

SHELDON SCHOOL DISTRICT
School Board Meeting
Tuesday, September 14, 2010 5:30pm
Sheldon School Library

The Sheldon Board of School Directors met at the Sheldon School Library on Tuesday, September 14, 2010 at 5:30pm. Present at the meeting were Board members Celeste Kane-Stebbins, Paula Howrigan, and Jacob Bourdeau. Also present at the meeting were Principal Lenny Rosenberg, Superintendent Jack McCarthy, Business Manager Becky Hart, and VT Representative candidate Marianna Gamache.

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Celeste Kane-Stebbins at 5:37pm

Meeting Minutes:

Some typographical errors were noted. On a motion made by Paula Howrigan, and seconded by Jacob Bourdeau, the minutes of the meeting held on August 10, 2010 were approved as amended. Motion passed 3-0.

Correspondence:

A letter from a staff member regarding her intended movement on salary scale was received. Letters received from parents regarding bus transportation will be discussed later in Executive Session.

Old Business:

Telephone upgrade – the Board questioned whether a contract had been signed for the school phone lines. The school had terminated its contract with Verizon recently to contract with Fairpoint at a lower rate of cost.

Business Manager's Report:

Financial Report – After brief discussion regarding the financial report for period ending August 31, 2010, the Board accepted the report on a motion made by Paula Howrigan, and seconded by Jacob Bourdeau. Motion passed 3-0. Projected carryover at this time reflected at just under \$25,000.

Principal's Report:

The opening of the new school year went very well. Mr. Rosenberg reported that the students settled in to the 6/7/8 model without issue. Step-Up Day last spring and the Welcome Back barbeque provided opportunities to prepare students. Only minor adjustments to lunch schedule resulted from this change.

Mr. Rosenberg presented a request from the preschool classroom to purchase a dishwasher. As a licensed childcare, the classroom is required to wash and sanitize dishes in dishwasher. The request included funding and installing the dishwasher in the music room next to sink. At the board's request, Mr. Rosenberg with research whether the cafeteria dishwasher can be used, rather than purchasing a separate unit. Additionally, the cost of utilizing biodegradable paper products will be researched for comparison to cost of purchasing the dishwasher.

Mr. Rosenberg provided an update on the Exordium site-based outdoor learning program in the school's nature center. Kurt Valenta has requested that teachers take part in the lessons with

their students in the garden center and forest, noting that it is legally required to have teachers stay with their classes when involved in Kurt's lessons. The Board took a short recess to walk down to the Nature Center. An inventory of items stored in the Nature Center was provided for Board review. This will be brought back to next meeting to determine what to do with any items not being used.

The school's older boiler has been replaced and tested and is functioning appropriately. Some work had to be done on the second boiler to make it fully compatible with the new boiler.

The entire school is participating in a new Mid-Morning snack program with funding support from new Fruit and Vegetable Grant. Snacks of fresh fruit and vegetables are prepared by school staff and distributed to all classrooms. Nineteen thousand dollars (\$19,000) has been awarded for this year to provide equipment and healthy snacks, and the school can also apply for 2nd year funding as well.

Eleven (11) staff members have signed up to take the school CPR class. The class will be held in the school library on September 15th from 3:30 to 7pm. There is a \$100 fee for this class.

Grades 6-8 field trip has been scheduled to go raspberry picking at the Lakeside Berry Farm in Alburg. The Farm to School Grant paid for transportation to and from Alburgh and the Fresh Fruit and Veggie Program purchased the berries as part of the program to illustrate the origins and uses of fruit. Additional fruit will be frozen for pies for future events.

Mr. Rosenberg reminded the Board that the school's Open House is scheduled for Thursday, September 16th. The spaghetti dinner is being sponsored and provided by the Sheldon Cares program. Classroom visits will be from 6:30pm to 7:30pm.

Parent Conference schedule has been extended to 6pm on November 29th and to 6:30pm on December 1st in order to make opportunities to meet with teachers more available to working parents.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. McCarthy reported that school districts are being asked to cut approximately 2% from their "local education spending". Local education spending is the net of the school's approved budgetary expenditures minus all revenues other than property taxes and education fund payments. A letter from the VT School Boards Association (VSBA) encourages school boards to include community and staff in these discussions.

Dr. McCarthy reviewed the recent Superintendents Association meeting which he attended on September 2nd. Three major issues were discussed – the state's adoption of National Common Core Curriculum; the concept of merging districts/supervisory unions; and the 2% target for reducing local education spending.

The Education Commissioner and Chair of the State Board of Education recently signed an agreement to move to using National Common Core standards. This curriculum change came without notice and without any input from school administrators in the field. NECAP tests will not be used after this year. The move to the new curriculum will need to be done with no state funding to train teachers to deliver the new framework. Funding will have to be provided locally.

According to recent state law, supervisory unions are required to discuss the concept of a merger. A meeting of all board members has been scheduled for October 19th from 6-9pm – the location of the meeting to be determined. Winton Goodrich from VSBA will be in attendance to facilitate board discussion. The topic of spending targets will also be discussed so that boards can review how individual districts plan to meet their target.

It is not known at this time what the ramifications may be if a district is unable to meet their targeted reduction. Concerns have been expressed over the formula employed to calculate the targets. Formula did not take into consideration whether schools were low spending districts over past 3-4 years and schools did not get any credit for their continued low rank in spending. Cuts will not be just paper and pencils, but will require looking at personnel and programs.

One of the school boards' main responsibilities is to develop a budget and it is the right of the towns' voters to approve or disapprove that budget proposal. The legislature is essentially circumventing the Vermont model by mandating the 2% cut. Much effort and expense have gone into creating programs in FNW schools to improve student performance which will now be in jeopardy to budget cuts.

The attendees at the Superintendents' conference were also advised not to count on the \$19million in federal education dollars to help with 2012 budget as the current administration wants to use funds to help offset the funding shortage in the teacher retirement system. Funds were originally provided to help defer staff cuts.

A draft of the negotiations evaluation form was distributed for review and feedback on the negotiations process. Council members are asked to provide feedback at their earliest convenience so that comments can help direct the next negotiations session. Discussion of future negotiations will take place in Executive Session.

Copies of the policies of Section E were distributed for review. On a motion made by Paula Howrigan, and seconded by Jacob Bourdeau, the Board designated the following policies as reviewed on this date: E1 – Fiscal Management Philosophy; E2 – Budgeting; E3 - Financial Accountability; E4 - Financial Reports and Statements; E5 - Risk Management; E6 - Property Disposal; E7 - Fixed Assets; E8 - Federal Child Nutrition Act Wellness policy; and E9 - Tobacco Prohibition. Motion passed 3-0.

Next Meeting Dates:

The next scheduled school board will be October 12, 2010 at 5:30pm. The FNWSU Board will be meeting October 6th in Swanton at 7:00pm. A Long-Term Planning meeting was scheduled for November 10th at 5:30pm.

Executive Session:

The board discussed personnel, legal issues, student issues and a bus request. The Board entered Executive Session at 7:15pm on a motion made by Jacob Bourdeau, and seconded by Paula Howrigan. The board exited executive session at 8:17pm.

Paula Howrigan made a motion to approve the bus requests. Celeste Kane-Stebbins seconded the motion.

The Board reviewed and signed orders.

Jacob Bourdeau moved to adjourn; Paula Howrigan seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 8:23pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jacob Bourdeau, Board Clerk