

# ***Spotlight on the Board***

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

### **November 12th, 2008**

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

## **Detailed Study – Transportation, Busing and Transportation Benchmarks**

### **Action Item - Transportation – Bus Replacement**

*Spotlight on the Board* notes for the above Transportation discussions can be found at:  
[www.fcwpta.org/pdf/d15\\_nov\\_12\\_2008\\_transportation.pdf](http://www.fcwpta.org/pdf/d15_nov_12_2008_transportation.pdf)

## **Capital Improvement Plan – Summer 2009**

**Allard** – She understood the Board approved \$2M in capital improvements to be done in the summer of 2009 at the June meeting. It will be broken down by the district vs. architect portion. In that \$2M, was about \$250K that was designated for the repair/replacement of the church parking lot adjacent to Winston Campus. That is on hold. The church is reviewing the lease agreement with the district and will be presenting us with a new lease in early 2009. This Board will have to determine whether they want to continue to use that parking lot under those terms. We are now looking for the Board to endorse once again the improvements, and prioritize the work in order. It is all about timing and is worried about awarding contracts so the work can be done in the summer.

**Quinn** – Is for reprioritizing because she doesn't think the higher priority items are on this list. There is a item on the agenda for the Facility meeting next Tuesday that reviews the 2005 Life Safety Study to indicate what items have been done or need to be done. She thinks it is premature to decide this now until the Board looks at that information and makes sure that the highest priority items are on the list. The item that she is concerned about is roofing repairs. There was the issue at Pleasant Hill this year which forced the district into a not ideal situation for students as well as the bid process. There is a similar roof issue at Paddock that was cited in the Life Safety Study. We currently list \$50K of repairs for Paddock and it is not sufficient to get that work done. There are also other "A" priority repairs (not on this list). Asked, when do we need to have a decision made in order to get in line for the bidding for summer for all of those roofing repairs we will be doing? **Allard** – The architects need time to develop the bid specifications. We talked about awarding the bid by March or April at the latest. **Quinn**- So there is time to consider our Life Safety Study, the meeting is next week. We can come back in December and look closely at the list to make sure we have the right priorities.

**Craig Phillips, Maintenance Manager** – A report is coming out on Friday, prepared by Allard that identifies those items in the Life Safety Study designated as "A" or "B" priority – which are completed, or going to be completed this year. It will indicate which ones are being done internally by our staff and those that would be handled by outside contractors. Phillips then outlined several maintenance issues in the district that are happening at Paddock, Plum Grove and Winston Campus.

**Millar** – What we are not taking into account is that the \$2M is from the 2008/09 budget. We haven't even done the budget for 2009/10 which would give you extra funding to do these for the summer.

**Chapman** – What are the priorities for this \$2M that the Board established because this is critical to make a decision? The next issue is with these other critical issues, how many to put into the next budget.

**Quinn** – She wants to point out that we have \$1.9M in the regular Operations and Maintenance (O&M) budget. When things break, they need to be fixed. If they are not massive capital expenditures, it should be coming out of the \$1.9M. Wants to make sure that is our understanding of it. We have to get the most important things done first but we also need to make sure we are spending money from

the right funds. **Phillips** – There is money in the O&M category for what we call repair and maintenance. We cannot fund all capital investments out of that fund.

**Lukich** – He understands that the difference between the \$1.9M and \$2M is that the \$1.9M is a recurring budget that you have over the years to address ongoing needs of the district. The \$2M seems to be earmarked for specific things that came out of Life Safety that whoever decided felt that it was a need coming online in the next 12 to 16 months.

## Action Item - Architectural Fees

**Millar** – Some of the architectural services items he hopes we could do in house since Phillips is a licensed architect. There could be significant savings by having him doing the drawings and bid specifications. Regarding roofs, if we could look at overlays in some cases instead of always doing tear offs. Most businesses including municipalities are doing overlays. It is about a 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the cost and lasts about 2/3rds as long. It is a pretty big savings. He also suggests having long term roofing plans so that they all don't come in one year's worth – like the buses. It is always easier for future BOEs to have a more level expense picture. It is his recommendation to see how many things we can actually do ourselves.

**Chapman** – There may be cases where we could do that. It is open to the architect when they do their examination of the roof. If that option exists to us, we shouldn't close the door to it. Doesn't think anyone disagrees with that. Regarding having Phillips do some items in house, it has been identified that some things like carpet, we can do the specs for and the supervision at a significant savings. Chapman doesn't think that Millar is talking about roof repair or major projects.

