfEducation/PDF/Sections_1-8%20FINAL.doc#FiscalBusinessMgmt

New Business/Other

Rowden – The Board talked about a list of anticipated items that would be on the agenda each month. For example, what items are typically on the agenda in September, or November? It would be a calendar of items that all Board members could have and also the public could be aware of via the agenda. This would improve communications. Rowden has heard from people that if they knew an item was on the agenda that evening, they would have been at the Board meeting.

Millar – Also thought that the Board spoke about putting actual items on the agenda that the Board wanted to discuss at a future BOE meeting. That would give the District staff a heads up.

Quinn – The Board discussed during their recent workshop about having a public discussion on financial philosophy. Quinn asked where and when is the Board going to do that? Can the Board do that now? Or should it be put on the agenda for August?

Millar – Said that there were other topics brought up such as a middle school concept and financial audit. The Board needs to refine these items for the August meeting. Explained to the audience that there was a Board workshop Monday night and many ideas/concepts were discussed.

Quinn – The IASB (Illinois Association of School Boards) rep at the workshop moderated the Board members. It was a great chance for the Board to just hash out some of the issues that they need to accomplish and come together as a Board.

Action Items

Personnel Report

Quinn has several issues to discuss about the Personnel Report.

Motion to table the vote until after Executive Session.

Unanimously approved.

Transparency – Board of Education Policy, Bids and Budget

Quinn – Referred to the handout that was provided to the Board and the audience. This issue was brought up at the last BOE meeting and is about posting items on the District's Web site in order to be more transparent to the public. The Board had indicated that they wanted a more specific idea of what types of items would be posted. Quinn made a checklist (see link below) and included a sample checklist of what would have been posted on the Web site for the May 9th, 2007 BOE meeting.

Reference: www.fcwpta.org/pdf/TransparencyChecklists.pdf

Board member discussion/concerns:

Chapman – Thinks it is wise to turn this over to the Policy Committee and have them come back with a recommendation. The committee can work out the details.

Keenan – Doesn't have a problem with this issue as long as it is fact-based. Just put the policy on the Web site and show the differences, just put the bids and budget in. Concerned that if explanations are given for one side, the other side must be represented. Doesn't want to politicize anything, wants just the facts given – no commentary.

Quinn – Thought that whatever comes in the Board packet would be put on the Web site. Perhaps it could be cleaned up for the Web site – just the bare bones. Understands the difficulty with editing the information. Thought the Board could take the checklist piece by piece – said the police piece was pretty straightforward. Thinks the Board needs to be cautious about saying it does not want to put recommendations out on the Web site because policies are recommendations.

McKanna – Concerned with the time needed to edit the Board packet information into a different format. It would be a challenge to have everything ready to meet the 48 hour deadline before a BOE meeting. In reference to Keenan's concerns, McKanna said that it could be made clear that a particular policy is the recommendation of that committee. Said it is rare that the Board may disagree with the Policy Committee recommendation.

Board Member Jim Ekeberg – Referring to Keenan's concerns, Ekeberg mentioned that if the IASB said that something is now school code – that statement can be put in as the rationale for changing a policy. That would not be editorializing.

Rowden – The Board may disagree with the recommendation. That can be done during the 1st reading of the policy when every Board member has the opportunity to say yes or no.

Concluding discussions:

Chapman – Asked Quinn why this could not wait for the Policy Committee. Thinks there are good points on both sides. The committee could weigh those issues and get back to the Board. Chapman would be more comfortable with that.

Quinn – Replied that transparency is always pressing and perhaps a little bit uncomfortable. But if by waiting, there could then be a consensus of the whole Board, Quinn would be fine with that. However, believes that the Board really needs to not continue to delay.

Chapman – The Board can tell the Policy Committee that this is a priority.

Rowden – Thought that the committee was not going to meet again until September.

Millar – Would be more comfortable passing this issue to a committee to hash out the details. The bid info is pretty straightforward and can be FOIA'ed (Freedom of Information Act) directly.

Chapman – Said that there were no policies coming forward to the Board until the Policy Committee meets to establish them. Doesn't see the timing as a critical issue. The Board won't get a policy to look at until it comes through the committee and that would be September.

Keenan – Thinks that the Board has to decide what is going to be put on the Web site and what is not going to be prior to this issue going to the committee. Wants to be more nimble when it comes to policy. Doesn't want to put everything to committee and have it studied for months.

