

BOARD NOTES
November 24, 2008

The regular meeting of the School Board was held on Monday, November 24, 2008 with Rich Shail, Al Williamson, LuAnn Schwingendorf, Bernie Baltes and Shelly Goethals present. Dr. Bender was also present.

WORKSESSION - 5:30 p.m.

Keith Dennis escorted the board on a tour of the high school highlighting the renovations that occurred during the past several months at New Prairie High School and New Prairie High School East.

REGULAR MEETING - 6:30 p.m.

Rich Shail reviewed guidelines for speaking on agenda items.

The board adopted the agenda as presented.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRESENTATION

- The board recognized the accomplishments of Kyle Smiley who placed 12th in the state Cross Country finals. The board also complimented Coach Thom Smith.
- The board recognized the New Prairie High School Spell Bowl for taking First Place in Division 2 state competition. The following 13-team members were recognized along with Coach Jim Groendyke: Chelsea Arthur, Mark Cichos, Briana Dais, Jill Fischer, Elizabeth Forsythe, Anna Hutcheson, Kourtney Keck, Black Lawson, Aimee Lowe, Zachery Myers, Ethan Seale, Cristopher Shumate and Jennifer Wilhelm.
- Dr. Bender introduced Senator Jim Arnold and State Representative Tom Dermody who discussed their current viewpoints on the upcoming General Assembly in January.

Tom Dermody indicated that since the recent election, the discussions have focused on the budget. He said this is going to be a budget session. Because of the economic condition, it will be a difficult situation. He is a minority in the House and Senator Arnold is a minority in the Senate. He

indicated that Indiana is doing better than most states. Indiana has a \$2 billion surplus. Tom Dermody said we will see a state revenue update and assume there will be reductions. The state is providing money in sales tax, which will play out in funding. Tom and Senator Arnold are fighting for K-12 funding. New Prairie is ninth from the bottom in funding. He will try to bring equalization to that funding. He has been hearing about flat lining, which will mean a reduction in funding.

Senator Arnold said it is a pleasure to serve this district. He said money will be tight. He has been trying to get money for the law enforcement academy renovation and was asked where the money would come from.

Senator Arnold and Rep. Dermody communicate daily. When you look at the agenda, everyone is talking about education. They feel property tax will still be addressed. Government reorganization will be a big item.

Rep. Dermody said K-12 is essential. He talked about the allotment that New Prairie received versus the Gary Schools. They (Gary schools) carry a lot of weight down state. They are pouring a lot of money into the schools and not getting anything in return from the money. Schools that show an incentive should get rewarded. They want to know our concerns. Tom said if you invite them and they can be here, they will come. He wants to do what is best for our district.

Dr. Bender said he and Tom met on Thursday at the area Study Council meeting. Senator Arnold had to be in Indianapolis. Every one of the superintendents is ready to testify on behalf of education. We need to lobby more. We will be part of an organized group to come to Indianapolis. Anything we can do to testify, we will.

Dr. Bender told them that when they go into session, they need to look at what is happening in the global perspective. We are losing many jobs here. People are not going to the same jobs. They are moving into a new era. We need to look at that and gear ourselves with what the future is going to be.

Dr. Bender said he would also like them to look at sustainable change. Whether it is tax bills, etc., he wants them to think down the road with whatever they do, make it sustainable.

Dr. Bender also asked how the surplus will fit in. What about the rainy day fund? Rep. Dermody said we will get some economic outlooks - where we are financially, see what we are dealing with. It is very difficult to see how

much we can spend. He said the DLGF made a statement that there is not enough money for schools. Tom said that is not true. Where do we use the additional dollars? There is a lot of focus on work development. Students are competing with students globally now. Also, the budget is an opportunity to do things differently. There will be limited dollars.

Bernie said he has been involved in politics for many years. He wants to thank Tom and Jim for their relationship with all the people here. They are involved anytime they are asked.

Bernie said as far as the cooperation between industry and education - we are producing a product for industry. Education cannot do that unless they cooperate with what industry really needs. How can we bring those two entities together? Industry wants to reach out to education and we have been slow to accept that.

Bernie said as far as the money situation - you have to learn to survive on what you have. We are not looking for more money, but don't put so much unfunded mandates on us. That is what hurts us. It costs money, but where is it going to come from.

Tom said he is concerned because Gary is getting \$8,800 per student and LaPorte County schools are getting \$5,400. If they are not seeing improvements but we are, why are we not getting more money? Equalization has to come more. We have to continue to fight for it.

Senator Arnold said any time legislation is proposed to the state, before it is drawn up, they do a fiscal impact of the state indicating how much it will cost. Who is going to raise that money for that bill?

Tom said sometimes business takes the approach that education does not know what is happening. How do you teach parenting? We need to improve on this.

