

**Eau Claire School Board Minutes**  
**Monday, December 17, 2018**

*Generated by Patti Iverson*

**Members present**

Lori Bica, Chris Hambuch-Boyle, Aaron Harder, Laurie Klinkhammer, Joe Luginbill, Eric D Torres, Charles Vue

**1. REGULAR MEETING - CALL TO ORDER**

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, President Luginbill called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. Board Secretary Patti Iverson confirmed that the meeting had been properly noticed and was in compliance with the Open Meeting Law.

**2. PUBLIC FORUM**

Teacher Brian Wiltgen said he has seen a lot of changes in the 20 years that he has taught for the District. He added that he has seen what has happened to a once-proud destination district because of salaries being frozen seven times. He said he made a promise to give the best he could to the District and in return, he was promised to have Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) to rely on in retirement. He said that cuts to OPEB would affect over 600 staff and would impact who the District can recruit and retain.

Teacher Ruth Bowe has worked at South for her entire 20-year career. She said she is an asset to the District and has grown to be a leader in her building. She is part of PBIS, BIC, PLC, curriculum writing, grant writing, mentoring new staff, mentoring UWEC students, co-planning field trips, Code Blue Team, Compensation Committee, Student Council advisor and sports coach. She volunteered her time for most of those activities. She acknowledged that the current budget is challenging, but she said that it is necessary to have courageous conversations about OPEB. She felt that the listening sessions did not include the official numbers, and that she could lose a lot with the OPEB proposals that have been discussed. She felt that stripping any employees of benefits was disrespectful, adding that she was loyal to the District through the pay freezes. She told the Board if it wants to hire and retain highly qualified staff, they should not eliminate the retirement benefits. She asked that the Board gather accurate information, brainstorm ways to generate revenue, and ask for input. She said staff are the District's greatest assets.

Dan Wilson has been a teacher in the District since 1989. He said that through it all the staff members have been instrumental in passing referendums, taking pay freezes, and advocating with students and families in Eau Claire. There are 665 employees who are being asked to give up retirement benefits. He said that OPEB Option B1 not only alters the promises made to staff but targets 308 people by significantly altering their benefits. This option would cap health insurance at the 2018-19 rates. Mr. Wilson felt that none of the listening sessions included details on Option B1 or mentioned the insurance cap. He said the Board should not vote on the options until the actual numbers can be viewed. He knows this Board values and appreciates the staff and that no one can do it alone. He said if reasonable changes need to be made, the Board should take the time to be informed as much as possible with the most accurate information available.

Jane Adler Corning has worked for the District for 24 years. She said staff did not create the budget problems, but they are now being asked to fix them. This has brought memories of Act 10 for the District's most loyal and dedicated employees. She said she feels resentment that staff have been told that if the Board doesn't make changes to OPEB, there

will be salary freezes, larger class sizes, etc. She said as a counselor, she is doing much more now than when she began including giving almost 1,000 AP exams, providing mental health services, giving ACT exams for all juniors, etc. She said she does not like the fear tactics that have been used noting there are a lot of people who are afraid of speaking out with their concerns. She said staff are fearful as they have planned on these benefits for many years. She said the Board has a moral and ethical obligation to fulfill the promise the District made to staff years ago.

Nick Nowak said he taught in the District from 2004-10 and again in 2015. He felt that people with no experience in the classrooms have been making the decisions. He said that staff must jump through hoops to meet professional requirements. The District protects what it has because it can't imagine it any other way. He said that people are afraid of speaking out and morale is as low as he has seen. He asked the Board and Superintendent to listen to staff and to visit with them on and off school grounds, to participate with students on their terms, and to think outside the box. He felt that good ideas seldom trickle down, they trickle up. He asked the Board to be bold, do the unconventional thing, and ask what is best.

Kelly Moran is in her 6<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. She said she gets to work with incredibly talented students who are excited about learning and with inspiring colleagues who challenge students. She felt staff should be able to use their own professional judgement on how they spend their professional development time and that it should happen during the work day. She said that when staff can collaborate, students and teachers grow. She felt that staff should be allowed to do what they have been trained to do.

