

CHURCHILL COUNTY BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Fallon, Nevada

SPECIAL MEETING

February 17, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

President Evans called to order the special meeting of the Churchill County School District Board of Trustees at 6:35 p.m. at the Churchill County School District Administration Office, 690 South Maine Street, Fallon, Nevada.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Evans led the pledge of allegiance.

VERIFICATION OF POSTING OF AGENDA

President Evans confirmed the posting of the agenda.

ROLL CALL

Trustees Present

President Evans
Vice President Clay Hendrix
Trustee Greg Koenig
Trustee Matt Hyde
Trustee Rich Gent
Trustee Carmen Schank
Trustee Steve Nunn

Others Present

Dr. Sandra Sheldon
Phyllis Dowd, Director of Business Services
Sharla Hales, Legal Counsel

Debra Shyne, Secretary
(Interested Staff/Community Members per Attached List)

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Jim Falk spoke regarding common core and common core tests and commented that there is nothing in NRS that requires students to take the common core tests.

Mr. Bob Clifford spoke regarding common core and provided board members with a DVD of the Fallon symposium. Mr. Clifford commented that staff is afraid to make comments regarding common core due to retribution.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. For Discussion and Possible Action: The Board will discuss all aspects of the 2015-2016 Budget and set budget priorities in an effort to provide direction to the Budget Committee and staff so that items to be reduced can be explored and quantified. Staff will provide information to the Board for review. Any and every line item in the budget may be discussed and acted on for possible reduction.**

President Evans clarified that the direction of the board meeting was based on NRS statutes which states that if a school is to be closed or schools are to be reorganized there has to be a letter sent to parents and staff followed by a public hearing to hear their comments.

The Board can either stay with the current configuration of schools or accept one of the reorganization plans. The Board will accept the report from the budget committee, the Board will ask questions, the public can make comments, the Board will have discussion, and then, if there is a motion to reorganize, the District will move forward with that process.

Phyllis Dowd stated that the budget committee was well attended by the majority of the committee members. A motion was made by Keith Boone to recommend to the school board to go with Option 2. The motion was seconded by Doug Drost, who is the independent financial representative from the community. The motion carried with 12 yes, 1 no and 1 abstention. The plan would be to develop grade level schools: a K-1, a 2-3 and a 4-5 school. This would remove one level of administration with the transfer of the Special Services Director to Northside to monitor Pre-K services. This would eliminate a principal, office manager, secretary, custodian, and a librarian. At the K-1 level it is proposed to eliminate a counseling position. The reconfiguration would allow the District to save one special education teacher. The number of aides for high-need students could be consolidated so an aide could handle two students. Option 2 would cut specials except for one technology teacher for the 3rd through 5th grade classes.

President Evans asked how Ms. Dowd arrived at the cost of savings. Ms. Dowd stated that the savings is this year's salary and next year's benefits, with PERS at 28%. The principal, for example, would be the least senior administrator, which happens to be a vice principal. The rest of the positions were estimated as the least senior. Specials teachers were calculated based on the average teacher salary. The special education amount is the most senior position who resigned and the District would not refill that position.

Ms. Sharla Hales, legal counsel, stated that the decision to reorganize schools would not be made tonight, but rather the Board could direct staff to prepare the process to reorganize. After that process, the Board could then make a decision at the March 26th board meeting.

Public Comments:

Merry Kay Kennedy, Lahontan Elementary School Counselor, thanked Dr. Sheldon for talking with staff at Lahontan and voiced concern regarding grade level schools. Ms. Kennedy stated that it would create upheaval of elementary school communities, pull siblings apart, and she voiced opposition to eliminating a counselor at the K-1 school.

Mr. Jim Moore, retired Parks and Recreation Director for the County and presently working on intervention program at Numa Elementary School, voiced concern about the effect of multiple transitions on student achievement. Mr. Moore recommended Option 4, which would provide students with the best opportunity for success.

President Evans commented that staff wrote on flip charts at each school and the Board has that information.

Lisa Solinski spoke against losing a counselor at the K-1 school as many counselors act as vice principals in the absence of the principal. Ms. Solinski stated that many parents are not aware of the proposed grade level school reorganization. Ms. Solinski stressed communication and encouraged Board Members to visit schools. Ms. Solinski asked what the long-term plan is for the District.

