

**West Carroll Board of Education
Special Meeting
Board Retreat
February 10, 2011**

A special meeting of the Board of Education of West Carroll Community Unit School District No. 314 was held in the WC Business Office Conference Room, 801 South Street, Thomson, Illinois.

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Sweeney at 6:30 p.m.

Members present: Bill Sweeney; Mike Highland; Tim Atherton; John Brigham; and Bev Kilpatrick
Members Absent: David Boyd (entered the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and left the meeting at 9:05 p.m.);
District #5 (Vacancy)
Administration: Superintendent Craig Mathers; Principals Robert Lamb; Monica Burkholder; Julie Katzenberger; Jeanette Ashby; Special Education and Preschool Director Pam Delp
Others present: Media (Michael Miller)

Financial Review

Audited Fund Balances

Superintendent Mathers gave the Board of Education an overview of district audited fund balances from 2005-06 through 2009-10. The major portion of revenue the district receives is generated from the tax levy and general state aid. These funds are generated by district EAV and student enrollment. The amount the state is currently behind in payments to West Carroll is \$1,308,825.75.

FY 2011 Expenditures and Revenue Review

Graphs showing the expenditures and revenues versus the budget through December 31, 2010 (end of second quarter) were shared with the Board.

General State Aid; Historical Perspective

General State Aid is calculated using a combination of student enrollment and equalized assessed value. The current funding level per student is \$6,119. The general belief is that the district receives 100% of that amount but that is not the case. The district only receives 58-59% of that amount. Illinois State Board of Education is requesting funds equal to funding levels from FY2009 plus 3.5%. State funding is at the discretion of the legislature and the district will not know funding levels until August. This makes financial decisions for the next school year hard to make.

Budget Reductions Already Made

Mr. Mathers supplied the Board with a historical perspective of the proposed budget reductions and the actual budget reductions for the past five years. This shows the Board of Education has made approximately \$2,000,000 in reductions to district finances.

Factors to Consider for FY2012

Several factors need to be considered for 2011-2012: current budget deficit of \$140,000, current contract obligations for support staff salaries, increased energy costs, funds received from ARRA that will not be available next year, the uncertainty of the funding level of general state aid, the non-funding of the Reading Improvement Grant, the reimbursement level of transportation, health insurance increases, teacher contract negotiations, teacher retirements, preschool funding, the rearrangement of the RAP program, and the amount of funds from annual grants. The cost of electricity has increased the past two years while natural gas has remained stable but there is a possibility that it will increase next year. Funds received through ARRA this past August were used to pay current staff salaries. There is legislation pending that will reinstate the funding level of transportation back to 80%

(it had been cut to 40%). State funding will pay for the preschool program, but funds will most likely be delayed. The Regional Alternative Program is being revamped to include a half day of instruction at the Area Vocational Center. Statistics show that the State's poverty numbers have decreased whereas, West Carroll's have increased 1.5%. Five teachers are retiring at the end of this school year. The district will realize a savings of \$336,537 plus health insurance costs if they are not replaced. Kilpatrick asked what kind of things were included in the budget reductions from previous years. Most of the reductions were through personnel and some services. Kilpatrick stated the cuts that have been made should be recognized and identified to the public. Atherton asked what the total district cost for energy was. He was informed that a chart was available for later in the meeting. Brigham stated that energy is an expense that the district can not do much about. Some ideas for energy savings were discussed; windmills and/or geothermal. The money realized from the 1% sales tax could be used for these projects or the district could sell bonds.

Operational Review

Historical Perspectives

The Board was provided with a historical perspective of the district from 2005 – 2011. The information showed number of staff members, student enrollment, health insurance costs, life insurance costs, registration fees and cafeteria fees. The district has 200 less students than when it was started and thirty-six less staff members. Registration and cafeteria fees have remained constant while insurance costs have increased.

Operational Expenses

A chart demonstrating the costs to operate each building was reviewed. The expenses were from 2009-2010. The chart represents per student expenses and square footage costs. This is a visual for the Board showing that the budget can not be balanced merely by closing a building.

Athletic Participation

A historical perspective of athletic participation shows even with enrollment declining that participation numbers stay much the same.

Program Review

Pam Delp, director of special education and preschool, explained her programs to the Board. Special education numbers for West Carroll have gone from 25% to 19% of the student body. West Carroll is getting closer to the national average. Students needing additional help have not decreased but how these students are served has changed due mostly to RtI and other program changes. Highland asked with moving more students into the classroom is it possible to reduce special education teachers. With West Carroll having such a transient student population the district does not want to overload (case load) the teachers. Mrs. Burkholder stated it maybe possible to utilize these teachers in other areas of the educational program and Mrs. Delp stated that co-teaching would suffer with less staff. The teacher work load has not decreased just because student numbers have. The general statistic is that it takes 2.5% more financially to educate special education students.

