

MINUTES
McLean County Unit District No. 5
BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Session
January 18, 2005

The Board of Education of Community Unit School District No. 5, McLean and Woodford Counties, Illinois, met in special session on January 18, 2005, at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the District Office, 1809 West Hovey Avenue, Normal, Illinois.

1.0 Roll Call Members present: Gail Ann Briggs, Tom Ellsworth, Scott Lay, Meta Mickens-Baker, Martin O'Connor (entered at 7:02 p.m.), Steve Whittington, and Board President Rick Percy. Members absent: None.

Also present: Chapman, Pye, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum/Instruction Jim Braksick, Executive Director of Secondary Education Bruce Boswell, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer Tod Altenburg, Prescher, Meghan Leiseberg, Michelle Steinbacher from The Pantagraph, Kevin Heinkes from WJBS, John Puzauskas, Rich Schroeder, Bob Burritt, Linda Chizmar, Cathy Greene, Linda Chizmar, Donna Lutkehaus, Karen Gibson, Mindy Vaughn, Matt Sterrett, Greg Kennett, Julie Basting, Heather Ritchie, Aylin Akin, Stephanie Pappas, and others.

2.0 Pledge of Allegiance The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3.0 Public Comments None.

4.0 Board Work Session President Percy opened the meeting and indicated a board work session was scheduled as part of the budgeting and planning process and to update the public on issues before the District.

Chapman stated that he was anticipating an interesting discussion at the meeting and hoped the reports provided would generate questions and suggestions on the various topics. He felt the session was an opportunity for the Board to look further ahead than it has been able to in the past year. During the past year, he indicated the focus was on more immediate issues, development of a budget for the current school year, and necessary reductions in the Educational Fund.

4.1 Strategic Plan/District Goals 2003-2005

Chapman noted that a Strategic Plan was developed during the past spring and summer in an attempt to look ahead to the future. He remarked that the District Goals, 2003-2005 preceded the Strategic Plan. Chapman stated that a determination was made to not replace the District Goals with the Strategic Plan, but to bring the Goals to conclusion as designed and at the same time implement the Strategic Plan and looking ahead for a five-year period. He reported that he would present a progress report on the Strategic Plan at the January 26 board meeting. Chapman also indicated he would present a similar progress report on the District Goals at the February 9 board meeting.

It was noted that the administration had prepared documentation for the Board on most of the agenda items and viewed it as a basis for discussion and hoped it would prompt questions. Chapman added that he had asked administrators to facilitate discussion of the various topics.

4.2 2004-2005 Budget Report

Altenburg reported that as of December 31 the District was on target in regard to its budget for this school year. It was reported that expenditures during the second semester are typically less than during the first semester. Altenburg estimated that expenditures for the year would be in the range of 96 to 97 percent for the year. In response to a

question about the Site and Construction Fund, it was noted that fund expenditures to date included expenses thought to have been paid last year for the conversion of Field School to the Field Special Services Office. It was indicated that the bills, however, were not received until August. Other expenses were also part of the amount reported for that fund.

4.3 Current Reductions/Savings

Chapman stated that the District had not ignored its need to be frugal even as it developed and implemented the budget. He cited significant cuts to the Educational Fund and remarked that ways to conserve were still being considered throughout the school year.

For example, Chapman stated that the District's Nextel wireless service had been reduced to save money. Pye reviewed a summary of the last six months of service that reflected a reduction in minutes used and phone charges. He stated that since July 2004 the District had reduced its number of cellular phones by 35. It was suggested that consideration be given to further reducing the number of cellular phones in the District. Pye reported that staff members have been encouraged to utilize the walkie talkie feature on their cellular phones as much as possible as that feature has unlimited minutes. Appropriate and limited cell phone use has also been encouraged. It was reported that some two-way radios were able to be eliminated in the maintenance department, as they have cellular phones with the walkie-talkie feature. It was suggested that a policy be developed on appropriate cell phone use for the future.

Pye noted that the District was just beginning its agreement with Energy Education, Inc. and hoped to soon realize savings in the area of utility costs due to that agreement.

Concerning copy machines, Chapman remarked that the administration would review copy machines in the District as it considers new leases or changing of equipment.

4.4 2005-2006 Budget Calendar

Chapman stated that documentation had been provided on the proposed budget calendar, potential and appropriate fund reserves, and the potential transfer of funds from the Transportation Fund. Altenburg reviewed a draft of the proposed 2005-2006 budget calendar and remarked that the administrative team was focusing on making the budget process more efficient and collaborative with building administrators and grant managers throughout the District. It was noted that emphasis would also be placed on differentiation between needs and wants, what the buildings need to deliver their programs, and what the District can reasonably support.

