

West Carroll Board of Education
December 17, 2009
BOARD BRIEFS

A public hearing for Truth in Taxation of the Board of Education, West Carroll Community Unit School District No. 314 for the 2009 tax levy, was held in the WC Intermediate School Library/Media Center, 801 South Street, Thomson, Illinois. The public hearing was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President David Boyd.

Administration present: Superintendent Craig Mathers

Principals: Robert Lamb, Julie Katzenberger, Pam Delp, and Jeanette Ashby

Members present: Tim Atherton, David Boyd, John Brigham, Mike Highland, Bev Kilpatrick, Deb Klein, and Bill Sweeney

Others present: Brad Field, Michelle Konrardy, Dave Baisden, and the Media (Bill Gengenbach, Michael Miller, and Mike Nester)

Superintendent Mathers presented the 2009 Tax Levy to the Board. The levy in the amount of \$5,840,486 has been posted for 30 days. The district is using a "balloon" levy to be able to access all available funds when the district's EAV is determined. Using the estimated EAV figures from the county assessors the anticipated tax rate for the district will be \$5.53. With no public present and no additional questions from board members President Boyd announced the close of the hearing.

Motion to adjourn the 2009 Tax Levy Public Hearing at 6:34 p.m. Motion carried.

The regular meeting of the West Carroll Board of Education was held in the WC Intermediate School Library/Media Center. The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by President Boyd.

Administration present: Superintendent Craig Mathers

Principals: Robert Lamb, Julie Katzenberger, Pam Delp, and Jeanette Ashby

Members present: Tim Atherton, David Boyd, John Brigham, Mike Highland, Bev Kilpatrick, Deb Klein, and Bill Sweeney

Others present: Brad Field, Michelle Konrardy, Dave Baisden, and the Media (Bill Gengenbach, Michael Miller, and Mike Nester)

Motion to approve the items of the consent agenda as presented.

- A. November 12, 2009 Regular Meeting Minutes
- B. November 12, 2009 Regular Meeting, Closed Session Minutes
- C. Financial Reports
- D. Payment of all bills with the exception of Central States in the amount of \$43,500.

Motion carried.

Public Comment – None

Correspondence - A thank you card for a memorial for her father was received from Denise Noordhoff and family and a letter of appreciation from Tom Noordhoff for the kindness and helpfulness extended to their family during a difficult time.

Administrative Reports

Mrs. Delp, WC Intermediate principal thanked Mark Bressler and all the students for the hard work that was put into the excellent Winter Concert. The Geography Bee was held and 27 students participated. Congratulations were extended to Grace Fehlhafer – 1st, Jacob Casey – 2nd, and Mitchell Glazier – 3rd place

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winner. She thanked Lisa Wolfe for chairing the event with the assistance of Scott Schneider, Julane Bowman, and Patty Laughlin. The EXCEL Class is sponsoring a "Santa Store". The funds raised will be used for class field trips and other classroom activities. Mrs. Delp on behalf of her faculty and staff wished board members a Happy Holiday.

Mrs. Delp reported on the special education enrollment figures for the school year. Total enrollment is 266. The previous enrollment number was 315. The special education teacher aides were recategorized at the beginning of the year. This is allowing the teacher aides to help with all students within the program. It has worked very well especially with inclusion and Rtl. Special education teachers are also working with general education students who have been identified to need additional help. Bryan Kamper has been providing CPI training for staff members.

Brad Field explained that things are fairly stable within the technology department. JorjAnn Fink is taking care of EdLine problems and short line work. Currently, the district is having server difficulties. A virus problem has been detected on the Network. Brad is working with a consultant to identify the problem. Mr. Mathers informed the Board that Brad will be working to provide remote access to the HVAC company that did the life safety work this past summer. They have the capability to work on the HVAC system computers from Davenport. This will be a great help to the district in time and costs.

