

**MINUTES**

Special Meeting of the

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Corvallis School District 509J  
 1555 SW 35<sup>th</sup> Street  
 Corvallis, OR 97333

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chair Rieck called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Central Office Board Room, 1555 SW 35<sup>th</sup> Street, Corvallis. The secretary recorded those present as listed below.

<u>BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT</u>	<u>EXECUTIVE STAFF PRESENT</u>
Kari Rieck, Chair	Dawn Tarzian, Superintendent
Donna Keim, Vice Chair	Jim Hogeboom, Assistant Superintendent
Nell O’Malley	Fred Wright, Auxiliary Services Director
Helen Higgins	Kathy Rodeman, Business Services Director
Blake Rodman	
Matt Donohue	
Anne Schuster	

A quorum was present and due notice had been published.

Chair Rieck congratulated the Corvallis High School football team on winning the state championship.

**II. ACCEPT ELECTION RESULTS – LOCAL OPTION LEVY 02-58**

**MOTION #24:** Director Keim moved, Director Higgins seconded, to accept the abstract election results of the District’s levy, Local Option Tax 02-58 of November 7, 2006, from Benton and Linn counties. (See Supplemental Item #X-14 in the Official 2006-07 Board Minutes.)

The motion was unanimously approved.

Chair Rieck commented that it is a requirement that the District accept the results.

### III. PUBLIC TESTIMONY REGARDING MUDDY CREEK CHARTER SCHOOL

Chair Rieck stated that each testifier would have three minutes to speak.

Linda Hentsch, 7660 SW Deerhaven Drive, Corvallis, stated that she was a longtime Corvallis resident and currently resides in an area surrounding Inavale, though she has no direct connection to the District. She expressed that she finds it disheartening that rural schools are no longer viable. She described a rural school as a uniting force that provides identity, a community center that can serve contiguous districts in this case. Families share a common appreciation for the surrounding land and a close school makes the world a little less hectic for students. The Charter would still be a connection to the District for accountability and accessibility to it through a transition path to middle and high schools. She hopes improving education funding will allow the Board to approve the Charter.

Margarita White, 4520 NW Big Oak Place, Witham Oaks, Corvallis, spoke to the ability of the Charter to reach out to more communities, especially rural, which will solve the problem of attendance. She felt that expert money management would ensure the successful implementation of the school, more or less an offshoot of the closed Inavale K-8, a successful model that encouraged students to think for themselves. The school would use the abundant natural resources to learn how to care for and protect the natural area along with book learning, important for young children.

Wendy Williams, 2950 NW Monterey Drive, Corvallis, stated that she had read through the review notes of the Charter application, noting the value versus impact discussion. She stated that the Charter's value is a smaller learning environment with more focus and that the District and Charter could learn from each other. Regarding the costs, she expressed that education should not constantly be reduced to dollars and cents and asserted that the Board would not find a more committed group than those proposing the Muddy Creek Charter School. She urged the Board to support its creation.

Julia Moore, 26190 Nicole Drive, Corvallis, spoke to the isolation she is experiencing in locating and arranging for playmates for her kindergarten daughter, now that her children attend Adams Elementary instead of Inavale K-8, which they would have continued to do had it not closed. Because of the loss of the neighborhood school she is unaware of the proximity of classmates for her daughter to meet. Her 3<sup>rd</sup> grade son feels lost coming from a school with 180 students. He used to love school. Now he doesn't. It's been a very hard transition. She believes Adams is a good school with wonderful children, but they live 9 to 10 miles away. She stated that there truly are benefits to having a neighborhood school in your location. It is very powerful. She asserted that it would be nice to have a school that is aligned with their values and lifestyle; the Charter would really meet their needs in that respect.