Altenburg reported that the proper level of fund reserve balances was discussed with the District's auditor last October. Reserve targets of 10 percent, 15 percent, 20 percent, and 25 percent for the Educational, Operations & Maintenance, and Transportation Funds were presented. Chapman sought the Board's input on appropriate reserve targets. While the auditors have suggested a target reserve of three to four months of expenditures, some board members felt that the public might deem 25-30 percent to be too much and thought 10-20 percent might be more acceptable.

It was suggested that work would need to be done to bring into balance revenue and expenditures for the Operations and Maintenance Fund in future budgets.

Another suggestion was that the Board be partners in the development of the budget, more in relation to providing some general parameters, prior to receiving a proposed budget.

Board members discussed the possibility of transferring funds from the Transportation Fund prior to June 30 to the Educational or Operations and Maintenance Fund. Some board members suggested transferring \$1-2 million to the O & M Fund. It was also pointed out that funds could be transferred at anytime from the Working Cash Fund to help out other funds. Chapman remarked that it appeared at this time to be a reasonable

move to transfer some money from the Transportation Fund without significant problem to that fund.

A concern was noted about the state having yet to appropriately address school funding issues. It was pointed out that some state aid payments had been eliminated on occasion in the past by the state.

4.5 2005-2006 Staffing Projections

Pye noted that the December 22 enrollment and the projected enrollment for the coming school year had been provided to board members to review. He stated that the projections for next year still included 226 sections and no change in class size ranges for the various elementary grade levels. Pye remarked that secondary registration is underway and will be reviewed in regard to student interest. He sought board input on staffing levels for the coming school year. Chapman informed the Board that the administration was planning to continue to utilize open attendance areas and attendance exceptions to assist with appropriate placement of elementary students. He felt that any reduction in force, if necessary, would be limited. A concern was noted about the kindergarten class sizes at Grove, Hoose, Northpoint, and Oakdale. It was felt that full-day kindergarten had positively impacted students. In addition, teaching assistants have been added to assist grade levels with higher enrollments. It was noted that while lower class sizes may be desirable, they might not always be economically feasible.

4.6 Schedule B

Chapman remarked that some Schedule B reductions were included in a previous list of proposed cost containments for this school year, but they were not actually part of the final plan due to contract implications. Some limited Schedule B reductions were, however, implemented for this school year in ways that did not take away Schedule B positions from bargaining unit members. Boswell noted that board members had been provided with Schedule B pages from the 2003-2004 UFEA contract and potential Schedule B cuts for 2005-2006. He indicated that longevity was not included in the list of possible cuts. The cost of the potential reductions is \$95,707. Boswell reviewed the potential reductions and indicated this was an area that was previously criticized for not being reduced. Any Schedule B cuts that would impact bargaining unit members would require appropriate notice of dismissal in March.

4.7 Enrollment Projections

Chapman stated that actual and projected enrollments for 1996 through 2011 provided to board members are an update of the format previously developed by Howard Davis, a retired administrator. He remarked that the data is based on historical data that tracks retention and forward projections. Also presented were enrollment projections for Grades K-5 in relation to classrooms needed and growth percentages. Also presented were enrollment projections for middle and high schools, which included both actual and estimated figures. It was noted that middle school capacity would be reached in 2007. High school capacity would not be reached until 2010. Chapman remarked that the projections include a continuing, constant program as it is currently. Given the middle school projections, Chapman felt that a short-term solution might be to add portable classrooms at Chiddix and Parkside. He felt more additions to those facilities would be impractical. A question was raised on whether a change in the curriculum would assist with middle school capacity. Chapman stated that this question was currently being researched.

4.8 Growth Challenges

- Class Size
- Building/Classroom Space
- Attendance Boundaries

Chapman informed the Board that he is tracking subdivision growth and development in Unit 5. He sought the Board's input on growth challenges for the future. Chapman noted that some of the topics listed under this item were previously discussed. Board members were provided with the number of classrooms and available classrooms in the District's

elementary schools. Pye stated that he and Braksick felt the open attendance concept has worked well for this school year to balance classes. One negative aspect is that parents, particularly those of kindergarteners, desire earlier notification of the school their children will attend. Pye indicated that consideration was being given to adding Hoose School as a possible placement for students in open attendance areas. Of the potential schools for placements from open attendance areas, Pye expressed concern about Towanda School as it has capacity for only 30-35 more students. He also pointed out that Fox Creek School has five available classrooms. Chapman stated that redistricting was not being considered for 2005-2006. Given available classrooms at Fox Creek, it was suggested that consideration being given to relocating some special education classes to open up classroom space at elementary schools on the east side of the District. Pye stated this would be explored, but could present transportation issues. Online student registration with later payment of student fees was also suggested.