Mrs. Katzenberger, Middle School principal reported that the second quarter will end December 22 and report cards will be mailed on January 8. January 8 will also be the Battle of the Books competition, student recognition assembly, and VFW's Patriot's Pen Essay Awards. Many Middle School staff has or will be attending professional development workshops. Teachers come back rejuvenated with great ideas for their classrooms. Boy's basketball is coming to a close and Mrs. Katzenberger thanked Coaches Venner, Spencer, Greene, Kaczmarksi, and Mrs. Adleman (cheerleading) for the nice job working with the students. Twenty-three boys are signed up for wrestling. She thanked Mr. Titus and his music students for the wonderful Winter Concert. The WC High School Holiday Tournament is being held at the Middle School. Winter break is from December 22 (early dismissal) through January 1. The EXCEL students have made Doggy treats to sell for \$2.00 each. The funds will help with classroom activities.

WC High School students are currently taking semester tests with the end of the semester being December 22. Due to weather the Winter Concert was rescheduled to the afternoon of December 13 and the Madrigal Tea was held in the evening. The Holiday Tournament is taking place with the final games scheduled for December 19. The tournament was revamped this year. There are twelve teams and four pools. Mrs. Burkholder is supervising. Student registration for the next school year will begin in late January. Mr. Lamb extended congratulations to Colby Lemm, Emily Rogers, Becky Titus, Kris Corrigeux, Maria Heath, and Derek Sturtevant for being elected to IMEA All State Music Festival and Megan Fitzpatrick, Maria Heath, Brittany Mills, Emily Rath, Jaimie Storjohann, Becky Titus, and Beccah Yuswak for being State of Illinois Scholars.

First Grade Reading Night was November 19. Forty-seven of the 101 first grade students were represented. Holiday Concerts were December 3 and December 16. Both programs had excellent attendance. Mrs. Ashby thanked everyone for all their help with the sprinkler malfunction in the freezer at the Primary School. The entire freezer of food was lost and it created a big mess. Those thanked were the Savanna Fire Department, Steve Stiles, Bill Hilgendorf, Cindy Weems, Craig Mathers, Dawn Cole, and George Kruse. Report cards will go home with students on January 8. Rtl progress monitoring is underway at the Primary School and the resource teachers are giving regular education students additional help. Mrs. Ashby wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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Superintendent Mathers reported Coca Cola has reached a final settlement on the rebates owed. The amount is \$5,374. This money will be shared between the WC High School Activity Account and the Sports Booster Club. The contract with Coca Cola will soon be up and Mr. Mathers will bring a recommendation to the board in the future for a company contract. The District Christmas Party is December 22 and Mr. Mathers invited board members to attend. The WC High School Holiday Tournament is under way at the Middle and High School. The AVC minutes from the December meeting were in the board packet. Student attendance for November was down due to the flu. The attendance was not worse due to the nursing staff's hard work in getting the word out to parents and staff. The number of students and staff that were absent due to the flu was monitored daily. The Adolph annexation passed on a 6 – 0 vote of the Regional Office of Education, Board of Trustees. Both West Carroll and Pearl City school districts were in favor of annexation. Quality Circle meeting exit notes were included in the packet. Mr. Mathers met with State Representative Jim Sacia. He basically told the superintendents in attendance that the State of Illinois is in debt \$13,000,000 and it will only get worse. The state is behind 180 days in categorical payments. Other materials in the board packet for perusal are PA-96-0640 – Public School Calendar, Alliance Legislative Report 96-39, and HLERK – The Extra Mile. Highland Community College gave an informational presentation to the Mt. Carroll Rotary Club. Mr. Mathers shared this information with board members. Mr. Boyd commented on the Quality Circle item regarding the quality of school supplies purchased this year. The district should try not to use that vendor again if possible. Mr. Mathers stated it was just not getting the proper item number on the order and that problem will be monitored in the future.

Board Committee Reports

Exit notes from the Policy Committee meeting held on December 2, 2009 and the Transportation Committee meeting held on December 10, 2009 were presented. Updated board policies for July and September were presented for the first reading in November for December approval. The first reading for the November updates was waived so all three updates could be approved at the same time. Highland pointed out one item regarding "remote education" so all board members could review that particular update. That item created much discussion during the committee meeting. The Transportation Committee will meet again on January 5, 2010. The committee will continue to look at buying buses, leasing buses, or using a bus trust; as well as, looking at other options for the district to continue to have safe transportation for its students.