**Millar** – He doesn't know to what extent it could be done. That is for discussion. Phillips is involved in a lot of the specifications anyway. He has to work with the architects to develop specs. The other option is working with the architects to get a fixed fee instead of paying a percentage. Other municipalities and public bodies have done it. They bring in three architectural firms – work with one to see if they can come to an arrangement, if not work with the next one. He already passed this by legal and they said they could do that. He is thinking long term. If we can plan out roofs for the next ten to 15 years and actually fund them, get them done, plan it out and have a good system for doing that. Then he thinks we would be way ahead of the game instead of everything being an emergency.

**Keenan** – Even if we don't get there, but she wants to get there – we are paying 7 ½% to our architectural firm to oversee laying carpet. That is something she would like to see stopped immediately. Phillips is involved with it already and a lot of this has already been a part of his job. We are not asking him to go beyond the scope of his job.

**Quinn** – Any way we can do to reduce our architect fees would help because they are enormous. \$122K is just the fee for just looking at some of these roofs and plumbing repairs. Fixed fees are a fabulous idea because we do remove some of that incentive, which she thinks is very important. She would like to hear back from Allard/Phillips on what suggestions they have that we can do or can't do and what resources they need to bring those fees down.

**Chapman** – Wants to make a suggestion. When you (Allard) come back to us in December with a revised list, can you sort out which projects we can oversee with Phillips and his staff and those that are architect related which need additional assistance? Then in the meantime, what we are asking you to do is contact the architect to see if there is a way we can get fees upfront so we know what we are paying for the project as an option instead of the 7 ½%. **Allard** – Her experience would tell you that the 7 ½% on renovations are about 2% lower than school districts are paying for renovations. New construction tends to run 6 to 6 ½% of the project costs. **Chapman** – He can't imagine that it will be difficult for the architect to translate their fees into a fixed number because they know what it is estimated to be. **Allard** – There will be a scope of services clearly defined that they won't deviate from.

**Keenan** – Can we have this in terms of a Board Action Item next month? She would like to see – no flooring, no carpeting being overseen by the architects anymore unless it comes to the Board and even

the curtain walls. Keenan thought Phillips was going to oversee that. **Phillips** – The documents for the curtain walls have already been prepared by the architects. We have already paid them the fee for documents that have gone out to bid twice. There is not an additional expenditure unless it goes under supervision. It is an aspect that we normally do and have done before.

**Lukich** – Perhaps Phillips can develop a short list of what he can do internally.

**Millar** – Would like to have the architectural firm give the Board a better detailed billing. It is almost impossible to figure out which projects on the \$2.7M bill - what the breakdown was and where they did the work.

## **Superintendent's Communications Goals**

Ref: **Goal: Improve Communications with the BOE, Parents and the Community**

[www.fcwpta.org/pdf/D15BOE111208\\_communications\\_goals.pdf](http://www.fcwpta.org/pdf/D15BOE111208_communications_goals.pdf)

**Lukich** – Goals were made part of the superintendent's contract in May and the BOE met on September 3<sup>rd</sup> and developed four goals for the superintendent. The first has to do with Student Achievement and a report was given at the last Board meeting for your review, not for approval. Tonight he has a second goal that Jim Garwood, Asst. Superintendent and his Communications staff have worked on him based on some direction that he gave them. The Board gave him directive to improve communications with the Board, parents and community and in addition improve communication with the Board, staff and administration. After we had a first round of meetings with groups such as DACEE, PCEE, CTC and others, there were some things that they saw that were not good communication processes that we intend to improve.

Garwood has outlined this under Key Strategies, Key Activities and Key Measures. We did include a couple of things that he hoped responded to some Board members request: Town Hall meetings and working with the Press in regard to getting our own message out in terms of the good news of D15. Then we also included a monthly "Key Strategies/Activities" beginning back in September and carrying us through May and June. Goal 3 will also be reviewed with you tonight and it has to do with upcoming negotiation processes. Goal 4 we are continuing to work on and it will depend on next Tuesday night's meeting. He would like to present that goal along with Allard at the December 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. If successful, all four goals will be in place and you will have an opportunity to review and make corrections.