Dr. Bender shared information on consolidation. He said LaPorte is a poster child of what could happen. Tom said the idea is getting more dollars into the classroom and make schools and trustees more efficient. Some feel they are talking about closing schools, but it is administration they are looking at. If you have an administrative team for 300 students while another school has 6,000 students - does it make sense for efficiency? He has also heard that there is too much paperwork for teachers and administrators. They need to be able to focus on education and not on paperwork. Dr. Bender said we would then be allowed to be more of what we are hired to do and be leaders and not managers.

Dr. Bender said there are also issues with Title I and the supplant issues. There is a school dealing with that now. It needs to be looked at. Because of terminology, it will affect many students.

Rep. Dermody said on the property tax bill issue, he sent at least six e-mails about the plan asking people what their thoughts were. Senator Arnold and he did not hear one word from the county council and then received complaints afterward. Make sure if you see one of our bills, we want to hear from you before we vote on the bill.

Dr. Bender said we are coming off of a budget that has never been certified because of no AV in LaPorte County. That worries me because we could suffer ramifications from this. This is not just at New Prairie. What if we run short down the road? We have no control. What will happen once this is certified and it should come up short? Senator Arnold said he has no answer for us. We have no insight into this. This situation is having everyone pulling their hair out. Tom said he knows we are directly affected. We have an assessor not doing their job. You are having to borrow money because they are not doing their job. The assessor can be removed and if we cannot get it right, we need to look at it.

Bernie said he is frustrated when they say there is a surplus. They shifted the school funding out and required us to put it into a different fund. We have shifted close to \$2 million out of the General Fund into the CPF which will show a surplus in the state, but you are not telling them it is on the backs of the local tax people.

Bernie asked if you could present a bill that would prevent what happened to Shelly Goethals during this election and the cross filing in counties. Someone was responsible for screwing up. Rather than having to file with the county with the greatest AV, it should be the county you reside in. You have to file in your home county to be certified. Tom and Jim said it is a mandate that does not make any common sense. We can present this, but when you file for a bill, there is no guarantee a bill will be heard. Dr. Bender said when you have representations from cross counties, there is a level of responsibilities at the county level to do the right thing. If they don't, no one accepts responsibilities. That is what bothers me.

Rep. Dermody said they encourage the board to come to Indianapolis. Let us show you around at the state house.

Dr. Bender said on behalf of the board, they wanted to thank them for coming. You have proven yourself to be accessible to us and listen to what is in the best interest to us.

CONSENT AGENDA

The board approved the Consent Agenda as follows:

- Minutes - October 27, 2008
- Financial Reports
- Claims
- Payroll
- Personnel Report as follows:

CERTIFIED

- Leaves/Resignations
 1. Jackie Hunsberger - Leave of Absence - January 8, 2009 - January 23, 2009
- Employment
 1. George Arndt - Temporary Spanish Teacher - NPHS - November 10, 2008 to February 2, 2009

NON-CERTIFIED

- Employment
 1. Tim West - Technology Assistant - New Prairie Middle School - Effective immediately
 2. Tina Wolfram - Technology Assistant - Prairie View Elementary School - Effective immediately
 3. Ron Tepper - Technology Assistant - New Prairie High School - Effective immediately
- Employment - Extra-Curricular
 1. Kristen Freitag - Assistant Girls Basketball - NPHS
 2. John Arndt - Second 6th Grade Boys Basketball - Middle School
 3. Doug Matthys - JV Girls Basketball - NPHS
 4. Joel Hostetler - Head Girls Tennis
 5. Teresa Hostetler - Assistant Girls Tennis

REPORTS

- Superintendent's Report
 - Reviewed letter from Denny Costerison regarding the general assembly.
 - Received thank you letter from Dr. Suellen Reed for her visit. She enjoyed the fact that board members attended. She said that rarely happens.
 - Dr. Bender said we need to have the board look at the attendance policy. In the guidelines, it talks about vacations. It was meant to encourage family time. At this time, we had 67 days missed at Prairie View; 19 students missing 76 days at the middle school because of vacations. Dr. Bender has contacted the ISBA for clarification. He feels we need to look at the policy. He does not feel that is where we want to go with the policy. He feels it is excessive. It is hurting us on attendance and that deals with AYP.
 - Dr. Bender updated the board on the School Messenger system. We found a few bugs. It worked very well. We will divide it out by individual building, athletic events, etc. It will be a good communication tool. It took 45 minutes to place 2,712 calls - of which 1,095 were answered. It took out 1,007 duplicate numbers. There were 425 calls answered by machine, 132 no-answers and 43 disconnects. We had a meeting this morning with the secretaries. Information will be going home with students. We need to have parents communicate correct phone numbers to the offices. In case of an emergency, we can get information out quickly to parents.
 - The board received a draft of the first newsletter. Dr. Bender would like to try and get two publications out a semester. The high school department has put this together. Al asked if this goes into New Carlisle. He would also suggest placing issues at the local post offices, libraries, etc.
 - Cash Flow - Dr. Bender advised that we should receive an advance for \$2.9 million by Wednesday. The Bond Bank will want their money. We anticipated levies not paid at \$8 million. We have paid \$80,000 in interest for loans from the bond bank because of the property tax issue. LaPorte is doing everything they can to help us get operating monies. There is over \$1 billion that will have been borrowed by school corporations alone throughout the state. Somewhere along the line, this will have to be paid back.