Mark Goings spoke as the president of the Eau Claire Association of Educators. He said there are many difficult decisions to make as everyone wants quality education. He felt that decisions made in isolation are rarely the right ones. He said that schools in the state are asked to balance their budgets in a system rigged for public education. The District has a deficit and a fund balance that keeps decreasing. He said that staff costs are growing but making cuts to staff is not how the District can grow. Mr. Goings said the District doesn't have a spending problem, it has a revenue problem. Students are already being affected by the cuts that have been made in the past and noted that all of the 'extras' were removed from the budget long ago. He said the greatest good will not come from cutting OPEB, salaries, programs, increasing class sizes, etc. He asked the Board to be bold and to inspire the minds of future generations. He said if that means going into the fund balance or going back to referendum, the District should get started. He asked Board members to think about what sort of future a child in Eau Claire deserves.

### **3 BOARD/ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

#### **3.1 Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Hardebeck shared the Board's calendar of upcoming events.

A report from the Wisconsin Public Education Network was shared with the Board. Dr. Hardebeck said that Joe Luginbill and Chris Hambuch-Boyle have been very active in WPEN, which has done much within the state to draw attention to the funding formula and to advocate for funding for public schools.

Dr. Hardebeck gave special recognition to McKinley student, Keon Ferguson. Keon found a three-year-old wandering outside on a cold December morning. He went to school to get a staff member and knocked on the door where the child was found. No one answered so he

carried the child to McKinley. The child was returned safely to her parents. Keon received a certificate from President Luginbill and was recognized for his outstanding citizenship. Dr. Hardebeck said that Keon very possibly saved the little girl's life. Keon received a standing ovation for responding bravely.

### **3.2 Board President's Report**

Mr. Luginbill said a survey is being launched through Child Care Partnership to learn more about child care needs in Eau Claire County. He said they would like parents and caregivers to take the 5-minute survey found at [www.childcarepartnership.org](http://www.childcarepartnership.org).

President Luginbill thanked DeLong Middle School for partnering with the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and Central Office staff to provide gifts to deserving families. He said it is the time of the year when he is thankful for the wonderful staff and students, colleagues on the School Board, the many people who have played a role in his life, and to the community. He wished everyone happy holidays and best wishes for the new year.

## **4. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

Abby Green said that the students want Board members to know that teachers spend time with kids, and they feel that cutting from children, families, and communities is taking away the livelihood of everything that student's value. She said that teachers show students what that means and shape where they are going. Students also acknowledge the complex and difficult budget decisions. She encouraged the Board to look at the effects on everybody and the impact on the years ahead.

## **5. OTHER REPORTS**

### **5.1 School Board Committee Reports**

The Policy & Governance Committee met and will be bringing a new policy to the Board on concussion and head injury management. They have also received a recommendation from the Equity Committee on its review of Policy 830 - Use of School Facilities. Committee members would like to provide the Board with information to discuss how the policy should be interpreted.

The LEAP Committee received feedback from the Policy & Governance Committee on Policy 332 and continues to work on getting a process in place for the Board's review.

The Demographic Trends & Facility Planning Committee requested that President Luginbill attend their next meeting. He will represent the Board and provide the group with the information they want and gather feedback.

The Revenue Committee will discuss the fee schedule, a potential vendor credit card, and other revenue ideas.

### **5.2 Legislative Update**

Mr. Torres said there were no legislative matters to report.

## **6. WORK SESSION**

## **6.1 Strategic Plan Priorities and Alignment to New and Ongoing Initiatives/Budgetary Decisions**

Mr. Jim Schmitt, Executive Director of Teaching & Learning, shared an overview of some of the high-level strategies being used by the District and programs to support those strategies. He shared a model that the National Superintendent's Association uses to gather information on how school districts are closing achievement gaps. The District has many things in place to support all students. He said that staff have done the heavy lifting to close gaps. He shared a sampling of strategies that are used and aligned them to the Board's Strategic Plan. He went on to share the progress that was made by one graduating class through their educational career in the area of math. They can look at risk ratios for students of color, those not meeting the benchmarks, those who were economically disadvantaged, and by gender.