**Quinn** – She is quite impressed with the detail and some of the things that have already been implemented such as the Constant Contact email. Quinn has a couple of suggestions under "Improve the choreography and video-taping of Board meetings". She recently discovered that our own village council has a fantastic system to videotape their meetings, they video stream live their Board meetings on their Web site. As soon as the Board meeting is done, you can review the whole thing. Has no idea of cost but thought that could be something to check out.

**Rowden** – We did look into that two years ago and it is extremely expensive.

**Quinn** – Recently became aware that the district actually has DVD copies of the Board meetings that are available for checkout through the BOE Secretary. The local libraries no longer have copies available. **June Becker, BOE Secretary** – (Explained) she contacted the libraries when she first came to the district. The libraries no longer saw a need to catalog and store the DVDs. They asked if it was a problem if people could just contact her directly. Becker said that she does get several DVD copies of each meeting and has had about 8 to 10 checked out in the last 6 to 8 months.

**Millar** – Would like to tag on to Quinn's comments. In the past, the Village of Palatine has offered us their old videotape equipment, which is still pretty good, for free if we wanted to use it.

**Quinn** – Has another suggestion. We have used Survey Monkey in the past. We have Constant Contact to push (information), but would like the district to be able to pull (get information). Have a vehicle for soliciting input from the community. Often times we have issues come up, maybe it is bus times, maybe it is class sizes – to have an ongoing vehicle to assess input.

## Action Item - Finance Committee

**Millar** – Would like to make a motion to establish a Finance Committee to review budgeting procedures as well as work on a Five-Year Forecast to make sure our assumptions and projections meet good standard.

**Discussion – Millar** – Believes that we have had some cost saving measures come out of the committees in the past. Within the Board meeting format, it is hard to have and build solid communication. Many times, we have needed additional information and we have to wait a month for it to have the next discussion. We still have our cash basis accounting which doesn't give us a picture of where we are at. We really have no idea of where we are at and we don't have the numbers from last year to get a good starting point. Thinks it is very difficult to do our fiduciary responsibility without truly sitting down and making sure we know where we are at, know where we are going and do the long-term planning.

**Carlson** – She really likes the structure of a Committee of the Whole, finds that it is more beneficial to her and makes her a better Board member because she is hearing more discussion without it coming through a funnel. She can act more effectively when we are all sitting here listening to the information. Sometimes she hasn't thought of a question that someone else here is asking that gets her thinking to ask another question. She has found that not having committees has been beneficial to her because it is not being filtered. Something as important as the finance committee, everybody here is interested in the finances of this district. Although she likes the idea of the finance committee, she personally feels given the structure of this district and what we have to look forward to in the next several years in terms of our finances - she doesn't want any information filtered. She wants the benefit of everyone on Board giving their input, thoughts and ideas.

**Keenan** – Agrees with what Carlson is saying however since the committees have stopped, she feels like we are not getting as much work done. The sidewalk issues - we were trying to get more kids walking to school, we were trying to lessen the buses – that all fell apart when the Facilities Committee went apart. Quinn wanted to do the Communications Committee. If she was spearheading that, we could be having a lot more communications out there. Agrees that more communication should come back to the Board so no one thinks a committee is making decisions on behalf of everyone else which she thinks was part of the problem before. You don't want the committee making assumptions that the whole Board needs to make but doesn't think we are getting a lot of work of the district done that we had when we had committees.

**Quinn**- Committees of the Whole is a great idea. The committee structure did not work well last year. Some good work did come out of them but doesn't think they were good for the cohesiveness of this Board. The cohesiveness has been better and we are not fighting or worrying about who knew what, when and under what circumstances. We have so many big issues like finance and facilities. She would be in favor of having more topic specific meetings like the facilities meetings we have been having – they are Special Meetings. To have a finance special meeting would be fine with her but she wants it to be inclusive so that everyone feels like they are part of the very large decisions.

**Chapman** – Some Boards have a Committee of the Whole where no action is taken once a month. All of the action would be taken at the Regular meeting. The committees do fragment people and it does disenfranchise a person which is his concern. He cannot imagine anything more important to this district than the five year plan.

**Rowden** – We should have Committees of the Whole and should set a calendar now so it happens.

**Quinn** – Her problem with the Committees of the Whole (in the past) were that they became the second Board meeting. **Chapman** – And that cannot happen. We cannot make it an action committee and you have to decide ahead of time what the topics are. And if you are going to do that, you have to say we limit 45 minutes to the budget, 45 minutes to the facilities, etc and stick with that as a Board.

