

Grass Lake Community Schools

899 South Union Street • Grass Lake, Michigan 49240
(517) 522-5540 • Fax (517) 522-8195

Grass Lake Community Schools Regular Board of Education Meeting

Wednesday, April 14, 2010
7:00 p.m.

Grass Lake Middle School
Library/Media Center

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Darrell Hart
Florine Herendeen
John Paterra
Loretta Ryan
Tim Waskiewicz
David Wright

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mark Burnett

ADMINISTRATORS

Brad Hamilton
Michelle Clark
Doug Moeckel
Andi Overmyer
Jeanene Satterthwaite
Brian Thompson

GUESTS

Jane Anderson
Joelyn Artz
Kelly Bagby
Terri Burg
Kathy Camilleri
Lori Dobbs
Margaret Henthorne

Jeremy Koch
Cody Lester
Shannon Maynard
Rhonda Mosher
Carlene Pindzia
Nancy Rigg
Deanna Rouster

Fritz Schinck
Sue Schinck
Jenny Shoemaker
Jennifer Sullivan
Jennifer Taylor
Jena Tengman
Janet Welch

PRESIDING OFFICER:

Tim Waskiewicz, President

Certified Correct

John Paterra, Secretary

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1. Call to Order

President Waskiewicz called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

2. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Member Hart, supported by Member Wright, to approve the agenda, with reversing items VI and VII. Reports of the Superintendent will be VI and Hearing of Citizens will be VII. All present voted Aye. Motion Carried.

3. Approval of Minutes

Moved by Member Herendeen supported by Member Hart, to approve the minutes as presented. All present voted Aye.

4. Presentation of Bills for Payment

Moved by Member Hart, supported by Member Herendeen, to approve paying bills in the amount of \$689,145.23. All present voted Aye. Motion Carried.

5. Correspondence

All board members received an invitation to the upcoming Prom. Mr. Hamilton called attention to a handout for the board from the Jackson County ISD.

6. Reports of the Superintendent for Information

A. Future Committee Meetings

Mr. Hamilton informed the board that Athletic Director McCalla had asked to schedule an Athletic Committee Meeting. They would need to plan about an hour for the meeting. The members of the committee were Mark Burnett, John Paterra and David Wright. The committee members agreed to meet the following Monday, April 19, 7:30 p.m., in the Superintendent's Office.

B. Budget Progress

Mr. Hamilton reported that the Legislators were back in session after a two-week recess and they were getting pressure to do something with the retirement package.

Mr. Hamilton reported on the ISD budget meeting that he had attended the previous night. He said the local school districts had to approve the ISD budget by May 30th. The ISD was trying to get their budget ready by May 1 so local boards would have time to review it before they voted on approval. Because of a decrease in property values, the ISD was budgeting a 4% reduction in property taxes. The ISD planned to reimburse local districts about the same next year as this year. The ISD will be down to 2% in special education fund equity after next year, which might mean that local districts would not get 100% special education funding from the ISD in future years. Special education programs are federally mandated, so they can't be cut, even if the local school districts have to be responsible for the funding.

Also at the meeting, Mr. Hamilton had received an RFP for combining transportation services county-wide. He was not sure if this would provide any savings for Grass Lake, but districts could decide to opt in or opt out of the proposal. Mr. Hamilton added that the role of the board was to look at any of these options as they came along to see if they offered any savings for the district.

The Jackson County ISD issued 19 layoff letters, which was unprecedented in this county. This was a sign of how bad the budget situation was in Michigan.

The state aid for next year was still unknown, as well as the enrollment. If the district laid off six teachers, five aides and a few other people for next year, and if the \$165 and \$118 cuts and the increased retirement rate were approved, the budget would still be \$354,000 in the hole. That would be the best-case scenario so far from the state, which all the state organizations were saying not to count on and that it would probably be much worse. With the worst case scenario, there could be a budget deficit of \$730,000. Mr. Hamilton added that this budget problem was not created by the district; it was created by the state.

Mr. Hamilton explained that if there was any carryover (unexpended from line items in the budget this year) and more growth than expected, it was possible that the deficit could be less. The Board has already agreed to put in \$450,000 out of fund equity, but the question remained of how to take care of the remaining negative \$350,000 amount.

Mr. Hamilton explained his budget process; how he looked at the worst case scenario and tried to figure out how to save everyone's job and how to save programs; and how to maintain the programs even with staff cuts. The reality is that it wouldn't work very well this year. He added that the announcement would come in the near future of any cuts, staff and/or programs. Mr. Hamilton planned to meet again with everyone who would be getting a layoff notice. Again, the goal was to look at all the angles and possibilities for savings and try to make the best possible decisions. Mr. Hamilton suggested thinking of it as "resizing," as opposed to "downsizing." Mr. Hamilton added that it doesn't make anyone feel good to make cuts. He reassured community members that the district would still have an average of only 24 students per class, which was much lower than other districts.

