

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meeting

February 14th, 2007

This was a Regular meeting. All Board members were in attendance.

Superintendent's Reports – Other

Dr. McKanna, District 15 superintendent reported that approximately 3,500 transportation surveys were received from parents. He thought it was a very good response and staff are nearly finished tallying the results by school. McKanna asked the Board if they would accept a summary of the surveys by school – a listing of the number of “yes” and “no” responses as well as a listing of comments. Some comments were short, some were longer. McKanna believes that this can be done well before February 28th. Expects to see a detailed report from the transportation consultants, has already seen a number of mapping charts.

Board President, Nancy Lee Carlson indicated that she would like to look at the report at least a day or two before the meeting. **McKanna** stated that the survey information would be provided beforehand. It may be next week before they get final recommendations from the study. He said the survey results were not surprising. The schools that were assigned to the earlier start expressed the most opposition. Survey is being used as an advisement.

Citizens Address the Board

Renee Whiteler – Paddock parent

Concerned that a decision will be made regarding school start times before the \$24,000 study is publicized. Has heard that it is final, a done deal and that it's permanent. Doesn't think that is right. Thinks Board should look at school boundaries. Paddock's boundaries go from downtown Palatine to past the Buehler YMCA. Some buses pass other schools to get to Paddock. Kindergartners from the farthest points would have to be at the bus stop at 7 a.m. Paddock Principal has already sent home a notice about children being late for school with an 8:30 a.m. start time. How many more children will be late with a 7:45 a.m. start? Believes there needs to be a compromise – 9:10 a.m. is a late start but 7:45 a.m. is too early for kindergarten.

Jessie Thompson – Paddock parent

Has a problem with the new start/stop times for Paddock. Is confused because she called the superintendent's office last week and was told that there would be a vote on this issue tonight. Said that people have not been told of a change in times, came as a shock. No info has been given as to why, no justification. Survey came much too late. Transportation department couldn't give her a time as to when the buses would come. Her impression was that transportation thinks it is a done deal. Asked if the survey will be used to influence this decision? Another concern is that the CARE program at Paddock is always full. There are a lot of working parents.

McKanna responded – Stated that a vote was not on the agenda for tonight. The survey that was sent home to parents said the vote would be taken on the 28th. Said that the survey will be used as data, final report not in but it should be close to what was proposed. May have to be tweaked.

Lisa Tracey – Paddock parent

Does not like the 7:45 a.m. start time, thinks it is too early for any elementary school. Asked the Board if they considered the issue of fairness when it was decided which schools go in which time slot. At the last Board meeting, a transportation representative said that he automatically put all of the 9:10 a.m. schools in the 8:45 a.m. slot and the remaining schools got shuffled to wherever they needed to go. Doesn't see how that is fair. If Board's primary motivation is to appease the 9:10 a.m. schools then the Board will have the same problem with the 7:45 a.m. start time schools.

Vicky Nelson – Paddock parent

Questioned if the same amount of students are being transported, with the same amount of buses to the same number of schools in the least amount of time, does that mean there will be more kids per bus? Thinks that would mean longer commutes. Still doesn't understand why there needs to be a full hour between tiers if it is more efficient. Her son's commute is longer this year than last year. Has a friend that lives near Dundee Road and some of those kids are picked up 35 minutes before school starts.

McKanna responded – If we consolidate the buses to stay in the same geographical area, it would be more efficient. District is trying to get a balance.

Jennifer Paulter – Paddock parent

She encourages a new start time proposal, thinks the district has spent enough money to deserve more than one option. Would hate to see the proposal presented and voted on in one night. Thinks that would be unfair. Thinks that some schools are too close together to make location a factor. Says that we have heard that the 9:10 a.m. schools have done their time. Personally, she agrees with that and supports their concerns. However, what is on the table today is a permanent bus schedule; it is not a rotation. Asked Board to please make this fair and demand more information from our administration. She finds it difficult to believe that most elementary school children across the nation start at 7:45 a.m. Asked Board to take this seriously, get the facts.

