

GEORGE-LITTLE ROCK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

The George-Little Rock Board of Education met for a special session on Wednesday, April 5 in the superintendent office in the GLR central office building in George. President Austin Lloyd called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Board members present were Austin Lloyd, Andrew Sprock, Jason Fugitt, Andrea Johnson, and Matt Mitchell. Also in attendance were Superintendent Tom Luxford, Board Secretary/School Business Official Cathy Bonestroo, Principal Tyler Glanzer, Principal Karie Aeikens, and guests Valecia West, Jim McConnell, Brenda Sandbulte, Trish Rockman, Mitzi Wynia, Sheri Stratman, Kris Hamilton, Kristi Donaker, Ashley Klaassen, Miranda Dreesen, Samantha Everhart, and Dave Klaahsen.

A quorum was established. No citizens submitted paperwork to address the board during public comment portion, therefore no public comment was received.

A motion to adopt the agenda was made by Mitchell, seconded by Fugitt, and carried 5-0.

Matt Gillespie with Piper Sandler reviewed the summary of bond proposals with five received from three banks. Noncallable and callable bonds were presented for pre-pay, restructure, or refinance. Lowest bids were received from JPMorgan Chase at 3.62% noncallable and 3.69% callable which would give flexibility. Total interest is quite similar with \$8,387 over the life assuming to pay until maturity. Flexibility just in case is worth the difference as unsure of school board, school needs, or possible borrowing or interest changes. Listing of all banks who were sent proposal requests was presented sharing some only rule on property tax bonds and this bond is sales tax and not property tax. Issuance of \$2,810,000 principal along with \$300,000 ESSER and estimating \$29,140 of cash pending project bids received. Costs of issuance presented as \$44,390 plus bond agent, attorney, HVAC, plus engineering. Bond repayment schedule is through 2030 due to revenue purpose statement extension needed. Revenue purpose statement election is simple and obvious vote and required for all school districts. The revenue purpose statement vote is anticipated with the November election and needed for borrowing or spending beyond 2030 and through 2051. Bond timeline was again shared. It was agreed upon to have the callable option for the bond seeing it more beneficial for the future of the district.

Lee Hilbrands arrived at 5:38 pm.

A motion was made to accept the resolution directing the sale of \$2,810,000 of school infrastructure sales services and use tax revenue bonds series 2023 to JPMorgan Chase Bank of Chicago, Illinois at 3.69% callable rate by Fugitt, seconded by Mitchell. Roll call vote was taken with Fugitt, Johnson, Mitchell, Sprock, and Lloyd all ayes, no nays, motion approved with resolution adopted.

Jim McConnell presented on behalf of the bus drivers with updates from the driver activity scheduling meeting held. Stories were shared from continuing ed and other school bus tragedies that have happened. Drivers receive gratification from working with co-workers and helping students. Pay scale was also discussed at the meeting with a letter from drivers presented about the pay scale noting low activity hourly pay compared to neighboring schools. Drivers are ok with most of the pay amounts approved, but not the activity hourly pay. Drivers feel disrespected from the initial recommendation increasing the rate from \$13.31 to \$13.71 and district proposed amended pay increase to \$15.50. Also presented was the need for another bus. Board questioned if one additional bus is sufficient or if additional needs are there. Lee Hilbrands also spoke requesting to be treated fairly with appreciation for what they do. Lloyd thanked Jim for presenting and expressed the district's value for the bus drivers. McConnell, D. Klaassen, and Hilbrands left the meeting.

Brenda Sandbulte thanked the past school boards, administration, and staff for the support received over the last 30 years contributing to her most recent award. She expressed appreciation for former Superintendent Nichols seeing value of the speech program designating speech as being equal to athletic coach and Principal Range for breaking up her contracts noting she covers 3 athletic seasons. She recognized GLR for one of the largest speech teams in all divisions in the state and having the most all-state speech nominations of any other school no matter the size. She shared she is speaking for herself although recognized others are present sharing her limited time before retirement in upcoming years and expressed concerns. She wants her legacy to be that she was a good teacher and others learned a lot from her sharing she has had several offers over the last couple decades and chose to stay here because she loves the district but expressed decisions would be different now knowing her retirement would be different if she would have left. Concern was expressed over teacher pay versus other districts recognizing the load is great and getting tougher to manage, sharing the board can't ask teachers to continue to make the same sacrifices. She recognized the load of some teachers and the inequity between staff schedules and loads and overflowing elementary classrooms. She expressed the dedicated teachers got the district off the ESSA designation changing and adopting new curriculum and not during their contract time. Last year's pay increase was approximately \$1200 with this year's \$750 wage increase plus increased district insurance contribution which was noted as means nothing for those who don't take insurance. She expressed gratitude but also recognized many years of teachers receiving nothing or additional leave day instead of wage increase. She shared the standard of living 6% increase is also a concern and that she is tired of writing recommendation letters but some have no choice but to move to another district as simply can't afford to stay and need to do what's best for their families. She expressed concern for GLR's future, and staff are worried with running short-staffed and concern of meeting state compliance. Inequity starts with teachers with huge loads vs those with lighter loads based on needs. She requested to consider what to do to get and keep new teachers and balance inequity within the district. Systematic problems education is facing and teacher shortages with great people leaving education. She requested to show staff that they are valued financially to stay within the district and that raising taxes is ok to give teachers what they need. She expressed that the board can do something about it or just listen to the message and brush off and remain indifferent but tired of the revolving door and losing teachers. Lloyd expressed appreciation to Brenda for sharing. Rockman, Stratman, Wynia, A. Klaassen, Hamilton, and Everhart left the meeting.