The Board went on to discuss the big picture of aligning new and ongoing initiatives and budgetary decisions to its Strategic Plan. Some felt the Board has been making decisions about the budget in isolation and thought that looking at areas more deeply would be helpful. The Board could look at pieces aligned to the Strategic Plan and have discussions about primary priorities. It was suggested that a status update on the Strategic Plan itself would be helpful so that decisions can be made with an awareness of where the District is at in different areas. Especially because most of the current Board was not involved in developing the Strategic Plan.

Some Board members requested longitudinal data for students to make sure the District is seeing gains. And in addition to following students longitudinally, some felt it would be helpful for the Board to have the opportunity to know what mechanisms are in place to understand what specific plans within each building are used to help students. And along with that would be getting input from teachers and having principals coordinate with each other to target common areas of need. The efforts being used to help students who are not being successful should be tied to priorities of where the Board is putting the money.

It was stated that during the OPEB discussions, staff members were given opportunities to be engaged, but there is more to be done to get Board members connected to staff and to collaborate to problem solve about OPEB. Staff morale and the budget are linked, and the way to move forward is together.

Another Board member wanted to see the kind of detail provided on closing the achievement gap for all priority areas. This would also include proposals that have come before the Board to lead the District. If the Board continues to make decisions in isolation without looking at the whole plan, it will run out of money. A future Work Session could provide more examples of what long-range planning could include and the Board could pick one to three items out of each priority area to discuss.

President Luginbill summarized areas he heard Board members say they wanted more information on: long-range planning, assessment of Strategic Plan, collaborating with and engaging staff, following students longitudinally, looking at plans in place for students who are disproportionately impacted, and looking at input that educators are providing to gain an understanding of issues. It was stated that the Board should contextualize budget decisions it makes, collaboratively and holistically. This could include discussions about the fund balance. There may also be alternative ways of thinking about revenue rather than focusing on making cuts.

It was thought it could be helpful to have a long-range educational plan similar to the District's five-year capital maintenance plan.

## **7. CONSENT RESOLUTION AGENDA**

Motion by Chris Hambuch-Boyle, second by Aaron Harder, to approve the following consent resolutions:

- Minutes of December 3, 2018
- Financial Report - November 2018
- Gifts in the amount of \$26,546.82 for the period of November 1, 2018 through November 30, 2018
- Payment of all bills in the amount of \$6,109,859.63 and net payroll in the amount of \$3,543,532.69 for the period of November 1, 2018 through November 30, 2018.
- Human Resources - Employment Report
- New Appointments/Reappointments of Representatives to Learning Environments and Partnerships (LEAP) Committee and Demographic Trends and Facility Planning Committee

Motion carried

Yes: Lori Bica, Chris Hambuch-Boyle, Aaron Harder, Laurie Klinkhammer, Joe Luginbill, Eric D Torres, Charles Vue

## **8. INDIVIDUALLY CONSIDERED RESOLUTION(S)**

### **8.1 Schedule 2019 Summer/Fall Meetings**

A proposed schedule for Board Meetings in the summer and fall of 2019 was shared.

Motion by Laurie Klinkhammer, second by Eric D Torres, to adopt the schedule for 2019 summer/fall School Board meetings as presented.

Motion carried

Yes: Lori Bica, Chris Hambuch-Boyle, Aaron Harder, Laurie Klinkhammer, Joe Luginbill, Eric D Torres, Charles Vue

### **8.2 Dual Immersion Preliminary Site Approval and Dual Immersion Application Process Approval**

Dave Oldenberg, Director of Academic Services, asked that Board to give approval to the preliminary site for the Dual Immersion School and the application process. Brianna Smit, English Learner Coordinator, said that in accordance with the timeline first presented, if the proposed program is implemented in the fall with kindergarten, the Board must vote on these parts of the process, so they can have staff ready by 2019.

Mr. Oldenberg asked the Board to move forward with determining the preliminary location and approve the application process. If approved, the committee would narrow down the transportation costs and meet with interested families in January to gauge whether they would enroll in the program. The approval of the lottery process and budget was moved to February rather than March so that everything could be in place if implemented in the fall.

Board members expressed support of selecting Longfellow Elementary as the preliminary location for the program. Both principals are part of the committee and said if the Board

approves the location, they would like administration to speak to their staff about the proposal. Dr. Hardebeck said that she talked to Longfellow staff and there was a lot of interest. They had some questions about the application process and were told that once the Board made decisions on the proposal, these questions could be clarified with Longfellow staff.