**Rowden** – And we have to commit to attending because you start having those discussions and then it turns into action items for the next meeting. If Board members were not there, then they didn't hear

the information and suddenly they are out of the loop. She would agree with the feelings that the committees did not work because she felt that the information was being filtered and directed perhaps not by the entire Board.

### **Vote to establish Finance Committee**

Failed 5:2 (No: Rowden, Chapman, Carlson, Ekeberg, Quinn; Yes: Keenan, Millar)

**Chapman** – If there is no objection from the Board, at our next meeting there will be an action item for the consideration of establishing and scheduling Committees of the Whole on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month beginning in January 2009. The first one would include a discussion on finance.

### **Action Item - Pleasant Hill – SMART Board Donations**

**Millar** – These are really great tools and enhance the learning in the right hands. He wants to make sure that we have a long term plan for the SMART Boards and that we roll these out to other schools once we get the budget worked out to see what we can do. This is a very generous donation but wants to make sure long term we are standardizing and our technology department is okay with it, stick with this throughout the district. Millar would like to see the Junior Highs with them next year.

**Keenan** – Questioned if this could do done and thought that gifts could not be given to specific schools only to the district. Asked why are we letting all of them go to PH, why not accept them and give one to each school? **Chapman** – Because Pleasant Hill raised the money.

**Keenan** – So this wasn't a donation from a third party then.

**Carlson** – She spoke with the superintendent about this issue concerning donations. Some schools may be able to raise more money than others. Carlson wants to make sure that we have an evening out so that not one school has many more things than another. The Board should have a policy for this. She thinks it is fabulous that schools have separate donations but wants to make sure there is a leveling of the playing field throughout the district. The fundraising effort at PH is terrific but we also need to make sure that we can provide that same quality to all students. The D15 Foundation works with the PTAs to raise money. **Keenan** – Why are we allowing this? We don't allow this at the PTA level. If a PTA were to have excess funds, it couldn't buy 20 SMART Boards for its school.

**Rowden** – Yes it could and they have been purchasing items for their schools for many years, or putting money into programs and equipment. They have bought VHS players and they become the property of the district. That is the risk that the PTA takes.

**Rowden** - Wants to add also that the purpose of D15 Foundation fundraisers like Reading Nights or Walkathons is often to target money towards technology. There have been differences in the amount of money that each school could raise so there have been discrepancies. She does agree that if we recognize that a technology tool will help improve instruction that we should be looking into that technology plan for the entire district. But to deny this opportunity based on the fundraising efforts that were done legally and done with the intent of putting SMART Boards specifically in that school that would not behoove us in any way.

**Chapman**- Explained that when donations are made and the district accepts them, they become district property. If we decide next year that we want to move ten of those SMART Boards to another school, we can do that. **Keenan** – Why not make it more equitable to begin with?

**Rowden** – One thing is that we don't want to extinguish is the ingenuity of people who are industrious enough to put forth an effort to add value to the educational process. Even if this is a starting point and it happens to be at one school. This isn't a precedent setting event. All schools have raised money for specific reasons whether it is rock walls or playgrounds. In addition, we have got to consider that this is a tool; it is not a piece of curriculum. We are not giving one school a particular curriculum advantage. We are giving them basically the difference between a chalkboard to a whiteboard to an overhead projector and now SMART Board technology which of course is a lot more expensive. Again back to what Millar said, if these tools are going to enhance the educational process, then we should be

looking at it across the district. But let's not kid ourselves into thinking that these kinds of things have not happened before and won't continue to happen. Even down to how we get our resources from the State. If you look at these Title I expenditures (earlier in the agenda), they are going to where they are needed. If we were going to have apples to apples, we would have to spread that entire amount out equally from building to building. But what we do is base it on need. In this situation, these dollars were raised specifically to put these SMART Boards in PH with the understanding that this has to go through the Board of Education for approval.

**Keenan** – She has never had to vote for one school getting all of one thing. Agrees that it is not a curriculum piece but it is more than a chalkboard. She has seen them at D211 all of the time, you cannot believe how helpful they are.

