

Black River Falls
April 21, 2011
Meeting #18

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE SCHOOL
DISTRICT OF BLACK RIVER FALLS ON APRIL 21, 2011 AT 5:30 P.M. IN THE
LUNDA THEATER.

The special meeting was called to order by Treasurer Ron Wirtz at 5:31 pm.

Roll call was taken.

Board Members Present: Don Mathews, Susan Olstad, Ron Wirtz, Laurel Meek,
Mary Jo Rozmenoski

Board Members Absent: Ramie Bakken, Lois Corey

Ron Wirtz thanked everyone for coming and for their contribution to the topics at hand. He thanked the staff for their patience and professionalism, and he thanked the administration for their efforts in preparing information for the board.

Ron Wirtz established the ground rules for the budget hearing as follows:

1. State your name for record purposes.
2. Give everyone the opportunity to provide input before returning for a second time.
3. Keep comments to a couple of minutes.
4. Speak briefly on topics that have already been mentioned and proceed to new items in a timely manner.
5. Treat each other with respect.

Ron Wirtz noted that after each comment, the board members will respond as best as they can. He also emphasized that we are all on the same team and are all focused on achieving positive outcomes.

By a show of hands, the audience preferred to view the following reports prior to starting public comment:

- Survey Results
- District Office Relocation Report
- Furlough Day Report
- Capital Maintenance Report
- Budget Development Priorities Report
- Reduction/Layoff/Resignation/Retirement Report
- Budget Development List (with insurance savings)

Barb Gluch pointed out that there really is a need for the speech/language pathologist position. She referred to the configuration of Special Education caseloads. Barb expressed her concern about the school nurse position becoming a “coordinator”.

Jenny Hefty stressed the importance of providing Special Education students with services, knowing their needs, and properly training staff (aides, bus drivers, etc.).

Amy Yaeger suggested a variety of ideas including borrowing one million dollars in order to save staff and programs.

Michael Doud shared his concerns about a four-day week due to a child’s short attention span. He noted the importance of meeting student needs and maintaining Special Education.

Tina Gilbertson wanted the board to consider the effect that cuts will have at all levels. She stated that losing teachers is detrimental. She asked why the district keeps putting money into a building (Third Street) that was determined to be in poor condition years ago. Tina suggested that data be prepared regarding the connection between SAGE numbers and test results. She asked about the student teacher ratios that were included in the priorities report. She recommended that the board consider the class sizes at the high school that would result upon cuts.

Corey Fisher questioned the increases that continue to occur with administrative salaries and benefits. He also questioned whether or not the Black River Area Green School is necessary.

Lisa Ocokoljich supported the need for aides (particularly in Special Education). She asked for clarification about the structure of Music, Art, and Physical Education upon cuts.

Shelly Wise discussed the safety concerns in relation to a four-day week and shared several other thoughts about the budget scenarios.

Brian Stemper asked about details regarding furlough days, insurance, and the decision/voting process. He spoke for the Tech. Ed. Department and the cuts that they have already faced.

Jill responded to Amy Yaeger’s suggestion about borrowing one million dollars without referendum by explaining that the repayment would have to occur under the revenue limit which is already strapped for dollars.

Amy Yaeger pleaded with the board to consider entering into a memorandum of understanding with the teaching staff.

Jenny Hefty spoke about the tension that has been created from the budget situation. She mentioned doing more fundraising, getting parents involved, focusing on our teachers, and reaching common ground.

Kris Geier talked about not being in favor of closing Third Street due to the potential overcrowding and the ineffectiveness of Art and Music on a cart.

Barb Blackdeer-Mackenzie supported the BRAGS program, suggested that all businesses work together, and recommended cost sharing with other districts. She said that every student should get a chance to learn, especially if they need special education.

Dan Olson represented the Tech. Ed. Department and the success that has come from their programs. He invited board members to observe his classroom, teaching, and students.

Tony Boerger expressed his concern about the disproportionate cuts and the affects on the high school.

Sue Millis reiterated the ideas that she shared via BRF Comments and encouraged board members to stop by the schools to help visualize and tour the facilities. She recommended making cuts that don't directly affect students.

Barb Blackdeer-Mackenzie added to the thoughts she she previously shared.

Lisa Ocokoljich observed that we need to approach these decisions as one entity. This one entity needs to work together and bridge gaps between buildings.

Donna Wojciechowski inquired about the board's knowledge of STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math) and explained that Steve Nyman was an unbelievable partner in this project. She said that the board should have talked to the teachers and identified that we want our students to be problem solvers but we aren't being very good problem solvers ourselves. Donna welcomed the board to the high school to see her in action.

Dave Meyer mentioned that the board needs to get more involved with the administrators.

Mathew Windsor stated that it is difficult to learn with a lot of students in the room and that it should be more important to do a good job educating students than to save money. He felt that cutting staff was not the right direction to go.

Tom Epps represented 100% of Third Street staff and declared that moving would not be conducive to a good education. He said that it is about the kids, closing Third Street is wrong, and it shouldn't even be an option to consider. Tom claimed that it is an old but operable building.

Tina Gilbertson reinforced the fact that electives are taking a hard hit at the high school and that those are the job skills and pathways to future success that students need. She detailed specific areas that would not be taught and stressed that the facility is not as important as the teacher. As a parent, she would prefer to close Third Street.

Melanie Simones wanted clarification that closing Third Street would not guarantee saving teaching positions.

Laura Simonson recommended experiencing a shared classroom. She reviewed the pros and cons of this situation. Laura noted that teachers and support staff are on the line but not administration.

Aubrey Schjeldahl commented on her experience with fourth graders short attention spans and the fact that they couldn't handle a four day week. She said that kids have lots of issues and aides help a lot so we need them. Aubrey reported that LMC director, Cheri Zahasky, is great; she can't imagine the library without her. She concluded by saying that students need to be involved in these decisions.

Don Mathews moved to adjourn at 7:47 pm. Mary Jo Rozmenoski seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

Maureen Ruka, Recording Secretary

Mary Jo Rozmenoski, Clerk