

BATTLE CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Meeting
June 15, 2015
BCCHS – McQuiston Center, 100 West Van Buren
7:00 p.m.

PRESENT - BOARD OF EDUCATION

Todd Stagner
Scott Cubberly
Kellie Thomas
Karen Evans
Catherine LaValley
Nathan Grajek
Art McClenney

Present – Administration

Dr. Linda Hicks – Superintendent
Stephen Sestina –Executive Director of Human Resources
Marilyn Wieschowski – Executive Director of Financial Services
Dr. Deborah Nuzzi – District Transitional Coach, ELA
Chad Osborn – Director of Technology

MINUTES

The Public Hearing was called to order by Dr. Todd Stagner at 7:05 p.m. All board members were present. Approximately 57 citizens were in attendance including school personnel.

All members present.

Public Hearing: Truth in Budget Hearing

We are required to publish in the newspaper that the board will be approving 2015 millage rate for Operation, Building and Site and Debt. We published the notice on June 1, 2015 and on June 8, 2015.

The 2015 Tax rate request is on Form L-4029. With Board approval, the signed form will be sent to the City of Battle Creek and the Townships.

The operation millage rate remains at 18 -9 levied on July 1 and 9 levied December 1.

The Building and Site millage rate is 2 with 1 levied on July 1 and the other December 1

The Debt Millage rate has been lowered this year from 4.6 to 4.32.

Questions

Catherine LaValley: The document with the tax levy, the name of our school district is Battle Creek Public Schools, and it is still listed as the School District for the City of Battle Creek. I know Dr. Hicks has been telling the county to look at us differently. She has done the research and why the county is not recognizing us as Battle Creek Public Schools is a concern.

We have their signatures. If the board approves, we can change the name and then notify them that in the future to list us as Battle Creek Public Schools.

Catherine LaValley: I know our staff has contacted them. This is a persistent problem and we've got to make someone follow through to say what our legal name is.

Dr. Stagner: Any other comments? Any public comments pertaining to the Truth and Budget Hearing? Seeing none. Consideration to adjourn public hearing.

Motion made by Karen Evans to adjourn public hearing.
Seconded by Catherine LaValley.

Motion passed 7 - 0

Public hearing adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

The Regular Board meeting was called to order by Dr. Todd Stagner at 7:10 p.m. All board members were present. Approximately 57 citizens were in attendance including school personnel.

Approval of Agenda/Consideration of Additions or Deletions

Art McClenney – I ask that under new business, items F and G be pulled from the agenda and added at a later date on June 29.

Motioned seconded by Karen Evans.

Discussion

Karen Evans – This is already our second meeting in June. I would suggest we move the Superintendent Evaluation to the regular meeting in July, instead of making yet another special board meeting in June.

Catherine LaValley – I would hope that we could keep the Superintendent's evaluation in the month of June because of its importance. I think the sooner we can get feedback to our Superintendent would be very important. I was looking forward to the process tonight because it's meant to be very informative and it is one of those things that we are required by the state to do. It is very important that we take the time it takes. I will be voting against this motion to take it off the agenda tonight.

Scott Cubberly – I too struggle with postponing this process. This has been on the calendar and the public has been made aware. We should follow through with that process. If it is to be adjourned, and is the will of the body, then I would encourage us to look at the 29th as the date to take care of this important process.

McClenney – The reason I put the motion forward is so I could have a chance to review the material that we received. I don't think two weeks is asking too much to review the material.

Dr. Stagner – Out of respect to my colleague, who initially we did not think would be here, but to have a full board making full evaluation lends us off to a better process. I would like to have it done on the 29th for the purpose giving that time to set goals going forward in the next school year. If we have it in July, we would be putting off the goals, etc. so just for that purpose alone.

Roll call

Thomas: Yes
Cubberly: No
McClenney: Yes
Evans: Yes
LaValley: No
Grajek: Yes
Stagner: Yes

Motion passed 5-2

We will remove F & G of new business from tonight's agenda.

Above and Beyond Award

Dr. Stagner presented Karolynn Ferguson with an Above and Beyond Award submitted by the Building & Site Department for the landscaping of most of BCPS properties.