Superintendent Luxford shared consideration for one preschool location instead of holding in both communities. Initial concern was expressed about preschool transportation to Little Rock. Additional logistics to consider include collaboration with teachers, disconnect from peers and colleagues, library materials, and experience with other students. Principals were asked for input. Educational reasons are agreed upon for change for being part of school, being with other kids, preschool staff consistency, and the option for families to drive their students if desired. One town and one room is favorable versus hardships of not being part of anything with the school including elementary specials, challenges of disconnecting from daycare to preschool from play time to learn time, and library which is not a requirement but is part of the schedule with book availability. Transportation was discussed as an understandable concern, but buses are one of safest vehicles. Behaviors were also discussed sharing with TK having bus buddies to assist at the beginning and not seeing issues. Completely understand parents' viewpoint, but reality is they are fine on a bus. Differences are being seen with testing between the sites but shared not always comparing apples to apples with higher numbers in one location where it could be split more evenly if one location. Concern of moving more kids out of George 3rd year in a row was noted with anticipated hard sell to a George mom. Aikens shared she has been asking George moms and was surprised on some of the answers and the support received. It is believed the benefits outweigh the challenges. Action will be taken with a decision at the April 17 board meeting. Consideration needs to be given to parents' viewpoints and open enrollment concerns. Transportation will need to be considered with the need to discuss with Jim regarding the impact prior to the April 17 meeting.

Luxford shared director districts and method of election for redistricting every 10 years from census is needed. Lloyd needs more information about remapping director districts. Process and rules were questioned with Luxford sharing more information will be presented on April 17.

Amended lunchroom walk-in cooler freezer bid was presented changing the agreement from \$89,875 to \$77,690 with Luxford following up on building permit requirements and submitting necessary paperwork required. 2023-2024 head custodian and maintenance increase was recommended at \$.30/hour increase to an hourly rate of \$20.30/hour for 12 month year-round staff at 40 hours/week with only holidays off with 10 hours of overtime/week allowed pending an additional hire and upon superintendent's pre-approval. Discussion was held on the rate of pay, job duties and differences between buildings. Right now same pay scale made most sense and decision was made upon hire that they were similar roles. Discussion was held regarding the difference in the buildings with number of students, square footage, and activities with it stated the board needs to rely on administration for justification for comparability. Wages are reviewed each spring and administration would need to justify if roles are different at that time. Job qualifications and experience, proven job quality, and significantly higher rate upon hire were also discussed. Committee meetings and having other board members in attendance were questioned, with Luxford sharing they cannot have all members as then board would have a quorum. Board members were encouraged to discuss concerns or circumstances to understand recommendations of committee members with questions running through committee members. Discussion was held that district new money was all used with teacher negotiation settlement. It was also noted the increases and doing everything we can in last 3 years for the staff, but also need to be viable in future years as well while giving as much as we can. Transportation rates originally proposed were 3% with additional discussions to amend original recommendations for Saturday hourly from \$19.04/hour initially proposed to amend to \$23.25/hour, Sioux Falls special ed route from 1 stop and 2 stop rates amending to \$67.63 per round trip with unlimited stops, and activity hourly rate changing from the initial proposal of \$13.71/hour to amended recommendation of \$15.50/hour. Board discussed activity hourly rates to possibly increase further to a rate of \$16.50-\$17.00 per hour placing towards the top of AEA wages. New money was again mentioned that all of the district new money was spent on teacher negotiations. All staff are important and difficult to single out and fairness questioned of \$6.00/hour raise. It was recommended to pull from consent agenda and hold another finance meeting to rework numbers.