President Evans stated that a letter will be sent to parents in the next day or two depending on the decision made by the Board of Trustees. Dr. Sheldon also visited with staff at each elementary school to discuss grade level schools.

Mr. Don Mello stated that he was not sure how the Board could decide which option, 1-4, until the options and costs are before the Board. Northside is under a grant now; what happens if the grant is completed? Would you have to reopen Northside as a school or is it closed forever?

Ms. Wilma Mora requested that the letter be translated into Spanish for ELL kids.

Ms. Jennifer Guerro, who worked at Churchill County the past 19 years, commented that the decision benefits some and harms others. Ms. Guerro supports the option to move kindergarten students back into the elementary schools.

Sunshine Pell stated that she has four kids in the district and they do not like the idea of grade level schools. Ms. Pell asked if anyone asked the kids.

Keith Boone, E.C. Best Principal, stated that Option Two is the least disruptive when it comes to budget and size of classrooms.

Beth Edwards, concerned parent with two children in the district, stated that she was opposed to Option Two and cutting specials.

Trustee Nunn stated that he missed one meeting in 6 ½ years and unfortunately it was probably the most important one. Trustee Nunn commented that he has repeatedly asked for numbers. Trustee Nunn had heard people asking about how much the four day work week was and he had just received the information five minutes before the meeting started and hasn't had the time to digest the information. Trustee Nunn stated that he has other questions and has thoughts of other recommendations. Trustee Nunn asked if transportation costs would be increased with Option Two.

Steve Russell stated that there would be no increase in transportation. The routes would be staggered. Transportation will reduce two routes as two people are retiring. The State does not mandate transportation; it is a privilege not a right.

Trustee Hendrix commented that as a parent he is not necessarily in favor of grade level schools. But, when you evaluate what works best for the kids and the community, it narrows your focus. Trustee Hendrix stated that when he lived in Las Vegas there was a rapid increase in population and his children went to four different high schools in four years and they didn't struggle with the result of the changes. Keith Boone made the motion in the budget committee meeting and recommended to that the Board go with Option Two. Trustee Hendrix stated that he is not making a decision in a vacuum, but rather from what he is learning from the people in the community, he has read emails and has listened to the community today, but because we change something at one place like Northside does not mean we can't create an equal environment someplace else. We can find serious fault in each and every option, but we need to find the best option and figure out how to make it the best for us and our students. The governor is fighting for education, but those decisions will come too late for Churchill County. Personally, if the money becomes available the first thing I would do is put a counselor back into the school because the teachers and principal

need the support. Trustee Hendrix supported Option Two with the caveat that the counselor be placed back in the school, when money becomes available.

Trustee Koenig stated that he takes issue with Trustee Nunn stating that the first time he saw these numbers was five minutes ago. BoardBook was downloaded on Thursday, so he had access to BoardBook. Trustee Koenig said that he is not 100% backing Option Two, but stated that without going forward tonight with Option Two we are eliminating it. Trustee Koenig stated that he thought the Board should go forward with Option Two and send letters and get input.

Trustee Schank stated that she felt the best option for families is the K-5 plan. Trustee Schank stated that there are too many issues that come with four day schools with parents working and children unsupervised.

Trustee Gent agreed with Trustee Nunn with regard to concerns about unforeseen consequences. Trustee Gent was also not necessarily in favor of grade level schools, but realizes the Board needs to act now. Trustee Gent voiced concern as to what to do if the grade level schools don't work out and what to do if the Pre-K grant runs out of funding.

Trustee Hyde stated that he and Trustee Koenig spoke with White Pine about a four day school week at an NASB meeting and White Pine had a hard time coming up with any substantial savings. Trustee Hyde stated that he was not a huge fan of grade level schools, but he went to grade level schools as a child and was successful. His biggest concern is the hardship to the parents regarding transportation. None of these options are great and none of them suit everybody. Trustee Hyde was in favor of going through the budget line by line and stated that the Board of Trustees has to make a decision.

President Evans stated that these are not easy decisions. There are many sides to each option. If the state took over the district, his understanding was that the state would eliminate all contracts. President Evans has not heard anything from the union about cutting salaries, but they haven't had a raise in seven years. We have gone line by line, but the biggest line item is salaries and that affects people. Requesting a salary freeze is only a temporary solution to the problem. Additionally, the DSA is going to be \$7 less. If they do away with the sunset taxes, the state will have to take the District over. All of these things come together and there isn't a good answer. President Evans stated that his students went to grade level schools and they did well.