Old Business

Motion to approve the destruction of the closed session tapes of March 5, 2008, Special Meeting and March 20, 2008, Regular Meeting. Motion carried.

A Truth in Taxation hearing was completed because the 2009 tax levy request is 109% of last year's tax extension. Based on the County Assessor's estimations, the anticipated EAV increase is 3.3% over the previous year. The district is using a balloon levy to access the maximum number of tax revenue dollars needed to operate the district. The majority of district funds are set at the maximum, legal limit allowed by School Code. Exceptions to this are TORT, Social Security, and IMRF, where the district will receive all the money levied. The Bond and Interest tax rate will be set by the County Assessor based on EAV and outstanding bonds.

Motion to approve the 2009 Tax Levy for West Carroll C.U.S.D. #314 as presented. Motion carried.

PRESS recommendations for Board Policy Updates: July, 2009, Issue 67; September, 2009, Issue 68; November, 2009, Issue 69 have been reviewed for adoption. Most recommendations did not change the major portion of the policy but provided updates to the footnotes and legislative references. It was discussed

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to waive the first reading on the November set of recommended policy updates since there were very few changes.

Motion to approve the second reading of Board Policy Updates as presented. Motion carried.

The District Security Plans were tabled from November in order to align district procedures and code words to assist traveling staff. The building principals aligned the building documents into one procedural manual and aligned district responses. Each building will still have sections specific for their building; building map, contacts, and chain of command, but the remainder of the document is now aligned district-wide. Highland commented the principals did a very good job in consolidating all the information into one format. He questioned if substitutes were made aware of the safety/emergency information. The information is included in the substitute folders in each building.

Motion to approve the West Carroll District Building Security Plan for 2009-2010 as presented. Motion carried.

New Business

West Carroll is currently using the student management system from STI and it has been causing problems almost daily. Mr. Field and the administrative team have been investigating updating to a new system for over a year. The new system being investigated is Skyward. Cost of the new student management system will be approximately \$75,000. Skyward would be able to combine the advantages we currently have with four district software licenses; STI, Edline, Lunchbox, and AlertNow. Skyward is a web-based program that would allow staff to access the information anywhere they have an internet connection. Another major advantage is Skyward stores all information off-site. Back-up files are created that would be available in case of a server issue. This is a safety measure not currently available for our data. The system will also expand our capabilities on state reporting, district-level reports, and provide one data base for K-12. Boyd questioned in the event of losing information or being contaminated by an additional virus what is the district's security liability. Fields informed the board that Skyward is top in the area of information security. It may be necessary for the district to beef up its internal system. Brigham asked what the time frame would be to get a new system up and going. Field stated the counselors will be able to use the new system for registration of students for the next school year. The rest will depend on how quickly the district moves on the purchase of Skyward. Skyward would like to start conversion in late June. Highland questioned how the conversion process will go. Skyward is by far the best prepared and informative for training staff for the conversion. All secretarial staff is in favor of the conversion to Skyward. Boyd questioned how secure are the funds for the purchase of the student management system. Mathers informed the board that the costs have been written into the ARRA-IDEA grant and the grant has been approved. The general consensus of the Board is to move forward and get the process moving.

Motion to approve the purchase of the Skyward Student Management Program for district use. Motion carried.

Mrs. Ashby presented the joint in-service plan between West Carroll and Eastland for January 22, 2010. Darcie Feltmeyer and Ashby have been working to put the in-service together. Keynote speakers were arranged through Staff Development for Education and will provide instructional ideas that address teaching strategies and are research-based for student improvement. All of the funding for this professional development activity will come from the ARRA-IDEA grant. If the weather is inclement and the speakers are unavailable other activities will be in place to work with staff. Boyd commented that he hopes everything will work well.