Priority School Report

Dr. Hicks – In the absence of Kimberly Parker-DeVauld, we have Dr. Deb Nuzzi who serves on the Ed Services team. She will do the priority report for us. Thank you for stepping in.

Dr. Nuzzi – Explained the power point of the Priority School Report. (*See copy of power point attached to these minutes*).

Naming of Northwestern Middle School Gymnasium

Dr. Hicks –A recommendation was unanimously supported to put the name of Mr. Al Leibert on the floor of NWMS's gymnasium. Present at that meeting was Bobby Holley, Melvin McKnight, Matt Peterson, Basil Nunelly, Karen Evans, Joe ??, Bernard Brown, Shawn Hubbard, Monique Wells and myself. The following names were recommended in this rank order: 1. Al Leibert Court; 2. Al Leibert House; 3. Al Leibert's Court. We talked about if the board would take into consideration upgrading the floor at NWMS, which is approximately \$11,000 expenditure that will come from our Building & Site funds. The committee of people are committed to paying for the cost of the lettering on the floor, and we don't have an estimate for that yet. The district will be paying for the regular upgrades. In regards to making NWMS bearcat country, it is the home court for our middle school basketball home competitions. These are the recommendations that this committee is bringing to the board.

Consideration and Approval of Consent Agenda Items

Karen Evans made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda items.
Catherine LaValley second that motion.

Motion passed 7 – 0

Public Comment

None

New Business

2014-2015 Appropriations Act Amendments

Dr. Hicks – The board heard a presentation from Marilyn Wieschowski regarding the 2014-2015 Appropriation Amendment. At this time, I make a recommendation that the board approve the recommendation amendment.

Kellie Thomas moved to approve the 2014-2015 Appropriations Act Amendment.
Catherine LaValley second the motion.

Motion passed 7 – 0

2015-2016 Budget Projection Appropriation Resolution

Dr. Hicks – Over the past two or three meetings, we've been talking about the budget projection appropriation for the 2015-16 school year. As the board remembers, we had an anticipated short-fall of \$2.1 M, and with proposed reductions for a total of \$2.6 M, would have a short-fall of \$500,000 for the 2015-16 school year. The proposed reductions included the reduction of teachers, paraprofessionals, aides, clerical, custodians, administration, central office employee, 504 coordinator being added to someone else's responsibilities, reductions for athletics, relocating the adult education program, a small amount in reduction of food at meetings, and reduction for utilities at Coburn Elementary. As presented earlier, total budget projection for 2015-2016 presented by Marilyn Wieschowski, I ask the board to approve the 2015-2015 Budget Project Appropriation Resolution.

Catherine LaValley moved to approve the 2015-2016 Budget Projection Appropriation Resolution.
Art McClenney second that motion.

Discussion

LaValley – The form that I am looking at right now, pages 1 – 7, it states “School District of the City of Battle Creek.” If we can have it changed to “Battle Creek Public Schools” it would make good sense to have our legal name on that form.

Art McClenney – Are we still recognized under the School District of the City of Battle Creek?

Dr. Hicks – Some of the places have not made that name change even though we have sent out documentation to tell them we have formally changed our name.

Cubberly – So would it be possible to amend the document based on our current policy and then attach an addendum to it that states our name change?

LaValley – I would be glad to make an amendment to that effect. I would like to amend the motion in consideration to approve the 2015-2016 Budget Projection Appropriation Resolution to make sure that our legal name be Battle Creek Public Schools.

Scott Cubberly supported the amended motion.

The 2015-2016 Budget Projection Appropriation Resolution will be voted on again after the staff lay-offs has been voted on. This will impact the budget.

Motion failed 0 – 7

2015-2016 Staff Lay-Off

Dr. Hicks – At this time, Mr. Sestina, Director of Human Resources, will present the staff recommended for lay off.

Stephen Sestina – The following is being presented for lay-offs:

Teachers: Stephanie Okolo, Deb Tobias, Dawn DeLuca, Vince Leveille

Special Ed Teachers: Christopher Walters, Jennifer Miller

Paraprofessionals: Heather Hart, Renee Hawes, Kimberly McNish, Candy Griffin, Mary Hemenway, Lisa Merry, Khiree Watkins, Tonya Spaulding, Tyiesha Weddle, Jamie Wynne

Secretaries: Asia Robinson, Sara Garrett, Mary Ann Morales

Interventionists: Amy Bridges, Deb Rowe

Other Personnel: Janet Brainard, Paul Kitchen

Nathan Grajek moved to consider the 2015-2016 layoffs.

