

MINUTES

Special Meeting of the

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Corvallis School District 509J
1555 SW 35th Street
Corvallis, OR 97333

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Gable called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. in the Central Office Board Room, 1555 SW 35th Street, Corvallis. Chair Gable dispensed with the calling of the roll and the secretary recorded those present as listed below.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Cyrel Gable, Chair
Robert Baldwin, Vice Chair
Joan Demarest, Member
Nell O'Malley, Member
Kari Rieck, Member

BOARD MEMBERS EXCUSED

Sara Gelser, Member
Robert Johnson, Member

PRINCIPALS PRESENT

Lois Rawers
Jay Conroy
Lynn Lahey
Gerry Kosanovic
Denise Gorthy
James Wickman

EXECUTIVE STAFF PRESENT

Jim Ford, Superintendent
Ron Corbell, Assistant Superintendent
Jeanne Holmes, Asst. to the Superintendent
Dawn Tarzian, Teaching & Learning Director
Duane Jager, Information Services Manager
Laverne Pitts, Foundation Director
Sharon Thornagle, Student Services Director
Kathy Rodeman, Business Services Director
Julie Catala, Board Secretary

PRINCIPALS PRESENT (Continued)

Karen Smith
Mike Strowbridge
Cathi Alden
Dawn Corliss
Marla McVay

A quorum was present and due notice had been published.

II. CORVALLIS SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET

Chair Gable explained that events of the legislature this past week prompted this meeting. She called upon Dr. Ford to provide some background for the evening's discussion.

Dr. Ford indicated that enrollment figures are coming in fairly close to projections. Principals have been submitting information to Dr. Ford on class sizes, and the data shows that class size is up across the district and is consistent across levels. He indicated that if the countywide income tax measure passed in September, it would alleviate class size by approximately three to five students per class. However, Dr. Ford recommended that the Board not use the additional money recently earmarked by the state (an additional \$1.7 million). He added that most Oregon school districts are doing the same as he is recommending, given that there will most likely be a referendum vote in February 2004.

Business Services Director Kathy Rodeman joined the conversation and stated two of the questions she has been asked recently: "How much of this difference of the \$1.7 million would come from the potential tax increase?" Ms. Rodeman indicated that almost all of it would come from the increase. She added that she believes all of it is at stake and maybe some of what was already approved in the 2002-03 budget. Ms. Rodeman said that another question she received was "What are other districts going to do with the money if they receive it?" She answered that it is not certain that schools will receive the funds. She clarified by stating that often when a legislature is faced with a situation such as this where a decision is up for a challenge, legislators do not even allocate the money. She opined that there is a good chance that the state will hold onto the money and not distribute it.

Chair Gable opened the floor to Board discussion.

Director O'Malley referenced an e-mail sent today by State School Superintendent Susan Castillo in which she recommended that school boards not give in to pressure from conservatives. Ms. O'Malley opined that the Corvallis School Board couldn't follow Ms. Castillo's direction given 509J's financial situation.

Chair Gable referenced the Corvallis School District budget that was based on a \$4.9 billion state allocation. She asked if that was the correct figure given the joint budget committee allocation passed last week of \$5.2 billion (and the fact that no K-12 budget has been adopted by the State).

In response to Chair Gable's question, Ms. Rodeman indicated that the State has allocated two payments already. The July and August payments were based on the joint co-chairs' budget of \$4.78 billion for the state school fund (509J's share is \$39 million). Corvallis budgeted based on \$4.9 million, but some leeway was allowed in case the state came up with more revenue than what was expected at the time. She added that in addition, some adjustments were included, such as the \$2.4 million of contingency that would only go into effect if the legislature came through with more money. Board action is required to spend funds held in contingency; tonight's meeting is to determine whether to increase spending at the beginning of the 2003-04 year based on the legislature's action last week. Dr. Ford recommends that spending not be increased over what was budgeted.

Director Baldwin posed a question: isn't it likely that voters will be deterred from voting for the countywide income tax measure because they will see the new tax as a double hit?

Director Gable indicated that the statewide measure would, on average, raise a person's taxes very slightly. She stated that she would want to convey to voters in Benton County that this potential state increase is extremely uncertain at this time and even if passed it will only bring \$1.7 million in additional revenue, whereas the local measure would potentially bring \$6 million to Corvallis alone. She added that she would want Benton County voters to know that the local measure is much more of a sure thing and far more adequate in meeting our needs than \$1.7 million.

Jeanne Holmes, Assistant to the Superintendent, offered a perspective: last year Corvallis School District cut \$6 million from the budget. She added that written into the countywide income tax measure is the option to reduce the tax proportionally should state funding increase.

Ms. Rodeman indicated that the state has yet to adopt a state school fund budget; however, legislators raised funds in anticipation of doing so. She pointed out that no one at the state level knows exactly what will happen and that some of Corvallis' revenue source is potentially at risk. She added that it appears as if Corvallis can count on an allocation fairly close to what was budgeted.

Dr. Ford began the conversation of class size by reading from an e-mail he received from Lois Rawers. Ms. Rawers wrote, '...class size is, in part, contingent upon the amount of its allocation a site diverts to support services (e.g., playground and cafeteria supervision, library, technology, behavior) and, in part, to the amount of funding from other sources (e.g., parent donations, Title I). For example, Hoover's average class sizes may seem relatively low (with some spikes at certain grade levels). However, I believe we are funding a fairly low level of support services beyond the classrooms. Furthermore, our parents have stepped forward to the tune of \$33,000.'

Ms. Holmes pointed out that students are still arriving to register at schools. She added that class size averages are misleading because one class can skew the numbers. There could be one class with 22 students, a few with 32 students, and one or two with 47 students.

Ms. Rodeman added that today's figures show our kindergarten numbers to be down somewhat. She said kindergarten is the grade with the largest discrepancy between what was budgeted and what is coming in. She said elementary and middle school numbers are down overall and high school numbers are up; however the numbers are less than one percent different than what principals had worked with district office staff in May to develop.

Director Rieck stated her opposition to risking a mid-year reduction, which would result in the need to cut school days. She added her concern over the possibility that we could get hit twice: having to cut the budget again and also not getting the funding.

Director Demarest echoed Director Rieck's sentiments, adding that she wished the legislature could pass something reliable. She feels we cannot trust that the money will materialize.

Director O'Malley stated her desire to take a conservative stance in this matter.

Director Baldwin agreed, but indicated his belief that the class size numbers will crush students and teachers.

Chair Gable opened the floor to comments from audience members.

Westland Middle School Principal James Wickman opined that being conservative in this matter is very prudent.

Chair Gable called for a motion to encapsulate the discussion.

Motion #16: It was moved by Director Baldwin and seconded by Director Rieck that the Board move forward with the 2003-04 budget as adopted.

Dr. Ford suggested, and the Board concurred, that the district state the level of appreciation felt for local legislators for the way they represented us.

The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

Chair Gable commented that Directors Gelser and Johnson, both unable to attend tonight's meeting, felt very strongly that the best approach is to move forward with the 2003-04 budget, as has just been decided by the Board members present at this meeting.

Ms. Rodeman thanked the Board for acting so promptly on this issue by having a special meeting. Dr. Ford echoed those sentiments.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Board, Chair Gable adjourned the meeting at 7:43 p.m.

Cyrel Gable, Chair

Jim Ford, Superintendent

Prepared by: Julie Catala
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