Trustee Schank asked if the District were to go with Option Four, would all of the principals look at their staff and be able to eliminate positions. If principals can't do that then Option Two would be the one to select. Dr. Sheldon stated that the principals could cut positions, but that would result in larger class sizes. Staffing is at 86% and we should be at 83 or 84%. We have made recommendations at the secondary level and within the district office. There might be a couple more secondary positions that could be cut. Registration at the high school is winding down, so we should have better numbers soon.

Trustee Hendrix stated that he is not in support of increasing elementary school class sizes. Trustee Hendrix made a motion, seconded by Trustee Koenig, ***to adopt Option Two for the purposes of directing staff and administration to prepare to follow Option Two as found in BoardBook and that any negative consequences be reported back to the Board.***

Principal Malkovich stated that there are no more bodies to cut. Mr. Malkovich hasn't had a counselor in seven years and his librarian works 13 hours a week. Option Two is where we need to go.

Trustee Koenig reminded the Board that the budget committee recommended Option Two unanimously.

Becky Dodd, CCEA President, stated that she is a member of the budget committee and they did discuss Option Two and nobody made the decision because they liked it. They chose it because they felt it was the best. As a private citizen, Ms. Dodd commented on something Trustee Schank previous said regarding Northside Early Learning Center working so well – that very thing could happen at K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 schools. The reason why Mr. Hendrix' children did well with different moves was because of his attitude. Children adapt to anything as long as the parents have a positive attitude.

Dr. Sheldon stated that letters will be sent to parents, staff and principals involved in the schools letting them know there will be a hearing on March 26th, providing them with the opportunity to give their opinions on the options. President Evans asked that included in the letter that parents/staff can share their concerns before the meeting as well. Dr. Sheldon commented that notice will be in the paper ten days prior to the March 26th meeting.

Katherine Whitaker, member of the budget committee as a parent for three years, stated that each year there has been a mess of dwindling numbers. She realizes the challenges involved and the committee has spent a lot of time looking at programs and the budget line by line and discussed many options. Ms. Whitaker stated that Board members who state they have not had time to look at these numbers and that they have just seen them is disingenuous. BoardBook with these options was produced in January and emailed to Board members. For those in the public who think this is knee-jerk reaction, it is not. Ms. Whitaker stated that no option is going to be beneficial for everyone. Option Two was decided by the committee because the committee felt it would have the largest impact financially but the fewest cuts as far as the human condition toll. Ms. Whitaker stated that Option Two is for the family and children, because if we don't make these cuts, there is no school district.

Trustee Shank spoke in defense of her fellow board member stating that there were items that the Board just received, that were put together today - information and comments from the schools were received tonight.

Trustee Nunn stated he has put in a ton of hours and went to every budget committee meeting when he was on the committee. Regarding the comments that were made that he does not do his homework and for those who expressed disappointed, he apologized, but stated that he hasn't done anything to be ashamed of.

Wilma Mora, licensed teacher, commented on the list of things to cut it does include professional development. Staff has been through three professional development programs each year and she inquired what the cost was for this. Teachers used to be assigned by a principal to study and get all of the research and provide professional development at staff meetings for 30 to 45 minutes. Teachers don't have that choice any more.

Trustee Gent stated that the letter will get communication going so if the public doesn't like Option 2 then the Board can look at other options. The District had to have a completed budget by April 15th. In the meantime, in upcoming meetings we need to look at other options as well.

Gary Chappell, parent, commented that if it matters if the Board receives a lot of input within the next 30 days. Would it persuade or dissuade the Board? President Evans stated that comments matter. Board members have received comments both for and against grade level schools.

The motion passed 6:1; with Trustee Nunn opposed.

President Evans stated that there are other proposals on the list of potential savings. Becky Dodd brought up the MAPS testing, the Board has to talk about the four day week, cost sharing, raises, and RIF'ing positions. RIF'ing positions will be discussed at the first board meeting in March.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Schank made a motion, seconded by Trustee Gent, to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:06 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Carmen, Schank, Clerk of the Board

Prepared by Debra Shyne