It was noted that even if the Board approves the preliminary site and application process, it is a non-binding vote for moving forward with the program.

Lori Bica expressed concerns about barriers that could exist for families. She wanted the application process to be nimble and far less complicated. She felt that students moving into the District after kindergarten would be denied enrollment, and that some existing families might not participate because of the process.

Motion by Eric D Torres, second by Charles Vue, to select Longfellow Elementary as the preliminary location for the Spanish Dual Immersion Program.

Motion carried

Yes: Lori Bica, Chris Hambuch-Boyle, Aaron Harder, Laurie Klinkhammer, Joe Luginbill, Eric D Torres, Charles Vue

Motion by Laurie Klinkhammer, second by Eric D Torres, to approve the preliminary application process for the proposed Spanish Dual Immersion program.

Motion carried

Yes: Chris Hambuch-Boyle, Aaron Harder, Laurie Klinkhammer, Joe Luginbill, Eric D Torres, Charles Vue. No: Lori Bica

### **8.3 Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Consideration of Options**

Abby Johnson, Executive Director of Business, said her report was based on recommendations from the Budget Development Committee (BDC). She said that discussions regarding OPEB have been ongoing since prior to 2011. The District's current unfunded liability is \$125 million. This liability is in addition to the contributions that the District makes to the Wisconsin Retirement System. On April 8, 2018 the first cash flow presentation on the budget showed the current unfunded liability of \$125 million. There is another \$12.5 million paid out for teacher stipends, but the BDC wanted to focus on the health and dental portion of the benefits. OPEB is in addition to contributions that the District and employees make to the WRS. Consideration of OPEB changes would impact about 650 of the District's 1,400 employees. The current average age of retirement is 57 and the benefits last until the employee reaches age 65. This equates to a benefit per person of about \$200,000. The discussions on OPEB had been put on hold since 2014 due to the compensation study, and in November 2016 the BDC made OPEB their main priority. From December 2016 until April 2018 the committee worked with actuaries to develop a plan to address this unfunded liability.

The committee set goals for its OPEB discussions: the plan should be sustainable, equitable, and value retention. On May 7, 2018 the Board received an update on OPEB. It was one of the first times Scenario B1 was discussed. This scenario was developed after the first listening session, but it was decided that it would not be shared with staff because the Board had not heard about the option yet. Ms. Johnson said that the committee talked about the recommendation for the December 17<sup>th</sup> meeting with potential implementation of July 2019. The committee talked about historical costs for OPEB and looked at comparisons

for the last two years. In 2017-18 the cost of OPEB was \$5,872,680 and in 2018-19 it is \$6,755,033, which is a difference of \$882,353. The District can't predict what costs for 2019-20 will be as other school districts have had big increases in health and dental rates. The Board had previously discussed changing the structure to Option B1, which would cap the health and dental rates at the 2018-19 rates. However, that option was removed as it didn't meet the goal for savings they had set. It was discussed again at BDC in December, and they decided it would become an option.

Aaron Harder, Chair of BDC, explained how the committee made this decision. At its meeting on December 4, 2018, Mark Goings shared public comment and talked about options that would make no changes structurally but would involve a cap on growth. Some options would save \$10 million compared to the previous expectation of \$50 million savings. It would mean less savings to the District but would be less of a burden on staff. He said he was happy to get feedback and was interested in collaborating on the problem. He wanted to discuss this with the full Board and the agenda item was added.

Chris Hambuch-Boyle who is another BDC member, apologized for the way the new option was rolled out noting that this has led to a decrease in staff morale. She said it was their intention to bring other options to the table and recognize other ways to approach the problem. She felt it was important to have deeper conversations with staff before the Board makes a decision. She said the Board has a budget problem. Because 78% of the budget is for staff compensation, the District has cut as much as possible from the 22% that is for non-compensation items. She said if the Board wants to preserve the fund balance, it must decide what level it should be preserved at. And if it must cut into the staff portion of the budget, it must decide the appropriate amount and the form in which those cuts are made that is equitable.