Mrs. Delp is a huge advocate of the preschool program. West Carroll preschool screenings are scheduled for March but already 21 appointments have been set. Seventeen children are returning to the program next year and there is a waiting list of fifteen. There is a great need in the community for preschool services. The district also houses the federally funded Head Start program. Highland asked what if the district did not have preschool. Kindergarten teachers would have to spend

additional time on basic skills and social problems taking away from educational time. Highland asked what if you group the students in classes based on abilities. Delp stated it would not be educationally sound to teach that way. Brigham stated you would also impair social skills by separating students. Atherton asked if the district could charge for preschool. Because this preschool program is funded by grant funds it is not allowed. Highland asked if the district did not receive the grant could we run our own program and charge. Delp stated that not many families in the community could afford to pay. The grant requires that 3 and 4 year olds be integrated in the classroom. Children in the program are considered "at risk" for one reason or another. Currently, there are more 4 year olds because parents do not want 3 year olds to attend school yet.

Jeanette Ashby, Primary and Intermediate principal, stated her staff's mission is to provide opportunities for students to achieve their personal best, become responsible and productive citizens, and embrace lifelong learning in a safe and positive environment. Several things have been incorporated into the school improvement plan to achieve this goal; educational strategies and activities, professional development, and parent involvement. Ashby is working to make Title I – school wide. This would allow Title I staff to work with any student in the district. Atherton asked if parents are actually using Skyward. Thirty-eight percent of district families are using Skyward with more use at the Middle and High School levels. Mr. Lamb stated Skyward allows you to see how often a parent checks on student grades. Atherton asked how many SMARTBoards were in the Primary and Intermediate Schools. The Intermediate has four and almost every classroom at the Primary has one. Boyd asked how the teachers retiring from the Primary School will affect Mrs. Ashby's plan – will they need to be replaced? He does not want to cut services to students. Ashby said the issues have been addressed and a plan is in place. It will create class sizes being a little bit larger than they currently are.

Julie Katzenberger, Middle School principal, provided Board members with a copy of the 8th grade EXPLORE test results. This test is part of the PLAN and ACT testing series. This information is very beneficial in planning. The test asked students what particular areas they needed help in and there was an expressed interest in public speaking skills. Mrs. Katzenberger hopes the Board will support keeping highly qualified teachers, having growth in extra-curricular activities, and an increase in technology availability for students.

Bob Lamb, High School principal, stated his building is 53 years old but the district staff has made great strides in dressing up and cleaning the building. The High School has some outstanding programs and very active clubs. The staff has been pushed very hard. Through negotiations the extra prep period has been changed to a school improvement period. Discipline is pretty good. Positive side to the High School: RAP changes – good, certificate of employability, large variety of class offerings, AVC – great opportunity for students, and great community support. Some concerns: Rtl – more difficult to implement at the High School level, PSAE accountability, math concerns, technology – least number of SMARTBoards in district, staff development, and high rate of free and reduced. Mr. Lamb is also concerned about the number of teacher retirements over the next two years. The district continues to do more with less and less. Boyd stated the district will need to identify the skills of the teachers retiring and try to hire more teachers with diversity. Atherton questioned if the High School used an 8 period day – yes. Highland asked if the administration closely monitors school improvement time. Mr. Lamb said yes they do but they must be more diligent.

Possible Reductions

Superintendent Mathers stated that most of the retirements for 2010-2011 would be absorbed from within the district but he was not sure about the high school science position. More retirements are coming in 2011-2012. In regards to moving grades 4 and 5 to the Primary School, there would be enough space for all classes but the preschool would be displaced. Hillcrest has not yet come to a decision as to how much building space they will need for next year.

Closed Session

Motion Highland to move the special meeting into closed session at 8:06 p.m. for the discussion of A: appointment, employment, discipline, performance or dismissal or removal of specific employees; B: collective bargaining matters or consideration of salary schedules for one or more classes of employees; D: purchase or lease of real property or setting of a price for sale or lease of district property; and F: special educational programs or other matters relating to individual students. Second by Kilpatrick. Roll call vote: 6 yes. Motion carried.

The special meeting returned to open session at 9:25 p.m.

Adjournment

Motion by Atherton to adjourn the special February 10, 2010 meeting of the West Carroll Board of Education at 9:30 p.m. Second by Brigham. Roll call vote: 5 yes; Boyd absent. Motion carried.

Sandra Aude
Recording Secretary

Michael D. Highland, Secretary
West Carroll Board of Education

David W. Boyd, President
West Carroll Board of Education