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Lamb stated staff at the high school are trying to get more kids involved with science and create more flexibility with student scheduling. The four science instructors have been meeting monthly to discuss the science curriculum. They are considering reducing some of the current classes to semester classes and adding additional science classes. Some classes may be taught on an every other year basis depending on student interest and enrollment. Michelle Konrardy, science instructor, elaborated on these ideas, changes, and course offerings. With their discussion they realized that there was a big overlap in areas of the science curriculum. They feel the science department will not lose valuable material by reducing some of the classes to semester status. Re-arrangement of classes will help with state testing. The instructors propose to realign environment science, earth science, ecology, and add forensic science. Sweeney asked if the instructors had considered the shock factor of forensic science on high school students. Konrardy stated the class would probably be more lab analysis work. Mrs. Delp asked what the prerequisites for these classes would be. The purpose of these changes would be to grab the middle group of students to become more involved in the sciences. Physical science would most likely be the prerequisite. Highland asked are not all students required to have physical science to graduate. He also asked if earth science might not overlap with geography. It may be necessary to work out overlaps between disciplines. Boyd asked what is taught in ecology. The class consists of insect collecting, labs, dissecting, etc. Atherton and Kilpatrick asked if the science classes in the lower grades are being looked at also for curriculum content. Mr. Boyd asked Mrs. Konrardy if all of these changes and additions have gone through the curriculum committee so that all sciences are aligned kindergarten through grade 12. The basic information has not. There was much discussion regarding the alignment of curriculum K-12.

Motion to approve the first reading of the West Carroll High School science curriculum as presented. Motion carried on a 6 to 1 vote.

WC High School students will begin the registration process for next year in February. Superintendent Mathers has been working with Mr. Baisden and Mr. Lamb to have the handbook ready for Board review prior to publication. The Board of Education has as one of its most important duties the approval of the district curriculum. By initiating this process, it creates an environment of planning for curriculum review that is connected to March personnel decisions and annual budget preparation. Mr. Mathers would like to begin an annual, two month review process as the district plans each year for the future. Mr. Baisden explained the handbook as a "course guide" for students and parents. Information in the handbook is derived from instructor descriptions. It is a living document forever changing. The current handbook is a pre-draft with the first draft to be finalized over the holiday break. The handbook is re-worked every year. Part of the registration process is finding out the district's needs for the AVC. This will allow the Board to discuss the situation.

Motion to approve the first reading of the 2010-2011 West Carroll High School Registration Handbook as presented. Motion carried.

Superintendent Mathers discussed the November administrative retreat. The administrative team discussed current progress in the district, planning for the next school year, and the anticipated growth of additional students. This is the second year that an administrative retreat has been held. Mathers is sharing this information to allow the Board of Education to review administrative communications and possibly offer suggestions for future improvement. The retreats focus on improvement and growth. Boyd informed the Board to feel free to call the school, speak with the administration, and to share any ideas they may have. Highland feels the Board of Education should have a retreat. The Board needs to do a self-evaluation and it is time to do it. The Board owes it to itself. Boyd feels the Board owes the district to be able to be more productive. A board retreat will be scheduled sometime in the future. Mrs. Delp stated the retreat is a great help and it is very exciting to see the progress the district has made from the previous year.

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Due to the new Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the district must appoint FOIA officers by January 1, 2010. The new legislation shortens the response time from 7 days to 5 days. It also makes documents previously protected, items like evaluations, open for review. The Attorney General has not yet issued the new rules and regulations to assist districts in protecting individual staff members. Until that occurs, the district attorney will assist in reviewing FOIA requests to make sure we protect the privacy of our employees. Superintendent Mathers is recommending appointing positions to respond to FOIA requests rather than specific names. Mr. Mathers suggests, per attorney recommendation, two people due to the shortened response time. The FOIA officers must attend an annual training per the new legislation.

Motion to approve the appointment of the Superintendent and the Superintendent's designee as Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) response officers. Motion carried.