Mrs. DaValle – Paddock parent

Opposed to change in start time for Paddock. Doesn't think it is fair. She is a working mom and her children go to CARE after school. Thinks it is too hard for kids to wake up that early in the morning to get to the bus stop by 7 a.m. Understands that Junior High students can start earlier. Children would have to wake up at 6 a.m. for an early start. She picks up her children at 6 p.m. from CARE – says that is too long a time to be away from parents.

Joanne Colucci – Paddock parent

She lives at the farthest point away from Paddock in the area behind the Buehler YMCA. Her children are at the bus stop now at 8 a.m. It would be 7 a.m. with the new start time – that is crazy to her. Thinks it is way too early for a young child to be out there, little kids need help in the morning. Can't believe that the district hired a consultant that only gave one option. She would like to see the findings – asked when will a report would be available to the public to read and look at. Thinks it is too soon to vote on the 28th when the Board hasn't seen the report and had time to look at it. Concerned that the plan wasn't well thought out. Before a vote, she would like to see other alternatives besides a 7:45 a.m. start time. Concerned about Band program before school and what would happen to that program.

Doreen Taylor – Paddock parent

Thinks everyone would like to see several more proposals from the study. Said the economic makeup of each school should be taken into consideration. Board should also consider social and financial costs. Asked why are we trying to do 2 tiers – if the district has enough buses for 4 tiers now, there should be enough to support 3 tiers. Asked how the Board could not consider

activities. There is band and chorus before school. Activities do affect the current proposal. Stated there cannot be a vote on a partial study – thinks district should keep trying to work this out. Problem has been that it is brought up every year and then dropped. Said – let's make a commitment to keep it on the table until a solution is found.

Nancy Groch – Willow Bend parent

Said she has observed divisiveness between Board members. Has watched the integrity of the superintendent, board secretary and board vice president slurred. Stated that if these claims had merit, there would have been an investigation by now. Wanted to highlight some Board policies of what members should and should not do – do not use your position for personal gain, publicity or innuendos to prove a point; do not serve NW Tax Watch, Family Tax Network, Concerned Parents, etc.; do not promote private actions that compromises the Board or the administration; do not use your position to gain district employment for yourself, family or close associates as one Board member has decided he should pursue. Said Rowden ran for the board as being for the teachers and special education parents and now is angry. Asked why Keenan's personal info is not on the District's Web site and why home e-mail addresses are used instead of the District's e-mail addresses. Said Millar worries about costs and informed public during the election time that he had a financial plan coming. Stated that there is nothing yet. Said she has seen a current candidate respond to a letter that had been sent to the Board from a concerned parent.

Board member, Tim Millar responded – Asked Groch about her statement about a Board member, saying "he" was getting employment for relatives. Millar said that would mean himself or Mr. Boucher and Millar said it wasn't him. **Groch** responded by saying that there have been implications that there is a potential candidate running for the board that may be related. She further stated that there have also been implications that a contract was not awarded to somebody that had been a relation to a Board member. Groch says she finds these things unethical. Both **Board member, Kelly Keenan** and **Millar** agreed and responded that Groch should report these findings.

Eugene Flynn – Executive Director of Northwest Coalition for Quality Education

Wishes to direct his comments towards Millar, Keenan and Rowden. Says they speak for the need for greater state funding of education. This is a current topic of state legislature. The concern in Springfield is the huge funding inequity between districts that are rich vs. poor in tax bases. Districts with poor tax bases charge higher and still generate lower funding per student. D15 has a stronger tax base and is not likely to see any significant increases in funding beyond the current percentage. Understands that they wish to cut special education staffing below recommended levels. Said that Special Ed and bilingual programs are protected under specific state laws and state board of education policies. Cuts there could result in a court order to remove all other programs. Said that the above positions might make great campaign slogans but will bankrupt the district for future success. Said they cannot ignore state laws, Board of Ed policies - they cannot mandate the breakup of D15. D15 must look within itself and not Springfield or Washington for a workable plan. He calls upon them to work with fellow Board members, administration and staff and the general community to come up with a long term plan to pursue quality in a fiscally responsible way.