**Chapman** – Wants to make a comment about this. You have the opportunity for staff (with the technology); they have to make a commitment to use the equipment. You have a group of parents/staff (at PH) saying that we can provide an improved service to some of our schools. He thinks it is foolish not to take that and then shouldn't that become the model? He thinks that is what we are talking about - that it should become the model. We should have other teachers in other schools just as interested in doing that. **Keenan**- Yes, but they can't fundraise as much.

**Carlson** – This ties into what the D15 Foundation does in terms of fundraising across the entire district. She knows that Garwood is working on a new policy about this issue that should come to the Board.

**Lukich** – They are working on it, it is part of the struggle. He wouldn't want to be the one to damper innovation and ingenuity and people going out and raising money. Thinks that is very helpful to the school district. We do have to figure out a way to balance that by directing monies to places where there isn't. There has to be some equity. Quite frankly, he visited Willow Bend two weeks ago and they have a Promethean Board. If you think SMART Boards are good, go visit Willow Bend and take a look at Promethean Boards. All schools have things going on but we have to figure out a way to create equity and balance in the district. And it is not easy.

**Millar** – Wanted to tie in with what Carlson said about raising the funds through the D15 Foundation. He doesn't think we want to wait that long for this type of technology. He saw some excellent presentations on how much this can enhance ELL students and in a lot of areas. We should not wait for fundraising efforts to pay for these and should get it in our budget as soon as possible. Actually get an overall cohesive plan. **Chapman** – Could be one of the first items in our Finance Committee meeting.

**Quinn** – Thinks that Chapman hit this on the head when he said this should be the model. We are basically rolling out a technology that she thinks could be good for the district. If we can look at the implementation of it – problems, benefits, all kinds of issues, we can use that and then roll it into our planning. We should be planning now and she will talk about this later regarding the library grant. We should be planning now what our technology looks like (in the future). We have a technology plan for the next couple of years but not a longer term vision. Maybe SMART Boards need to be a part of that, maybe there is a different technology, something that really has the potential to enhance instruction.

**Rowden** – What the Board may not be aware of is that this was just not a self-indulgent attempt to get technology for one school. They actually became very community minded and raised 10% of their funds went to an inner-city school. They were so fortunate that they were so successful that they got additional SMART Board money so two are going to another school in the district. It is important to acknowledge that it was about the kids, it was about the commitment of the staff and the families but they also looked outside of themselves.

**Phillips** – The Promethean Boards and the SMART Boards are obviously educationally good for the enhancement of education. One of the elements that is missing here that you need to consider is that it requires a substantial amount of cash outlay from the facility division to wire these, electrify them, mount the cameras, create the data links and the coordination interface. The technology dept and Garwood are working on a presentation that will be coming to the Board as a suggestion on how to advance this under a controlled basis. It has been running us anywhere from as little as \$150 to an

excess of \$800 a unit. There are some areas where the boards have gone in for as little as \$150. There have been some technology problems and the interface projectors. This all links to an added conversation that you will be seeing from Garwood because our TV monitors are failing. This is replacing that with the overhead projectors. It isn't just the Board or a group that came up with some money; they have also been paying for some of the infrastructure.

### **Vote to accept SMART Board donations – 18 for Pleasant Hill and 2 for Plum Grove JH**

Approved 6:0 (Keenan abstaining)

## **School Library Grant**

**Quinn** – We are getting this grant for \$9K from the State of IL. Asked how much of a school's library budget comes from site based building funds, how much from the district and how much from grants like this? **Mary Zarr, Asst. Superintendent for Curriculum** – Even if the money is in a school's site based budget, it comes from the district. Each school's budget committee determines how much money is put into each line item for their school. Depending on what they do, some schools can put more money into the library than others. When she looks at all of the site based funding, adds it all together – what the Department of Instruction puts into the libraries is usually upwards of \$100K.

**Quinn** – From this grant, she pulled out the information regarding literacy standards. They are good ideas about how children should be able to understand how to access information, evaluate information and having some standards for sort of 21<sup>st</sup> century thinking. We have our technology writing standards which are specific to D15 and are not based specifically on State goals or standards because there are none. We have some very detailed things like create a spreadsheet in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and things like that are very detailed about technology standards. What are our standards that we want to set for kids in terms of technology literacy as a general idea? That is something she would like to see as part of our Board planning process. **Carlson** – This issue is another reason for a Committee of the Whole.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:15 p.m. when the Board went into Executive Session.

*Posted online: Sunday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008*

*Jennifer Mondy fcwnews@comcast.net*