President Luginbill thanked everyone in attendance and said that he felt Board members wanted to have deeper conversations about OPEB, to see preliminary reports from the Revenue Committee, and to see where the state will sit with school funding with new leadership. The OPEB options presented would not anticipate savings for five to six years, and the District needs budget solutions now. He said the BDC and Ms. Johnson have done what the Board asked them to do by holding listening sessions and following up on questions. However, he noted that there have not been any listening sessions on the proposal to cap insurance and there are not concrete numbers that show anticipated savings because the District doesn't know what its health/dental insurance rates will be. He felt that energy needs to be spent to increase ways of looking at third source funding and implementing new revenue streams. He said the District should tap into the brain trust of staff and students to explore alternate ideas for revenue through the Revenue Committee. He also stressed continuing advocacy at the state level and to remain vigilant as the state budget is adopted.

Board members talked about postponing the decision and putting together ways to have deeper, holistic conversations with staff. It was suggested that this be a multi-month employee engagement study with a set timeline. It was felt that the Board should not make a decision about a topic of this magnitude with options that haven't gone to staff and without the Board having full awareness of all the options presented.

Motion by Eric D Torres, second by Chris Hambuch-Boyle, that the School Board postpone the vote on Other Post-Employment Benefit (OPEB) changes and undertake a multi-month employee engagement plan.

Motion carried

Yes: Lori Bica, Chris Hambuch-Boyle, Aaron Harder, Laurie Klinkhammer, Joe Luginbill, Eric D Torres. Abstain: Charles Vue

## **9. ADJOURN TO COMMITTEE**

## **10. COMMITTEE REPORTS/ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

### **10.1 Review Recommended 2019-20 School Year Calendar**

Kay Marks, Executive Director of Human Resources, shared the recommended 2019-20 school year calendar. Ms. Marks explained that the District has used the same calendar format for numerous years with minor modifications. Survey results from both staff and parents over the years continue to indicate positive feedback related to the calendar.

When the draft calendar was shared with the Family Advisory Council, they recommended that it be modified to move the January high school PD/IP day to May, to be consistent with breaks for the elementary and middle school students, and to also move the May PD/IP day later by one week to allow for only one modified school week in the month versus two.

Ms. Marks explained that the District continues to have the required 189 teacher contract days and a schedule that allows enough instructional minutes to cover four inclement weather days. If a fifth day is required, the April 13, 2019 PD/IP day would be used as a make-up day for all students.

The Board discussed various aspects of the calendar including winter break, Fridays off in February and April, and professional development needs.

#### Public Comment

Mark Goings said that staff can't take a personal day on May 22<sup>nd</sup> unless they receive an exemption from Human Resources because it would be a restricted day due to professional development. Ms. Marks explained that current practice has been that if a staff member has a family commitment that weekend (graduations, weddings, etc.) they can ask for a waiver. Those exceptions have been made for special events.

Dan Wilson wondered why the professional development day for secondary schools was moved so late in the year and asked if the elementary PD/IP day could be moved back to January when the secondary schools have PD/IP. Mr. Schmitt and Ms. Koller explained that feedback received from elementary and middle school staff was to have this day at the end of the year, so it can be used for School Improvement Plan wrap up and review of student achievement data. Teachers could also use that day for end of the year Education Effectiveness requirements.

The Board agreed to add the approval of the 2019-20 calendar on the consent agenda at the next meeting as drafted.

### **10.2 Planning for School Board Self-Evaluation**

President Luginbill said one of the Board's goals is to conduct a self-evaluation in January. He proposed doing this at the January 21, 2019 meeting. The areas the Board could discuss would include a follow-up on the December Work Session about Board budget priorities and ongoing initiatives and talking about the model for Board Governance. At the meeting on



the 21<sup>st</sup>, there would still be a closed session as well as the business agenda, but the rest of the meeting would be to conduct the Board's self-evaluation. This will allow the Board to look at goals, policies, and what needs to be done for the coming year to strengthen areas for change.

School Board members agreed to that schedule.

#### **11. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

A request was made for the Board to consider a secondary charter-based school and whether there should be a sub-committee formed.

#### **12. ADJOURN**

Motion by Charles Vue, second by Chris Hambuch-Boyle, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried.

Yes: Lori Bica, Chris Hambuch-Boyle, Aaron Harder, Laurie Klinkhammer, Joe Luginbill, Charles Vue, Eric D Torres.

Meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.