McKanna – Offered a compromise. For the August BOE meeting, the District will try to get as much information on the Web site as practical. It could be a pilot - a test for the District webmaster.

Motion to put as much information as possible from the **Transparency Checklist** on the District's Web site before the August 8th, 2007 BOE meeting.

Unanimously approved.

Bids – General and Art Supplies

Board discussion before voting:

Quinn – Is not comfortable with the status of the information received in the Board packet. Feels that she needs additional information on whether these are the low bids, are there any special considerations as to why the District is choosing one company instead of another? Needs the rationale. There wasn't a document showing that this was the low bid, would like to see the other bids. After looking through the Board policies, there is none that governs what type of information the Board is expected to receive regarding bids in the Board packet. Policy change may be in order. For example, an executive summary which shows all of the bids stating which one is the low bidder, which one is not and the rationale. Says that the whole Board should make it clear to staff what is expected so as not to burden them a day or two before a BOE meeting.

Millar – Uncomfortable as well with the bid format. Unusual to see one vendor bidding on items – asked if the specifications were too tight? Doesn't have same comfortable level as when you see 5 or 6 vendors bidding. Would be helpful to get the Board packet sooner so questions could be asked. Packet is received by the Board on Friday night and then questions cannot be asked until Monday. Said that this particular packet had quite a few items to review.

Keenan – Would only want to see backup information if the recommended vendor is not the low bidder.

Noehlty – This particular bid was sent to 42 different companies and 22 were received. Was a complex bid document. Questions came in yesterday afternoon (Tuesday) about the bid. Did their best to compile information and gave Board members opportunity to review all documents. This bid is similar to what the Board had approved in the past for health supplies – many different items need to be bid. Said that what the Board sees in the packet is the low bid – that is what is being recommended for approved. His department follows school code.

Unanimously approved.

Bids – Fresh Bakery Products

Board discussion before voting:

Quinn – Asked why there was only one bidder?

Noehlty – Over a year ago, the Board directed the department to move towards purchasing more nutritional wheat-based products, which are more expensive. Roughly \$14K more than white flour based bread products.

Quinn – Supports that direction. But noted that the trend in the market is for more vendors to carry wheat based products. Surprised that the District could only find one vendor. Said that is why she had questions.

Unanimously approved.

Consent Calendar (22 items)

Board discussion before voting on the calendar as a whole.

Keenan – Would like to remove

H – Resolution – Establish Petty Cash Fund

S – Intergovernmental Agreements with Park Districts

U – 2007-08 Illinois Association of School Boards Annual Dues

Millar – Would like to remove

G – Workers' Compensation Insurance

Q – Premier Credit Union Lease Agreement

Motion to approve the Consent Calendar minus Items G, H, Q, S and U

Unanimously approved.

Board discussion on Item G – Workers' Compensation Insurance

Millar – Said that another school district changed their workers' compensation vendor and saved 20% which represented a few hundred thousand dollars. That district is about half of size of District 15. Village of Palatine recently changed vendors for the same reason. Said that District 15 subsidizes a lot of the smaller districts in the cooperative (co-op) that it belongs to. Would like to discuss this item in the Finance Committee.

Noehly – District 15 belongs to a cooperative. Co-op bylaws prevent the District from pulling out of the cooperative without giving a 6 month notice. Higher insurance is contributed to payroll going up and past experiences that were indicated in the Board packet. If Board chose not to approve the premium for next year, insurance coverage would continue however a 6% interest charge would be added each month. Co-op has already indicated that they would sue District 15 if the District chose not to pay it at all. The cooperative is run by **Gallagher Insurance, an affiliate of the District's insurance company.**

Noehly – Encouraged further discussion through the Finance Committee to look at this closely and make a decision as to whether or not to submit a letter to withdraw before December 31st. The District looked at this issue in 2005, got quotes to self-insure workers' compensation but at the time the premiums were close and the risk was much greater. Can look at this over the next several months. Would not want to risk not paying the premium now and paying additional surcharges.

Keenan – Questioned why Gallagher Insurance could not give the District a more comprehensive package, including workers' compensation. Said that the District is self-insured for everything else.

Motion to approve Item G – Unanimously approved.