Art McClenny second that motion.

Discussion

Catherine LaValley – What was the criteria for the 23 layoffs? Can that question be answered?

Dr. Hicks –The layoff process with teachers is first based upon their evaluation and then seniority. For paraprofessionals as well as secretaries, it's seniority. As well as the others, all based on seniority.

Karen Evans – Why do we have Dawn DeLuca on here when we have another staff member who will be entering retirement? Did we not look into that person as opposed to someone who does not want to leave?

Dr. Hicks – I'm sure you understand we cannot discuss employee information in a public meeting.

Catherine LaValley – I have a concern about the truancy issues. We have some staff members who have been responsible for addressing the truancy issues that have been cropping up. Also the interventionist from NWMS is on the lay-off list. I wonder how we are going to fill those valuable positions.

Dr. Hicks – I am sure you recall from the last board meeting that the middle school had a proposal for a reorganization for their schools. These were decisions the principals made for their schools. The truancy is an issue in BCPS. As you may or may not be aware, that position was funded through WK Kellogg Foundation monies. In consideration to bring that position back, we need to make sure we have appropriate funding for that position, as well as defining a job description. So if we are able to use Title 1 or at-risk funds, we have to make sure the job descriptions match those financial resources. That is what we are looking at currently before we use general fund.

Art McClenney – In the event that the position, for instance the choir director, becomes available, we would call that person back?

Dr. Hicks – Yes that is how the process works. The people who are on layoffs will be called back when the positions open. This is what we know right now. We are trying to keep that updated. As soon as people notify us that they are retiring or resigning, then we begin to make immediate call-backs.

McClenney – So we still don't know the exact number of people retiring?

Dr. Hicks – We have 14 as of today. That is why this layoff number is lower because remember we started with 7 special education teachers and 11 general education teachers. That is why this list has been reduced so far through resignations and retirements.

Scott Cubberly – Two questions, first, we are not completely cutting the choir program? Correct.

Dr. Hicks – Not completely cutting the Choir Program. I think that is an important point to understand. There will still be choir offerings at that level.

Scott Cubberly – Secondly, the data that we have support the need for someone to focus on truancy issues?

Dr. Hicks – Absolutely. I would say that is pretty universal throughout the district. So that is why we want to take this opportunity to look at what we are currently doing. We need to evaluate and determine how we are going to move forward from this point.

Scott Cubberly – I think that if data supports this position, we need to find a way to support retaining that position as we have experienced the first success of that group graduating this year. We should do everything possible to support paying that position.

Catherine LaValley – Can we clarify that middle school interventionist position?

Dr. Hicks – Their plan puts in place an interventionist – I don't know if that's the title they used, but this is the term they introduced to me is a SAMS. A person that does more encompassing work with the school. Currently for an interventionist using Title 1 funds, they have limitations on what they can do. So this really broadens that opportunity by readjusting the funds. We can create an opportunity that would be more impactful doing some of the same kinds of work but to a larger extent.

Grajek – I understand that it might be possible to amend this to remove a name from the lay-off. I cannot support the layoff of Ms. Dawn DeLuca. Anything that can be done to retain her on staff, I would like to see done. I understand that our budget is such, maybe we cannot afford her salary, but I believe we can't afford to lose teachers like her.

Dr. Stagner: Consideration to approve the 2015-2016 Staff Layoffs.

Motion passed 4 – 3

2015-2016 Budget Projection Appropriation Resolution

Catherine LaValley moved that the General Fund Budget Appropriation be approved with the ability to use our legal name of Battle Creek Public Schools.

Karen Evans supported that motion.

Motion passed 7 – 0

2015 Millage Levy

Dr. Hicks – I make a recommendation to approve the 2015 Millage Levy.

Art McClenney moved to approve the 2015 Millage Levy.

Karen Evans supported that motion.

Discussion

Catherine LaValley – If we can just make sure that the Battle Creek Public Schools name be changed in that top title of that document.

