

MINUTES

Special Meeting #2 of the

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

Chair Gable called the meeting to order at 11:12 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 a complaint against a staff member by Alexander Kurapov and Maya Korioukhina. The Board moved from Executive Session to open session for the purpose of rendering a decision on the complaint.

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
Jeanne Holmes
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 referred to discussion held in the preceding Executive Session. She pointed out that in 2001 the Board decided it was not in the district's best interest to have a policy that provides for early entry to kindergarten. She reminded the Board that when discussions were held in 2001 and the policy was changed, one of the factors discussed was the cost involved in both staff time and actual dollars to provide for these exceptions, adding that the cost in staff time is probably greater than the actual dollars.

In response to a question from Alexander Kurapov, Chair Gable estimated that testing each student would take approximately six hours.

Mr. Kurapov challenged that the six hours of staff time has already been expended for this appeal. He believes he has done the research needed for Board approval of his request to allow his son to enter kindergarten early.

Director O'Malley opined that there is a cost to the children who fail the testing; they are hurt and damaged.

Director Gelser stated that it is unwise to rush a policy change. She advocated for a first reading of a revised policy on early entry into kindergarten at the May 3, 2004 Board meeting, which would allow action at the June 28, 2004 Board meeting. She believes that having the policy in place in June would allow parents enough time to partake of testing and possibly enroll in kindergarten for the 2004-05 school year.

Motion #54: Director Gelser moved to deny the family's appeal for an exception to Policy JEBA – Early Entrance. She further moved that staff bring a first reading of a revised policy on early entry to kindergarten to the May 3, 2004 Board meeting. The policy should provide more flexibility for granting some exceptions.

Director Baldwin seconded the motion.

Director Rieck indicated doubt that a team could be put in place in time to bring something forth to the Board that has the research for a well thought out policy. She said she does not think such a timeline is fair to staff, who are overburdened as it is. She expressed her preference to assemble a team of district staff to look into the matter and develop a possible policy change. She pointed out her reluctance to firmly state that a change would be made to the policy.

Director Gelser opined that harm is being done by not allowing this family's child into the district, and added that she is aware of another family that wishes to make the same request for an exception to existing policy. She recommended going to a policy in between the old and existing versions, and said it would not take staff into uncharted territory. She said she considers this action to be a minor course correction that is close to a place where the district has been in recent years, not a major shift in policy.

Director O'Malley said she likes the option put forth by Director Gelser because it is meeting this family's need. She wants to acknowledge the work the family has done.

Director Baldwin suggested adding a sentence to the policy indicating that there may be extraordinary circumstances that would allow the district to make exceptions.

Chair Gable stated her preference to follow Director Rieck's position. She said she believes adoption of the motion on the table creates a foregone conclusion that the policy will be changed

and she is not sure that it has been given the study and thought that would lead the Board to that conclusion. She indicated her desire to ask staff to deliver the Board more study on the matter.

The motion was voted on. Directors Gelser, Baldwin and O'Malley voted in favor of the motion. Chair Gable and Director Rieck voted against the motion. Four votes (a majority of the full Board) are required for any motion to pass; therefore, the motion failed.

Motion #55: Director Rieck moved to deny the family's appeal for an exception to Policy JEBA – Early Entrance. She further moved that staff be directed to develop a team that will come to the June 28, 2004 Board meeting with a recommendation on a change to the early kindergarten entry policy.

Chair Gable seconded the motion.

Board discussion:

Director Gelser opined that the only difference between the first and second motions is that the second motion delays the timeline for a decision until July, which she believes makes it very difficult for a family to enroll in kindergarten for the fall. She reiterated her belief that there does not need to be a huge policy change, just something to give the district the flexibility to make exceptions. She said the district wants people to be able to have their kids attend public schools. The change can be a vague one that allows district and Board discretion. She said the district must be able to meet the individualized needs for kids. She said that in this situation, she believes this student is ready for kindergarten; she cannot reconcile making the family wait another year to enroll their son.

Director Rieck pointed out the legal needs for having specific guidelines for allowing early entry, which are objective and concrete, and added that staff needs time to develop a plan. She stated her need for adequate time to make a decision because she does not possess expertise in this arena. She said the Board should not be making a decision about allowing a student early entry. She clarified that she is only asking for a review of the policy, not a policy change. She is asking for a review and recommendation, leaving open what the recommendation is. She said she trusts what staff will recommend.

The motion was voted on. Chair Gable and Director Rieck voted in favor of the motion. Directors Gelser, Baldwin and O'Malley voted against the motion. Four votes (a majority of the full Board) are required for any motion to pass; therefore, the motion failed.

Discussion ensued regarding holding a special Board meeting in May to allow enough time for staff to prepare a recommendation to the Board, as well as to allow a first reading on any suggested policy revision in time for action at the June Board meeting.

Chair Gable asked Assistant Superintendent Ron Corbell to comment on the questions. Mr. Corbell requested holding a special meeting immediately preceding the May 24, 2004 Board work session to allow staff adequate time to conduct the necessary research.

Director O'Malley said she wanted to revisit the family's request for an exception to the policy.

Mr. Richards, district legal counsel, said the Board does not have legal authority to grant an exception to the policy. (Mr. Richards had previously pointed out that the Board's only options were to either deny the family's complaint appeal altogether or deny the appeal and revisit the policy.)

Motion #56: Director Gelser moved to deny the family's complaint appeal, and direct staff to study the issue of early entrance to kindergarten and return to the board with a recommendation. She further moved that if a change in Policy JEBA – Early Entrance is suggested, a second reading should occur at the June 28, 2004, Board of Directors meeting.

Director O'Malley seconded the motion.

The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

Chair Gable adjourned the meeting at 11:55 a.m.

Cyrel Gable, Chair

Ron Corbell, Assistant Superintendent

Prepared by: Julie Catala

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