Board discussion on Item H – Establish Petty Cash Fund

Keenan – Would like to discontinue the petty cash fund. Doesn't think it is a prudent way to do management. Doesn't want \$25K in petty cash fund with no accounting that she has seen.

Chapman – Thought the tradeoff would be more checks written. Shares concern that cash is hard to monitor. Would like to see the Board approve this item and then ask Finance Committee to address any Board concerns. Thinks there is good rationale for having or not having the fund. Would like to see this issue studied.

Noehly – If Board would like more detailed reporting, it can be supplied. Thought if the schools did not have a petty cash fund – then more small checks would be written for expenses.

Mary Zarr – Petty cash fund in each school is \$125 a year. It is important to have when parents come in to pay fees and use cash. School needs to make change. Schools have to account for every penny.

Motion to approve Item H – Unanimously approved

Board discussion on Item Q – Premier Credit Union Lease Agreement

Millar – Thought the \$1m liability insurance was too low for today's times. Thinking of protecting the school district liability wise. Doesn't think it is enough coverage. This agreement is for 3 years.

Noehly – Spoke with the District's general counsel, they indicated that anything in the amount of \$2 to \$3m would be more than adequate for this agreement. Counsel thought that \$5m would be excessive.

Chapman – Made amendment to the motion to approve the item with a change from \$1m to \$2.5M coverage. If District finds out that it is too low, can try to renegotiate the agreement to get a higher level of protection.

Motion to approve Item Q with \$2.5M coverage – Unanimously approved.

Board discussion Item S – Intergovernmental Agreements with Park Districts (Salt Creek, Rolling Meadows and Hoffman Estates)

Millar – Explained to the audience that the agreements are for the park districts to maintain the District's properties (cutting grass, some do aeration and fertilizing) in exchange for using the fields and buildings for their programs. There is no consistency between the various park district agreements. The park districts have been great to work with – no problems there – Millar is looking for consistency. He is also uncomfortable with a three year agreement without assurances that trash is picked up after ball games, aeration is done, weed killer is applied, etc. Have had complaints about some properties and their upkeep.

Keenan – Would like to know who is using the District's properties under the park district rates but are not park district programs? Would like to see one year agreement now vs. three years. Look at consistency between the park district agreements. Has nothing to do with problems with the park districts. Wanted to amend the motion to approve the three contracts but for one year only until a committee can look into a more consistent agreement with all five park districts that District 15 works with.

Craig Phillips, Maintenance – Offered background information. In years past, the Board took the position of not using weed control on the perimeter of the properties – just on the fields. The Park Districts wanted more use of the properties for the work they supplied. It was decided that the park districts would be guaranteed two to three days a week to use the buildings in exchange for upkeep. For the last 24 months, they have been mandated to use weed control around the perimeter of the buildings. Fields have always looked great because they have been using weed control there.

Gave Plum Grove Junior High as an example – the situation there (around the building) is very bad. There would have to be a complete kill of the area and then grading/seeding or

sod done to correct it. It is the residual affect of almost 10 years of no weed control. Park districts were not asked to do that until 24 months ago. The District monitors this based on staff input and contacts the park districts when necessary. Philips is open to a meeting to discuss this issue and for additional input.

Motion to approve the three agreements (Salt Creek, Rolling Meadows and Hoffman Estates) for one year and then put this issue to the Facilities Committee to figure out how to handle for next year. – Unanimously approved.

Board discussion **Item U – 2007-08 IASB Annual Dues**

Keenan – Wanted to vote on this item separately. The IASB does provide some benefits but some things are not in District 15's best interests. Thinks the bad outweighs the good aspects received.

Millar – The Board had this discussion last year. District 15's dues went up again to \$12K a year. District 15 pays more than other districts and represents more people and still only gets one vote. Thinks the IASB sometimes lobbies against items that would benefit our District. There are more small districts in the southern part of the state and they all get one vote. They then carry more weight. Expressed frustration with that.

Chapman – Shares that. Said that there will be disagreement in relation to school funding. Thinks the IASB is the most powerful voice for schools. Provides services like they utilized this past Monday night (workshop).

Motion to approve Item U - Approved 5:1 (Keenan dissenting)

Executive Session – Approximately 9:15 p.m.

Reconvene –

The Board reconvened at approximately 10:35 p.m. into Open Session.

Motion to approve the Personnel Report as presented

Approved 5:1 (Keenan abstaining)

Written by Jennifer Mondy

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