Kellie Thomas – For future levies, I think it is imperative that we ask for a larger millage to help with our operating expenses so that we do not have to endure more teacher layoffs.

Catherine LaValley – I support what Ms. Thomas is mentioning. It probably would also be wise as we start the strategic planning process, if one of these items can go on the agenda for further discussion.

Motion passed 7 – 0

Building & Site Summer Projects

Dr. Hicks – At our last board meeting, Chad Osborn presented our summer project list for phase II, which included updating the HVAC system in the administration building, roof restoration at Ann J Kellogg, updating the HVAC system at the McQuiston Center. All of these are Battle Creek Center, Tuckpoint 3 phase, McQuiston, Sewer line replacement, updating HVAC system in the music building. At the Math and Science Center, the roof restoration; SMS, tennis court resurfacing and the removal of weeds, complete asphalt walk-way around the building and resurface gym floor. I also want to add the resurfacing of NWMS gym which brings that total from \$754,001 to \$765,001. I make a recommendation to approve the summer project list.

Kellie Thomas moved to consider the approval of the Building and Site Summer Projects including the resurfacing of the NWMS gymnasium floor.
Catherine LaValley supported this motion.

Discussion

Catherine LaValley – Dr. Hicks, you mentioned the committee renaming the NWMS gym floor would be paying something?

Dr. Hicks – They volunteered to pay for the letters to go on the gym floor.

Catherine LaValley – I think that calls for an Above and Beyond Award. I think that is a very nice gesture.

Motion passed 7 – 0

Superintendent Comments

The board is probably aware that Dudley STEM School has extended their year, so they are still in session. I hear that the students are doing very well.

The Maranda Park Party will be held July 30, a Thursday and it is a community celebration. We want to invite Battle Creek community, but the greater BC community as well. It is at NWMS. It begins at 12 noon.

In partnership with BC Police Department, they talked to me about their Explorer Program. This is a program that helps young people learn about law enforcement. It's for students between the age of 14-20 years old. They are inviting our students to participate in this program. They would like 5 – 10 students to begin working with them this summer. It is really an incredible program that can teach our kids really great skills to help them determine if law enforcement is what they would like to be in. BC Police Department is trying to develop a pipeline. It goes from the Explorer Program to the Cadets. Our students have legacy scholars. All of their formal training can be done right at KCC, so if you know of any students who might strongly benefit from this program, let us know.

Board Member Comments

Nathan Grajek – Regarding the OEC. He would like the OEC to have its own committee to make decisions. People who know it better and know what's best for it. He would like information on how to make this happen.

Kellie Thomas – In the upcoming school year, she would like to see something – a mailer for the middle schools going to the 9th grade academy about Future Force. It is four-year college tuition program at Western Michigan University. 100% free. It's a program better than legacy scholars – not as good as the Kalamazoo Promise. Many of our students don't know about it. You have to sign up prior to your 9th grade year. I hope we can get some information out to our future high school students about this wonderful opportunity to attend.

Art McClenney – The Explorer Program – I am a retired police officer. I had dealing with the Explorer Program. It is an excellent program for kids to find out about not only law enforcement but other areas in the field. They learn a lot. I would encourage any parent to seek that program out.

Scott Cubberly–Thanking the teachers in our district for the work that they did for all the students. All three of my children graduated from Battle Creek Public Schools. There is a lot of negativity out there right now, but all three of my kids are going to college; all three graduated in the top 20 of their graduating class. Two in the top 10 and one salutarian. They received significant scholarship dollars to attend college and it pools through the BC Education Foundation, through their hard work and the merit scholarship program. Without the teachers, they would not have made it through the program, so I just want to thank them publicly.

Karen Evans – Support of the Outdoor Education Center. I believe kids need to be outside, learning about the world around them. I don't know how we move forward, but we as a board need to support and commit to the OEC before we expect people to invest in the OEC. I definitely suggest that we support and commit to the OEC. It's what is best for the kids.

Catherine LaValley – Ms. Evans speaks passionately for the OEC. She shared with the audience an email that the board members received. It really states the value of the wonderful jewel we have in the OEC. She read the email from Stephanie, a teacher from Constantine. We need to bring the OEC to the strategic planning committee.

Dr. Stagner – we will definitely bring the OEC and the Millage to the strategic planning committee.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.