Christine Harvey, 26631 Old River Road, Monroe, who has a 4<sup>th</sup> grader in the District, spoke to recently becoming part of the rural life which has required change to be successful. As a frequent elementary classroom volunteer and teacher of writing at the college level, she feels she has an understanding of education and its current changes as well as being a good bridge person to underscore

some of the fundamental differences between town and county life. She is in support of the Muddy Creek Charter School. After reading the Charter's proposal and hearing the presentations at last week's meeting by the organizers and the District's Review Committee she has some concerns about the reasoning presented:

- Regarding the example of a student with an IEP (individualized education plan) who would have to be pulled out of the afternoon projects part of the curriculum in order to receive extra instruction, thereby negating the advantage of the Charter for that child -- that's a parent decision, not the District's, about whether the Charter would still be a good option for that child.
- Another concern raised was that 15-20 students would likely be pulled from Lincoln K-8 resulting in loss of revenue but not enough students to realize a reduction of a teacher or other services to offset the loss. She offered that levy funds are to extend services to more children and reduce class sizes so the situation would be mitigated.

She respected the District's responsibility to run worst-case scenario numbers but she hoped that the bigger picture is still being weighed for that hypothetical calculation. She noted that the Charter has expressed a willingness to reach a win/win situation but she has not heard the same sentiment from the District. The Charter has asked for a reasonable risk to start a school that qualifies for special grant funds already available that no other Corvallis school can qualify for, fills a rural niche no other Corvallis school does, and serves an underserved population, recognized as such by the state level agency awarding the initial grant. She reflected that the conflict weighs heavily on her as a parent, as well as a person whose livelihood depends on her rural location. In searching for a solution she is reminded of a bumper sticker, "think globally, act locally." She offered that the Charter is such an opportunity as it has bigger implications beyond its four walls. She related that fewer and fewer local farmers have planted wheat in the last 5 years because they cannot grow a ton of wheat that goes into a 98 cent loaf of bread and still put gas in their tractors, pay their workers who are often fellow family members, and support their own families. Agriculture is another industry in the U.S. that is steadily being outsourced because enough people don't even understand that it is in danger. She feels like there are two choices: Hope that the countryside will fill with housing loaded with children and that some other district will shoulder the burden of housing agriculture or to take responsibility for all parts of the District as currently configured and allow the Muddy Creek Charter School to meet their needs. She asserted that there is a talented and energetic group of parents ready to go forward with the vision and dedication to found the school and she hopes the Board will give them the go ahead to plant this seed in their community and let it strive for sustainability.

Sarah Murch, 5244 SW Secher, Corvallis, a home-schooling mother of 5, spoke to her oldest daughter's satisfaction when attending Inavale K-8 part-time last year, that did not carry over when attending Lincoln K-8 this year. Her daughter decided to return to home schooling due to too many kids at school. Ms. Sarah Murch surmised that the Charter might be able to reach the home school population. A smaller school with project-based learning would encourage more to enroll.

Hannah Gosnell of Corvallis requested that her letter be submitted into the record. (See Section V in the Official 2006-07 Board Minutes.)

#### **IV. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM MUDDY CREEK CHARTER SCHOOL PROPOSERS**

John Dilles stated that he believes in public education and has voted for every school tax measure. He has had three children attend District schools. Two were at Inavale K-8 when it was closed last year. One of those now attends a District school; the other a private. He orated from a prepared statement. (See Supplemental Item #VII-17 in the Official 2006-07 Board Minutes.)

He stated that one of the goals of charters is to “take responsible risks to create new, innovative and more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system.” He asserted that a rural place-based science and arts program demonstrates something new, innovative, and flexible and asks that the Board take a responsible risk and approve the Charter.

He raised concerns about the review process and questioned some of the financial assumptions.

His concerns the District Review Committee and they were:

- Inability to recommend members which seemed to eliminate outside input
- Composition of committee not balanced, as per Board policy, between District staff and community members. It was composed of 4 current and 2 retired District employees, 2 members of the District’s Budget Committee and one independent educator. He said all members had integrity and knowledge and that he appreciated their efforts but it is impossible for them not to bring their own histories to the process which could be labeled as bias or prejudice. He feels that members do not actually reflect either the community the Charter hopes to serve or even the District as a whole. Predictably this committee voted 7-2 to deny recommendation of the Charter.