Mr. Lamb reported on the Education Foundation Board grant requests. The requests from the teaching staff were at an all-time high of \$56,000 and the Foundation very generously granted additional funds for technology all totaling \$66,603. Typically, the Foundation grants requests in the amount of \$16,000 - \$18,000. The focus of the Foundation is to provide the district with what it can not afford. The action the Foundation has taken to award the grants requires taking money from the savings accrued. Generally, the grant requests are funded with interest earned and donations from the Radio-Thon. The Radio-Thon is scheduled for April 23, 2010. Board members feel the public needs to be aware of what their donations go toward. Boyd stated we need to thank the public for their continued support. Because of the times and economy the Foundation and district need to make the best use of the donations for the sake of the students.

The district's insurance company totaled the school bus involved in an accident on November 19, 2009. The district will receive a check for \$20,700 for the totaled bus. Central State Busing has agreed to let the district buy a replacement bus for the remainder of the year for \$43,500. Central State will buy the bus back in June 2010 for \$37,500 if the district chooses that route after transportation committee recommendations. After the 80% reimbursement from the State of Illinois, district cost for the six months would be \$1,200. Due to necessity the district has already received the new bus. Mr. Mathers contacted Mr. Boyd prior to receiving the bus for approval to move forward with the request.

Motion to approve the purchase of a replacement bus for #28 due to the accident on November 19, 2009. Motion carried.

The Illinois State Board of Education is preparing to submit an application to the federal government for "Race To The Top" funds (total grant \$400,000,000). In order to receive these funds, school districts are required to sign a "Memorandum of Understanding" and submit it to ISBE by Monday, January 11, 2010. The main focus of the plan is educational reform tied to assessments, improved curriculum, and improved assessment scores of students. In order to access the funds, \$33 - \$60 per student, the memorandum contains an agreement to connect the funds to teacher and principal evaluations resulting from student performance; merit pay. The system has two issues that cause Superintendent Mathers concern; signing a blank agreement with ISBE, since the rules are not yet written, and the timeline dictated by the ISBE. Mr. Mathers believes this would require the district to communicate with the Teachers' Association. Part of the Memorandum of Understanding requires union support and agreement "establishing a system that differentiates compensation based on performance". That system would need to be in place by 2011-2012. The district's current contract expires after the 2010-2011 school year. A decision to participate would require agreement between the Board of Education, the principals, and the Association. The Association is being told by its union representative not to sign the agreement until more information is available. The funds generated for West Carroll are approximately \$40,000 - \$78,000. Klein and Brigham stated they are

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not comfortable signing a blind agreement. Atherton sees no problem with the idea and feels the district must sign the agreement so as not to lose \$40,000 or more. Boyd questioned from a contract stand point what will happen when the money dries up. Sweeney asked if the union has been contacted. Mathers stated at this point in time they are not supporting the endeavor. Mathers has invited Scott Mattison to attend a webinar regarding Race to the Top. Kilpatrick asked why merit pay can not be just a one time award. Boyd stated that would need to be negotiated. If negotiated into the contract this would involve money that the district might not have.

Motion to pursue the Race To The Top Grant and merit pay. Motion seconded, for the sake of discussion. Board members discussed extensively the pros and cons of the Race To The Top Grant agreement. Boyd called for a vote. Motion failed on a 1 to 6 vote. Sweeney asked that Mathers inform board members of any information that he receives regarding the matter.

Closed Session

Motion to approve the regular meeting go into closed session at 8:50 p.m. for the discussion of the appointment, employment, discipline, performance or dismissal or removal of specific employees; student discipline cases; and collective bargaining matters or consideration of salary schedules for one or more classes of employees. Motion carried.

The regular meeting returned to open session at 8:25 p.m.

Action Resulting from Closed Session Items

Motion to approve the appointment of Tony Jackson as a volunteer wrestling coach at WC High School for the 2009-2010 season. Second by Highland. Motion carried.

Motion to approve the request of WC High School Spanish instructor, Kathy Dahlman for a fourth personal day per the negotiated contract. Motion carried.

Motion to approve the request of Angela Kamper for a maternity leave to begin approximately the end of April 2010 through the remainder of the 2009-2010 school year. Motion carried.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the regular meeting at 9:28 p.m. Motion carried.

sja