

MINUTES

Special Meeting #1 of the

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

Chair Gable called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m. in the Central Office Board Room, 1555 SW 35th Street, Corvallis. The meeting was called to follow Executive Session, which was held under ORS 192.660(1)(b), for the purpose of hearing complaints against staff members by Jeff and Mary Bowman. The Board moved from Executive Session to open session for the purpose of rendering a decision on the complaints.

Chair Gable dispensed with the calling of the roll and the secretary recorded those present as listed below.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Cyrel Gable, Chair
Sara Gelser, Vice Chair
Robert Baldwin, Member
Nell O'Malley, Member
Kari Rieck, Member

EXECUTIVE STAFF PRESENT

Ron Corbell, Assistant Superintendent
Julie Catala, Board Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS EXCUSED

Joan Demarest, Member
Bob Johnson, Member

A quorum was present and due notice had been published.

Chair Gable reminded those present that everything discussed in Executive Session is privileged information.

Chair Gable explained that a proposal had been made to fuel the remainder of the Board's discussion. The proposal is that the appeal heard in the preceding Executive Session be denied but that administration continue to work with the family to ensure that the needs of their two kids, particularly the sixth grade daughter, be met so she can proceed to seventh grade.

Board deliberation:

Director O'Malley commented that teachers who were trained in the '60s have a very different philosophy of education than teachers trained in the '90s. Training in the '60s had a teacher-centered approach. Some of what she heard during Executive Session reflects training in a different era and some sounds like insensitivity. The frustration is that teachers who were trained 30 years ago can no longer get the professional development they need so they fall back on techniques that are outdated and negative. Some of what the board heard in Executive Session is reflective of bad habits, but there's a bigger picture that we need to be advocating for more teacher training.

Director Rieck agreed with Director O'Malley's comments. She expressed a desire for administration to ensure the sixth grade daughter has the skills for seventh grade and to further address the family's concerns regarding next year. She indicated that she would vote to deny the appeal, but added that there are still steps that need to be addressed which require the involvement of district office personnel.

Director Baldwin pointed out that there is no way the board could uphold the family's appeal. Although the district cannot terminate arbitrarily, the district will do everything in its power to really keep the situation under the microscope and to take appropriate action. There is no one in district leadership who wants anything the family has described to happen to a child in a classroom. He told the family that they have been heard and that steps will be taken and retaken until the situation is rectified.

Director Gelser said she concurs with the comments of her fellow board members. She thanked the family for utilizing the complaint process.

Motion #53: Director O'Malley moved to deny the appeal based on the grounds that the board is not in a position to terminate the employee. She further moved that administration be directed to follow through and keep the board abreast of all developments in the future.

Director Baldwin seconded the motion.

Discussion ensued between board members and Assistant Superintendent Corbell regarding the impact of the motion and the interpretation of the Board's direction by district office staff. Mr. Corbell said he interpreted the direction to mean that he and school staff will ensure that the needs of the family's daughter are met and that she is prepared for school next year. Mr. Corbell made no commitment about moving the teacher to another building next year.

Mary Bowman said that although the information is readily available in the student/parent handbook, most parents she spoke with said they were unaware of the complaint procedure and that they had the right to take a complaint further than the principal level. She added, "Who reads the handbook?"

Mr. Corbell said that 99% of complaints are handled at the lowest level: teacher and parents or principal, teacher and parents. When parents call the district office, they are advised that there is a complaint process they may pursue further than the principal level.

A board member requested that district office staff report to the board on this matter by the end of the year.

The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

Chair Gable thanked those present for coming. She expressed hope that it has been made clear through the discussion in Executive Session and public session that the denial had to do with the fact that district administrators had done everything possible to address the complaint.

Chair Gable adjourned the meeting at 9:52 a.m.

Cyrel Gable, Chair

Ron Corbell, Assistant Superintendent

Prepared by: Julie Catala

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