



Potomac Elementary School

School Board Minutes

for

February 18, 2011

Phone (406) 244-5581

Fax (406) 244-5840

www.potomacschoolmontana.us

*“Potomac School equips each student for his/her future
within a culture of excellence that values the small community experience.”*

Call to Order

Board Chair Robert O’Boyle called the meeting to order at 8:55 AM by leading all in the Pledge of Allegiance. Those trustees present were: Jeff Hahn, Gary Long, Victoria Richardson and Jim Wrobel. Principal Tim Johnson and Jill Thornton, clerk, were also in attendance.

Public Input (for issues not on the agenda) Jim spoke to Phil Hall about the possibility of the school using the area north of our sports field. It is in a conservancy and cannot be sold to the school, but Phil said he will talk to Bob Hall about an easement for the school to use.

School Budget

Bob started the budget discussion with the question of what needs to be accomplished today. With a shortfall in our budget for the 2011-2012 school year he feels we should look at either proposing a levy and/or reducing staff.

With our past discussions on reorganizing staff to teach to abilities, not just grade levels, Bob asked if a full staff wouldn’t be necessary. Using our vision statement to filter how to view this problem leads him to believe that the full staff would be necessary to achieve the schools goals. His view is also that the school has a good team here. He would like to keep it together by trying to get enough money to maintain the staff we currently have and continue to strive for that ‘culture of excellence’.

Gary agreed with that. He wondered if instead of cutting staff, wouldn’t it be possible to freeze compensation at the current level. Would that be enough?

Victoria said people in the community will ask why we aren’t combining classes. She would like to maintain the full staff for the students, but what is the answer to the community?

Jim said that he believes teaching to the capability level and subject, whether it is to 6 or 20 students, requires the same effort by the staff. He also feels that teaching multiple levels by one teacher is a disservice to the students.

Jeff said we would need a plan in place though if a levy fails, though he also would prefer to maintain the current staffing levels.

Gary asked how the process works. Can contracts for teachers be held until after the election results? And when is the latest the board can cancel an election?

Jill said a Technology fund levy could help ease some of the pressure on the General fund. But it would not cover our General fund budget shortfall.

Jim said the two levies were separate issues. He felt any levy should be specific to the schools needs, which would mean letting the community know of our shortfall for staffing. A Technology levy would not do that.

Bob brought up the thought that a vote for a smaller levy might have a greater chance of passing.

Tim asked the board to consider what they felt was an acceptable class size. Then he could work on the teaching schedule to reflect that size when scheduling for levels and abilities.

Jim feels there should only be one levy, whether the board decides on a Technology fund levy or a General fund levy.

Bob asked for more budget information. Jill said a more accurate budget will be received from the Office of Public Instruction next week.

Bob said we can discuss it further with that information, and then consider what happens if a levy doesn't pass. He asked if budget information could be gathered for a two year period.

Another meeting for the discussion of budget numbers and contract negotiations will be held next Friday, February 25th at 2:00 pm.

Contract Negotiation Committees

Bob started this discussion on contract negotiation with a request that one person be consistent on all the committees.

Tim added that whoever that was should be the constant mainly for input and not all the responsibility attached to each negotiation.

Victoria said she was not knowledgeable enough to be the constant person in all the negotiations, but would volunteer for the PACE, PEA and bus contracts.

Jim gave an overview of the contracts:

- The PEA, as well as the board, prefers a 2 year contract. But if the second year budget is not known, a contract can be concluded for the 2 years on language alone, with the compensation negotiated each year.
- There are always 2 board members on each committee as more than 2 constitute a quorum and therefore a board meeting. The committee brings its recommendations from the contract negotiations to the board for approval.
- The PACE contract is for hourly employees on separate pay scales.
- The Community Center used to be an annual contract, originally paying them to take care of all costs. Now we take care of most costs and pay the Community Center for insurance plus some additional. The last contract was for a 3 year term.
- We already have a preliminary contract offered for buses from our current carrier Majestic. Jim has questions about competitive bids.

Gary moved to nominate Jim as the board member who will participate in all the contract negotiations. Victoria seconded the motion. **Passed 5-0.**

Gary said he would volunteer to be on the committees for negotiating the contracts for the Community Center and Principal.

Victoria moved to nominate Gary as the board member who will participate in the contract negotiations for the Community Center and Principal. Jeff seconded the motion. **Passed 5-0.**

Jeff volunteered to be on the committees for negotiating the contracts for the bus and clerk.

Gary moved to nominate Jeff as the board member who will participate in the contract negotiations for the bus and clerk. Jim seconded the motion. **Passed 5-0.**

Victoria volunteered to be on the committees for negotiating the contracts for the PEA and PACE.

Jeff moved to nominate Victoria as the board member who will participate in the contract negotiations for the PEA and PACE. Jim seconded the motion. **Passed 5-0.**

Gary moved to nominate Bob as the alternate board member on all the negotiating committees. Victoria seconded the motion. **Passed 5-0.**