4.9 Full-Day Kindergarten

Chapman indicated that a report on full-day kindergarten was planned for the next board meeting, but as it was already completed and seemed pertinent to discussion planned for the work session, he asked Braksick to present it at this meeting. Braksick remarked that kindergarten teachers were concerned about the Board's commitment to full-day kindergarten. He reported that of the 881 enrolled kindergarten students, only 5 have taken the half-day option. Braksick remarked that in October 2004 he surveyed the kindergarten and first grade teachers regarding the full-day program. The teachers strongly support the full-day program. Principals and parents also are fully supportive of the full-day program. Concerning student achievement, it is felt that full-day kindergarten provides a stronger foundation for students that will result in the need for less specialized services and more successful educational experiences for children. Braksick recommended continuing the full-day kindergarten program. He noted that this was a change in his thinking as a principal last year when he thought the program was too expensive for the District.

A question was asked about what had been done to strengthen the curriculum of the other primary grades with the addition of full-day kindergarten so that students continue to be challenged. Braksick felt that each year there would be adjustments as the students progress from grade to grade.

Percy remarked that he felt the Board had already indicated its commitment to full-day kindergarten when it went against the task force's recommendation to not implement the program to save money. It was suggested that evaluation of this program should be ongoing. More professional development was encouraged to assist teachers in the other grades with making curriculum adjustments due to the addition of full-day kindergarten.

4.10 Technology

Chapman commented that technology was an area that impacted both the instructional and operational areas. He added that it is also an area of constant change and high cost. Chapman stated that the administration was seeking direction on technology areas in which the District should advance, research, or back away from. Braksick reported that elementary report cards were currently being studied, with consideration being given to whether they should be done electronically. Other areas of consideration are programs to provide parents with access to student information and programs to help educators with disaggregating student assessment data. He cited a previously presented proposal for the school lunch program that was not approved due to cost. Pye noted that with the Energy Education proposal there was software that will be implemented to make sure the District is operating as efficiently as possible. The addition of the Versatran software for transportation will also need to be continually updated in order to maximize system use. Pye asked how much time and energy the administration should devote to addressing some of the broader District initiatives that would impact all buildings; i.e. some type of lunch system, etc. He added that some could be phased in over several years, but carried a significant price tag.

It was suggested that the administration present its proposals in the area of technology to the Board, so it could react to more specific information. In terms of investments, it was suggested that internal processes continue to be moved forward to create greater efficiencies. Board members favored technological advances that would more directly impact classrooms and student achievement. Another suggestion was to seek out an independent review of the District's current computer hardware and software. Chapman indicated that efforts had already begun to identify resources for such a review. It was suggested that software that is compatible with other software be strongly considered.

4.11 Transportation

In follow up to input previously received, Pye presented Option C in regard to a tiered transportation system for the Board's consideration. He reviewed school start/end times with this option, as well as pros and cons. Pye remarked that Option C would be similar to Option A in terms of what it would do for transportation. He stated that the administration continued to struggle with a later start time at the high school level and the overall impact of that on the District's students. He did not feel the sleep studies and student testimonials were being dismissed, but felt that in looking at the big picture there were concerns about the overall impact on students, extracurricular activities, and the overall program with such a change. Pye noted that Option C would not fully address the Board's concern regarding length of the instructional day for ESL and special education students. He remarked that some buses might need to be specifically designated to address that concern. A concern was indicated in regard to the sleep studies and the administration's lack of response to it in all of the current options. It was suggested that there be a response/option in relation to the sleep studies and secondary students.

4.12 Food Service

Altenburg provided the Board with historical data on food service revenue vs. expenditures. He reported that revenues are up 4.6 percent and expenditures are down 2.3 percent. Given the increase in student enrollment, he felt that was rather remarkable. With this information, Chapman indicated the administration would probably not be in a position to propose an increase in student lunch prices for the next school year. In regard to the elementary breakfast program, it was suggested that consideration be given to expanding the program to the middle school level.

4.13 Other Items

None.

5.0 Announcements

Announcements made at the meeting:

- Whittington commented that the Unit 5 Citizens Advisory Council meeting would be held tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m. at Pepper Ridge Elementary School.
- Ellsworth announced that the Mackinaw Valley Special Education Council meeting would take place tomorrow at 11:30 a.m. in El Paso.
- Briggs asked whether the District was being prorated on categoricals and by what amount as it impacts revenue. Altenburg said he would research the question and provide a response.

6.0 Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:45 p.m.

Richard B. Percy, Board of Education President
Community Unit School District No. 5
McLean and Woodford Counties, Illinois

ATTEST:

Martin L. O'Connor, Board of Education Secretary

Approved: _____

(Date)