He asserted that the Review Committee’s significant negative financial impact reasons for rejection of the Charter are exaggerated. His concerns with the financial analysis are:

- District estimates were based on worst-case. Muddy Creek’s analysis indicates a possible positive contribution. He referred to the Charter’s 9-point memo of November 30 to the Committee and Board.
- Whether the first 15-20 students would not result in a savings to the District. He acknowledged that District figures are perhaps valid for the first year, but maybe not.
- Line item of “Audit, Special Ed. (\$17,676)” asserting that it does not matter which school in the District a student attends, that the state pays regardless. It is not an expense to the District. He eliminated this item.
- Overall cost to the District: Discounting questionable items in the next year, \$46,000 is what the Charter might expect to cost the District in Year 2, at the outside.
- Savings of closing Inavale stated as \$143,000. He said he has no idea as to whether that

materialized. Some funds were reinvested in Lincoln K-8.

- Loss of about 25 students from the District upon Inavale closing resulting in \$142,000 loss. The District can save 70% of that money eventually so it actually costs long-term 30% if they stay away from the District, which might be regained if Muddy Creek Charter opened.
- No evidence to support Committee's high estimate of losing 47 from Lincoln K-8 to the Charter. He predicts that the bulk of District students would come from Lincoln and Adams Elementary at 15 students each. He asserted that there is no reason to think that a loss of 15 students would compromise Lincoln's educational program and Adams, which is slightly over capacity, might benefit.

Overall, he thinks there is good reason to think the financial impact numbers will be less than the District's estimate and hope that they are closer to Muddy Creek's.

Mr. Dilles spoke to the ratio of the Charter's budget to the District's and asserted that in a worst-case scenario the Charter would use 0.25% of the District's budget. The Board could still carry over \$1.2 million from its \$1.3 million contingency fund. So he questioned how the Charter could affect the education of other District students if there is no significant financial impact, no teachers lost, and no reduced services.

Kathleen Westly also spoke from a prepared statement. (See Supplemental Item #VII-18 in the Official 2006-07 Board Minutes.) She addressed questions put to the Charter applicants from the District Review Committee, stating that the purpose of the school is to serve the rural community as stated in the proposal and to provide a unique learning environment to students in the District. She asserted that while cost efficiencies and economies of scale figure largely in District decision-making, as they should, they are not the primary goal. Value to District students is worth paying for, especially when the cost is small as Mr. Dilles demonstrated. She stated that it bears repeating that the learning model the Charter is proposing is unique to the District. While aspects of place-based and project-based learning are found in various classrooms, primarily at teacher preference throughout the District, in no place does the comprehensive place-based model for learning make the framework of the school. At Muddy Creek Charter School, every student in every classroom, in every grade, on every afternoon of every day, will spend a significant chunk of that afternoon working on project-based learning that it is an immersion in the rural, agricultural place that is south Benton County. The Charter applicants believe that this offers choices to students and parents, the potential to increase enrollment in the District, and frankly public school education.

Ms. Westly's presentation was cut short by a power outage.

**V. BOARD DISCUSSION REGARDING MUDDY CREEK CHARTER SCHOOL PROPOSAL**

Not undertaken due to the sudden adjournment.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Due to a power outage caused by a storm, Chair Rieck adjourned the meeting at 7:23 p.m. stating it would be rescheduled.

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Kari Rieck, Chair

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Dawn Tarzian, Superintendent

Prepared by Jolene Shute

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**NOTE:** On this date, the Board met in Executive Session at 5:30 p.m. under ORS 192.660(2)(d) – To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the district to carry on labor negotiations. The scheduled Executive Session at approximately 8:30 p.m. under ORS 192.660(2)(e) – To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the district to negotiate real property transactions was canceled due to the storm-induced power outage.