C. Strategic Goals Update

Mr. Hamilton reported that the administrators continued to discuss goals in their meetings. He felt that the district was doing very well in moving forward with the goals, in spite of the current financial climate.

There was some discussion of when the group that set the goals should meet again. It was agreed that since the goals were just updated in November that they should wait until August to meet again, just before the next school year. It was suggested that a meeting could be tied in with a tour of the construction project at the high school since that fit in with one of the goals.

D. Kindergarten Round Up

Mrs. Clark reported that 81 students had gone through kindergarten round up.

7. Hearing of Citizens

There were questions and discussions about the athletic budget, pay-for-play, eliminating athletics completely, upkeep of the athletic fields, class size, and only having one librarian/media specialist in the district.

Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Waskiewicz estimated that with 200 students paying \$200 each to play sports, it would net the district about \$40,000, which was well short of the \$750,000 that the district would need. If athletics was cut, this would only save \$275,000 out of the \$8 million dollar budget. The athletic budget had already been cut 10% and they were looking to cut more. In addition, the district would lose students, which would cost the district more money than it was saving from eliminating athletics. Mr. Waskiewicz commented that the board has considered pay-for-play every year since he has been on the board, but the feeling had always been that there would be too many students who could not afford to pay to play.

Mr. Waskiewicz and Mr. Hamilton responded to questions about paying an outside company to care for the athletic fields. Mr. Hamilton responded to the question about laying off the second media specialist by saying that other districts that were larger only had one librarian for the whole district. There was much discussion of class size, especially at the elementary.

Mr. Waskiewicz replied to a question about hiring an attorney to conduct contract negotiations. He stated that the board had decided to do this in November, in light of the budget challenges in the state and the district. He responded to a request and said he would supply the cost information on the athletic field care and the attorney.

There were suggestions from several community members about conducting an employee satisfaction survey and a community survey. Mr. Waskiewicz responded that the district had conducted surveys in the past and one was used during the Strategic Planning Process when the most recent goals were produced. Mr. Hamilton added that the district had a great staff and staff members were involved in committees and leadership teams where they could share ideas and suggestions for the district.

Mr. Waskiewicz concluded the discussion by saying that the budget process was more difficult than usual this year and it would be a longer process in determining staff layoffs and class sizes for next year.

8. Reports of the Superintendent for Action

A. Approve Resolution for State School Aid Budget

Moved by Member Hart, supported by Member Paterra to approve the Resolution for the State School Aid Budget. All present voted Aye. Motion Carried.

B. Pilot Breakfast Program for George Long Elementary

As requested at a previous board meeting, Mrs. Pindzia presented a proposal to the board to pilot a breakfast program to serve breakfast in the classrooms at George Long Elementary. She showed the board a sample of an insulated carrier, one of the 26 that she had received at no cost from the American Dairy Association. Inside the carrier was a sample breakfast. Mrs. Pindzia explained that the carriers would be delivered to the classrooms at 7:45 every morning. By 8:10 they would return to collect the carriers from the rooms. Also, teachers could put their lunch deposit for the day in the carrier and they wouldn't have to send a student to the cafeteria.

Mrs. Pindzia reviewed the proposal, menus, and copies of "Z" reports. The plan was to conduct the program the last three weeks in May. She added that she had presented information about the program to the elementary teachers just that morning and she was waiting for feedback from them. Jennifer Sullivan spoke and said she thought it was a great idea. Although there were some logistic concerns, the teachers felt it was worth a try because there were many students who didn't have breakfast before school.

Moved by Member Ryan, supported by Member Paterra, to approve the Pilot Breakfast Program. All present voted Aye. Motion Carried.

9. Unfinished Business

Mr. Hamilton informed the board that the Imagination Station had closed suddenly the previous week. The preschool/day care program had been able to accommodate a number of those students. In addition, the decision was made to start a toddler room to accommodate some of the younger students. The new room had passed the first inspection and they were preparing for the second inspection. There were seven toddlers on the list waiting for the room to open.

Mr. Hamilton stated that the district didn't start the preschool to run other businesses out. The preschool was created to meet a need in the community and to help bring students into the school.

Mr. Waskiewicz said he was happy to announce that Mr. Hamilton decided not to take the superintendent position in Howell and would be staying in Grass Lake. The board was confident in Mr. Hamilton's leadership and ability to lead the district.

10. Executive Session

A. Contract Negotiations

Moved by Member Ryan, supported by Member Hart to move into Executive Session. Member Wright – yes, Member Ryan – yes, Member Herendeen – yes, Member Paterra – yes, Member Hart – yes, Member Waskiewicz – yes.

Moved by Member Ryan, supported by Member Wright, to move out of Executive Session. All present voted Aye. Motion Carried.

11. Adjournment

Moved by Member Ryan, supported by Member Wright, to adjourn the meeting. All present voted Aye. Motion Carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.