

CONSTANTINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Constantine, Michigan

Regular Board of Education Meeting
Monday, October 9, 2006

The meeting was called to order by President Jeffrey Zimont in the Mason Township Hall at 7:00 PM.

Members Present: Jeffrey Zimont, Dale Davidhizar, Chuck Colley, Kevin Brouse, Jacob Bergh, and John Shuler

Members Absent: Mary Smith

Moved by Davidhizar and seconded by Shuler to approve the Consent Agenda as presented to include minutes of the September 11, 2006 Regular Board of Education Meeting, and September 6, 2006 & October 2, 2006 Work Session minutes, and bills in the amount of \$494,619.51 for the general fund.

*Bergh questioned technology and security camera billings. Taylor answered that they were to be addressed later in the meeting.

Voice Vote:

6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent
Motion Carried

Audience with Individuals:

1. Pete Miller, teacher, questioned the teaching supply budget for his classroom. Due to budget cuts, he will end up spending \$1200-\$1400 out of his own pocket. He has current software needs that cannot be addressed with the available budget. Zimont asked if this situation had been addressed with Principal Staffen. Miller responded that he has not asked Staffen, due to past discussions with former Principal French.
2. Beverly Smith, teacher, announced that Riverside and Middle School students would be giving a performance of "The Brave Little Booster". The public is encouraged to attend the performances at 7:30 p.m. October 28th and at 3:00 p.m. Sunday October 29th. Tickets are \$4.00 each.
3. Ethan Strawser, teacher, questioned why teachers are no longer reimbursed for highly qualified testing. He incurred a personal cost of \$74 over the summer. He wondered why the district is not obligated to pay, as it allows increased flexibility with other teachers and classes. He asked the Board to reconsider reimbursement. Secondly, he addressed the issue from last month when students spoke about concerns at the Board meeting. The students were not aware that they were signing up to speak, as they thought they signed up for extra credit in government.
4. Mary Grunert, teacher, read a prepared statement concerning her continuing commitment towards quality education. She expressed her concern over 9th grade English books which she feels are not in acceptable condition. She is willing to hold out for a fair contract.

5. Laura Withers, teacher, addressed her concern over huge technology issues. She wanted to know what the plan is to smooth out the glitches so they can get back to teaching. Zimont answered that the district did not foresee some of the technical resources that would be necessary with all of the advances and upgrades throughout the construction projects. Technology is currently short staffed, but working hard. Strawser asked if any additional computers were available to deal with issues as they come up.
6. Pat Townsend, teacher, commented that her brother has a business that could rotate books on a six year basis that would be inexpensive. She asked if anyone would look into it. Zimont said yes!
7. Steve Barrus, teacher, stated that there are still heating and cooling issues in the HS that need to be addressed. Zimont asked all to use proper channels when addressing an issue, as he would like teachers to let the building principals know first.

Action Items:

Moved by Bergh and seconded by Colley to approve the hiring of a 4th/5th grade split teacher, David Wing, at MA Step 5, and a middle school Social Studies teacher, Steve Wilson, at MA Step 4, as presented by the administration.

Roll Call Vote: J.B. aye, K.B. aye, M.S. absent, C.C. aye, J.S. aye, D.D. aye, J.Z. aye

6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent
Motion Carried

Moved by Bergh and seconded by Brouse to approve the FMLA request of bus driver Betty Yoder, as presented by the Superintendent.

Voice Vote:

6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent
Motion Carried

Moved by Davidhizar and seconded by Bergh to approve purchase of 14 trees from Arnett's Landscaping for \$3,206.00 and the purchase of 7 benches and 4 trash receptacles from Summit for \$ 6,553.00 as presented by the Superintendent.

Roll Call Vote: D.D. aye, J.S. aye, K.B. aye, M.S. absent, J.B. aye, C.C. aye, J.Z. aye

6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent
Motion Carried

*Mike Messner commented that Oldenberg's Nursery would like to donate 20 arborvitae bushes to line the football practice field.

Moved by Davidhizar and seconded by Bergh to move regular Board meeting for November to Monday November 6, 2006 at 7:00 in the LGIA and the work session to Wednesday October 30, 2006 at 6:30, as presented by the Superintendent.

Voice Vote:

6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent
Motion Carried

Discussion Items:

1. Taylor discussed his endorsement of the Honeywell “Instant Alert” System. He stated that he had received excellent reviews of the plan from Colon, Centreville, Mendon and the SJCISD, who currently have the system. It is a quick and easy mass communication system which automatically alerts home telephones of any schedule changes, emergencies and school reminders. Parents can add any other communication number, like a cell phone, email, pager, etc. later. The cost for one year is \$5400. Bergh asked if everyone fully understand the capability of such a system. Davidhizar stated that it may be possible in next year’s budget. Eric King, student questioned the technology issues that may be involved? Bergh commented that it would be a great time saver, but should wait until next year.
2. Taylor gave a curriculum & enrollment update, and he has asked that a priority list be created for curriculum needs by school. Suggestions will be run through the School Improvement Team. All needs and costs will be taken into consideration. Zimont stated that the administration has been directed by the Board to get back into a rotation cycle for all books. There is normally a certain volume of books that get rebound every year. This was not done this past summer and will be picked back up now. Taylor announced the enrollment update, with a 1554 un-audited count. He added that there are 31-34 Alternative Ed students, which will be counted in fractions along with Special Ed students for a total in the low 1580’s. This number will be blended with the February count after a final audit of the count. The blended count is what the state uses for state aid formula purposes.
3. Taylor gave a technology projects update. The completion of the middle school computer lab was the number one project to finish, although there are streaming issues. Ben Daugherty, the Technology Director is looking to upgrade internet service. In trying to address all problems, he has contacted Microsoft on many of the other issues that are popping up. There is currently a turf battle between Microsoft and third party software companies. Microsoft has tweaked their programs so they won’t allow third party products compatibility. You are then steered toward a Microsoft product instead. Technology has lost one of his helpers and the other helper is being shipped to Iraq in November so Ben is looking for technology help. Eastside lockers should be installed by the end of the week. The Eastside desks and carpets were delivered within the last week also.
4. Security systems update, cameras are up and operational while some outside work is yet to be done. There will be administrative training October 12, 2006 for the system. Parker commented that the system is great but additional cameras are desirable in the future.
5. Bergh would like to have a report from Grand Rapids Building Services (GRBS) including a monetary bottom line. He would like to let the community know if sub-contracting the custodial services out is working or not. Taylor mentioned that use of the red barn after it was cleaned out, is now being utilized for maintenance supply storage, enabling them to purchase in large quantities and saving money.

6. Taylor also announced that the gray athletics house on Canaris Street will be used for fire department training exercise and then destroyed through a controlled burn. The remains will be excavated when the burn is complete and grass seeded over this area.
7. Colley stated that he hasn't heard great things about GRBS, and would like to know what is happening. Taylor responded that despite occasional concerns, most staff members are pleased at this point with the cleaning, and that they are having some personnel turnover issues, but it is being addressed. Taylor called Karin Wysocki, Director of Operations, with a couple of concerns today.
8. Zimont gave an update on negotiations status for the past month. There are some process changes taking place. On September 11, 2006, the SEIU presented a contract for a vote by its members. It ended in a tie. It was rejected a week later. The following week the SEIU met with MEA to discuss adding SEIU members (which includes the fleet technician, maintenance and educational aides) to the MEA, and switching their union representation. They are anticipating that a vote will take place in November, overseen by the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC). He then stated that the Board and CEA participated in another mediation bargaining session with the state mediator on September 19, 2006, and that the CEA requested fact finding on the next day. An independent fact finder appointed by MERC summarizes documentation by both parties. A hearing is scheduled by the fact finder for verbal testimony which is likely to take place after the first of the year. He reminded the public that timelines are not confirmed, but the process may take 6-9 months. Findings will be released in report form with recommendations that are not binding on either party. Negotiations will continue based on those findings. The previous contract expired August 25, 2006. Colley questioned the cost. Taylor answered that fact finding preparation by a consultant from MASB will be about \$3,500. Some other legal costs, mileage, interoffice costs with labor and paperwork for the past five years will also be involved. He feels that the district is looking at \$5,000 approximately. Some staff had stated they heard that cost would be over \$50,000. This is not the anticipated fact finding cost. However, based on the current teacher labor costs associated with continuing the expired CEA contract, the district could spend over \$53,000 more that it has offered in negotiation proposals for increased total compensation should the fact finding process run into next spring as anticipated.

Additional Audience with Individuals:

1. Laura Withers, asked about suspending negotiations with CEA. Zimont stated that his understanding of the fact finding requested by CEA is that the negotiations could be suspended until findings are complete. She also questioned student counts. She wondered why Superintendent Taylor was not doing the fact finding preparation work. Zimont and Davidhizar responded that it could be a trust issue with the CEA, and that the superintendent already has a full work load, so it would be best to have someone who specializes in fact finding preparation help assist the Board with this matter.
2. Messner announced that the Falcon Athletic Boosters have agreed to buy a new track records board for the High School gymnasium.

Board Member Items:

1. Zimont gave a follow up to the Board Retreat on September 30, 2006. There were 34-35 people in attendance. Zimont felt that there was good representation by all groups. He felt that it generated great

discussion between all parties. Coming from that meeting is a core group of 8-9 people that will help plan the next two meetings with Mr. Kent the facilitator. The next meeting will be widely publicized.

2. Zimont mentioned that he and Taylor had attended a School Foundations meeting in Kalamazoo last Friday. He is interested in reviving our school foundation, and getting involved in fund raising and many other projects. All contributions to the foundation, which has a separate board of directors, are tax deductible. A 501(c)(3) foundation is a separate entity from the school district. It would mainly provide scholarships to seniors. In the past, the foundation has collected over \$100,000 and partnered with Sturgis Foundation (money is managed by them) and Kellogg Company to create the YAC for grant funding.

Zimont adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Kevin Brouse, Secretary
Board of Education