2023-2024 insurance plan contributions were revisited for 2 groups with Lloyd sharing changes were an oversight. Full-time 12 month 260 day 40 hours/week and 9 month full time 40 hours/week will increase from \$7007 to \$7500 with 35-40 hours/week qualifications being reinstated to \$6000 from the change originally presented of \$5000. Additional 2023-2024 agreements and rates for accompanists from \$10/hour to \$20/hour and stats were presented for basketball remaining the same, but adding volleyball stats for payment. Discussion was held regarding the amount for the stats to further discuss next year.

Agreement and contract deadline and process were discussed. Job postings will occur upon receipt of a resignation, not waiting for board approval to allow for earlier candidates. Growth position will need board approval prior for additional positions added. Contract and work agreement deadlines being met were discussed noting discussions held that positions can be posted if contract and work agreement deadlines are not met and increases can be voided. Positions without resignations or contracts will be given one final reminder with extended deadline and will then post job opening with application process followed.

Bonestroo presented a budget power point sharing the different funds and complexity of school finance with revenues and expenses allowed for each fund noting they are all separate "silos" or pots of money. Example given was that building improvements are a different fund or "pot of money" from general fund which is operations consisting of salaries, supplies, transportation, maintenance, and utilities for example. Budgets are determined and set by the state formula based on spending authority which sets spending limits based on enrollment for the general fund. The Iowa school finance funding formula does not allow

districts to increase taxes for budget issues noting as taxpayers we all want what's best for the district, but it is simply not that easy with complex Iowa school finance formula. Open enrollment was noted as the biggest concern for the district with current open enrollment out numbers up ten students from October of 2022 resulting in about \$75,000 projected increased costs for open enrollment. Targeted expenditure totals and explanation of what contributes to each line were shared for 23-24 and projected revenues noting the decrease in federal funds due to the end of ESSA and ESSER funding. Restricted funds and the increased chart of account numbers for tracking and the need to know how and where items are used in order to properly code and put the district in the best financial position utilizing restricted funds was shared. Inflation impacting the district was also noted. Controlling the budget through miscellaneous income and following the line-item budget for expenditures is important. The budget process timeline was explained as starting annually in November with the ability for all staff to provide input for considerations. The unknowns at the time of the budget were shared as higher projections than the line item budget for cushioning for the unknowns with constant and consistent communication needed for best financial management. Processes established with the auditors were also addressed and the need to follow processes in place to assist with efficiencies, effectiveness, and better management operations and functioning for the district. Everyone's role in following laws, district policies and procedures were also shared including all spending must follow Iowa Code for each fund, keeping funds separate, and that all revenues and expenses must run through the district business office and the district accounts. District culture and climate and considerations were also shared with needs of GLR district-wide teamwork, consistent and sincere communication, district procedures, supporting each other, addressing issues, accountability, meeting deadlines and the trickle down effects when deadlines not met, staff burnout and full schedules for everyone, staying within job roles and duties, promoting and marketing the district, and district goals needed.

Resignations were presented for Brent Fedders, Industrial Tech teacher and CTE Skills USA sponsor; Mandi Ver Beek, head cross country coach; and Tina Sherrill-Range, district media librarian and TAG. Lloyd expressed his appreciation for their service. Recommendations for hire were presented for Ethan Van Briesen, assistant baseball coach at \$2,829; Brian Luenberger, middle school baseball coach at \$2,153; Lexi Olivera, MS/HS summer ESY teacher at \$20/hour with hours presented.

A motion to pull 2023-2024 select transportation rates amendment was made by Mitchell, seconded by Johnson, and carried 5-0.

A motion to approve the remaining consent agenda was made by Fugitt, seconded by Sprock, and carried 5-0. Consent agenda items included amended lunch room walk in freezer cooler bid for \$77,690; head custodian and maintenance increases and work agreements for Jodi DeGroot and Jerry Smit; 2023-2024 district amended insurance plan contributions; 2023-2024 additional agreements and rates for Shari Kruse, basketball stats of \$150 for girls basketball and \$150 for boys basketball for the seasons and adding volleyball stats of \$150 for the season; Tim Mauldin, basketball home event supervision of \$50 per home double header; accompanist rates paid at \$20/hour with bill submitted to the business office; resignations as presented for Brent Fedders, Industrial Tech; Mandi Ver Beek, head cross country; Tina Sherrill-Range, district media librarian and TAG; recommendations for hire as presented for Ethan Van Briesen, assistant baseball coach at \$2,829; Brian Luenberger, middle school baseball coach at \$2,153; and Lexi Olivera, MS/HS summer ESY teacher at \$20/hour with hours presented.

A motion to adjourn was made at 7:33 pm by Johnson, seconded by Mitchell, and carried 5-0.