ACTION ITEMS

- The board approved the fixed rate for fuel for 2009 with Co-Alliance at the rate of \$2.76 per gallon. Lloyd said with the fuel fluctuation, we decided to see if we could get a fixed rate for the year. He feels fuel will climb again by April. Last year we paid an average of \$3.25 per gallon. Dr. Bender said New Prairie is one of the few school corporations in the state that operates their transportation fund in the black. We have a superior management arrangement going on in our transportation department.
- The board granted permission for the treasurer to transfer from major accounts with the General Fund.
- The board approved the list of vendors for the 403(b) account. Keith Dennis indicated that no one that was currently with us was excluded unless the companies excluded themselves. Dr. Bender indicated that this has been discussed with the union and there have been no issues.
- The board approved the suggested revisions to the classified and transportation personnel handbooks as presented. Dr. Bender indicated that there have been a few issues that were raised that needed clarification.
- The board approved the Indiana Bond Bank resolution in the event we need to borrow because of not receiving monies from LaPorte and St. Joe. Everything would be in line in that case. Keith and Sharon are watching this on a daily basis.
- The board approved the 2009-2010 calendar as presented. Dr. Bender indicated there were no changes made from the calendar presented at the last meeting. The calendar has been presented to the Meet & Discuss. They had a few suggestions, but they liked the snow days added which was arranged because of graduation. The dates work with the testing dates in the spring. He knows staff would like a multi-year calendar, but with the economic climate, we do not know what will happen in the future. We must be able to go with the flow of the economic situation.

BOARD COMMENTS

- Al Williamson asked about the status of the delinquent textbook letters. Dr. Bender said we want to be politically correct. We are looking over the contract language. We want to send the letters out the first of January with a 90-day grace period.

We have not received the credit card machines at this time. We are reviewing our current status with the banks. Because of the economic down time, interest is down on the Sweep account and we are now paying fees. We may change banks if we cannot get some things changed. We are with Wells Fargo currently. They want to send us a proposal. We have asked for one from LaPorte Savings and 1st Source. Keith said the Sweep account was masking the fees we were paying. We were paying about \$750 a month in fees.

- LuAnn asked if parents received any notices of delinquent textbook fees beyond the current year. Dr. Bender said nothing is sent after the current year is not paid. Once this process is in place, they will receive notices after the current year. We will also be looking at how the fee structure is set up for textbook collection. We need to segregate the classroom fees from the textbook fees. Shelly wondered if schools should put something in their newsletters that the notices will be sent.
- Shelly asked if the bus radio system was ever installed. Lloyd said because of Indiana State law regarding the suppression switch, it kills everything when you stop. With the bus radio system, it will only kill the switch for 10 seconds. Indiana law will not allow that to happen.
- Bernie indicated that he has always been a strong supporter of athletics. But New Prairie has never had an athletic team win a state title, but we have had academic teams win a state title. He feels this is something that should be highlighted. Rich said this is the topic of conversation and the devotion to athletics. What do you think you need to do for the community to get involved in our academic competition? How do you support that? Dr. Bender said the successful ingredients are involved parents, involved community. That is the key to success with some competitions. Rich said we have a lot of people willing to help, but you have to go out and ask them. That is what we need to focus on.
- Bernie said Ryan Toth, a former New Prairie graduate attending Grand Valley College placed third in the regional in cross country competition and finished fifth in the nation.
- Bernie said he gets frustrated that the associations are working so hard on vouchers. He feels if you do your job, you won't have to worry about vouchers. He feels they worry too much about it. But, if they are going to have vouchers, make them all play by the same rules.

- LuAnn felt the 100 people for 100 minutes symposium was great. She feels they could spend more time on comments. She wonders if we should have it more frequently. Rich said he was impressed with the students. They are in tune to what they need. He feels the students are not being heard because it is the same thing that they discussed before. Rich would like more student involvement at our level. He feels these students' priorities are different than our administrators. Where do we draw the line? Dr. Bender said he will be looking at a retreat and inviting Dick Cochran to discuss these types of issues.
- Rich appreciates the work that has been done by Lloyd Wood, Bill Kaminski and Keith Dennis.