

GEORGE-LITTLE ROCK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

The George-Little Rock Board of Education met for a work session on Monday, December 9, 2019 in the High School Library in George. Board President Kristi Landis called the meeting to order at 5:33 pm with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. Board members present were Kristi Landis, Wade Netten, Andrew Sprock, and Jason Fugitt. Austin Lloyd was expected to arrive late. Also in attendance were Superintendent Pat O'Donnell, Board Secretary Cathy Bonestroo, and guests Valecia West, and Nyla Hellinga.

A quorum was established. Landis announced the protocol for work sessions and that public comments or public discussions are not allowed at work sessions.

Superintendent Pat O'Donnell shared the board meeting schedule for the year with the understanding that sometimes dates, times, and locations may need to be changed. Consent agenda was discussed with explanation that items would be up for discussion and any items needing more discussion or items needing to be abstained from would be pulled out for individual votes, while the rest would be approved under the consent agenda with one motion, a second, discussion, and one vote. O'Donnell shared that the focus on board packets will be to minimize with full documentation available at the meeting. He stressed it is the board's meeting and they can go back away from consent agenda if preferred.

O'Donnell shared the basics of Iowa School Finance for the district and how complex and different it is from the business world. He explained four main points 1) that finances and budget are driven by the number of students, 2) the board has control over a small portion of the levy rate, 3) certain funds for different things and laws about different funds and how to use, and 4) that schools are labor intensive industry with 80% of general operating fund to salaries and benefits. Dillon's Rule (schools can only do what is stated in law) and Home Rule (cities and counties can do what they want unless it says they can't) was explained noting schools are very restricted. He also shared the ceiling for the general fund which is different than other states. Spending authority (the ceiling) determines how much a district is allowed to spend by law in the general fund without consideration to what they have for cash balances. Austin Lloyd arrived at 5:40 pm.

School funding is a per child basis which means district receives a set amount from the state multiplied by the number of children from the certified enrollment the fall before (October) which is not usually the number of children actually served in the district. Separate funds (sometimes called silos) are set for different expenditures with laws for which funds can be used for different things which explains why raises may be low but facility improvements still occur since it is separate money. Facility expenditures are not in the formula. Further explanations were given regarding school weightings, enrollment, and that about 40% of most schools run a deficit in special ed which allows a school to request more authority, but receives no cash to cover the expenditures.

The district's financial position was reviewed including true spending authority (spending authority less categorical or restricted funds), solvency ratio with a recommended target of 10-13%, cash reserves, and miscellaneous income. District finances can be controlled by increasing miscellaneous income or decreasing expenditures. A reminder was given that the \$94,000 anticipated this year and next from the state for the school improvement will no longer be received. Enrollment history and new money (state aid changes) history was shared with projections also shared. It was noted that the current year new money was negative with the needed budget cuts not made which can result in a compounding affect. The importance of advocacy was addressed particularly with restricted funding which limits how some

money can be used and GLR's high balance in some restricted areas also impacting the district. Keeping kids in the district was addressed with the daycare as a possible option to assist.

Levies were also explained, noting that PPEL is approved through fiscal year 30. The revenue purpose statement needs to be passed in the next year or two for the state wide penny tax which was extended by the state from 2029. O'Donnell shared the current bonded debt is \$1,735,000 from the new auditorium and gymnasium. 60% majority is needed to pass a bond issue. O'Donnell shared to bring the facilities to where they are needed a bond issue may need to be considered for a maximum of 20 years noting you can bond against future revenues from the penny tax. Voting dates would need to be considered for bonding with the need to wait 6 months to represent for another vote.

Quality educational program must be in balance with academic program and the financial program both must be healthy. O'Donnell shared previous goals he used at Sioux Center including class sizes and that the target of 15-20 students per class is difficult with finances, noting it is very expensive to maintain class sizes under 20. Curricular program is being reviewed with teacher leaders meeting to discuss creating professional development that is meaningful and planned for the future to meet building needs and levels within the buildings. Goals are math and reading as identified for us. How meet kids at their levels and teachers at their levels is the focus. Having the teacher leadership group highly involved insulates from leader change. A professional development culture is needed noting there are expectations for kids and the teachers jobs is to get kids to those levels. O'Donnell also noted expectations for teachers as well, with our jobs to get them where they need to be. Extensive training when given teachers something new is necessary. Computers was given as a main example noting to put computers in teachers hands should have included the necessary needed training or it's not worth it. K-8 ARC program is implemented for literacy and how to improve is professional development goal. Assessments include three sides of curriculum, instruction, and assessment triangle. Hire and maintain quality teaching staff is a focus and to make GLR people's home noting tenure goes a long way with improving instruction and achievement with tone set at the top.

Questions discussed included class size questions noting it is not board policy and discussion with board will be needed. Goals and benchmarks to drive conversations. Board table discussions and vote splits will happen, but when decision is made all members need to walk out and need to support the process. Work together as board and superintendent team is critical.

Landis noted that discussion and decisions will need to be made on the superintendent search soon.

A motion to adjourn the work session at 6:48 pm was made by Netten, seconded by Fugitt, and carried 5-0.