Keenan responded – Said that the state funding position Flynn mentioned is the exact opposite of her position. Believes that D15 is a property tax rich district, has a high per pupil spending rate and would like to keep it that way. Keenan stated that she has never suggested dismissing any employee or cutting any program ever that is protected or unprotected.

Carlson – Asked that there not be personal attacks on any Board members.

Keenan – Stated that if someone says she is doing illegal things or they are stating the exact opposite of what we is trying to do, she will defend herself.

Millar – Said that Board members have the right to defend themselves if somebody is calling their character into question.

Carlson – Said that she understands that.

Millar – Said that these comments are political in motivation, knows that Flynn is working with the union and the three candidates that they are supporting. Would appreciate that that they don't use this particular platform for that agenda. Millar stated that he has an e-mail with Flynn's name on it saying that they were going to attack the Board. Doesn't think that is appropriate and would appreciate that they would work for everyone.

Board member, Wendy Rowden – Commented that when people make statements that cannot be proven or personal attacks, Rowden asks the Board president to cease the conversation from going forward. Said the last two people made false statements

Carlson – Said that she would stop personal attacks.

Keenan – Doesn't mind people speaking as long as she can have a dialogue back.

Lou Sands – former District 15 School Board president

Sympathizes with the transportation issues. Said some things change, some things never change. Said he is here tonight to mention an item on the personnel report about the retirement announcement of Pat Campbell, Board of Education secretary - after 17 years. Leaves him with very mixed feelings. Regrets that D15 will lose a highly respected employee. Had never heard anything from his past 12 years on the Board to imply a dissatisfaction of any kind with Pat Campbell or her service. Said she is highly respected by past administrators, teachers and parents.

Karen Schutz – Pleasant Hill parent

Was here tonight to hear about the attorneys fees that were to be discussed at the February 14th meeting. Wants to hear the reply to that issue that was brought up at a January meeting. Wanted to respond to comments already made tonight – said let's remember who voted for and who voted against Dr. McKanna retiring early. Said if there are any attacks – let's hear about where our funding is going and who is spending it. Asked Board president if she was going to address the attorney issue. Stated she e-mailed McKanna on Monday and Tuesday and did not get a reply.

Carlson – Said that the matter was already discussed. District attorneys are not here tonight.

Boucher – Said that topic is not on the agenda.

Schutz – Repeated that Board president wanted the attorneys at the meeting when issue was discussed. That is why she is here tonight.

Carlson – Said that there will be no personal attacks against Board members.

McKanna – Mentioned a change in e-mail addresses for the District over the past year. Said Schutz should check to see which she used, that may be why he didn't receive her e-mails.

Kim Meyer – Parent

Had been listening to comments about transportation. Wanted to solicit from the Board a request to not vote at the 28th BOE meeting. Seems that there are a lot of factors playing into this and there is information that the Board doesn't have in front of them. Haven't seen the results of the study or other options. Parents have not either. Thinks both parents and Board should have the option to digest information since this will be a permanent solution. Asked if it was possible to get that commitment from the Board to not vote on the 28th.

McKanna – Board cannot make that commitment. Has to make decision on the 28th, a lot of parents working on daycare. Board could decide on the 28th that further studies need to be made and say they are not ready for next year.

Meyer – Asked McKanna if he felt that Board would be ready on the 28th

McKanna – Stated yes, said they are trying to put the very best possible proposal together and maybe only be slightly tweaked within the parameters of the dollars the District has. Wants to be financially prudent. Trying to eliminate current inefficiencies in the transportation system.

Meyer – Has heard that the Board has not seen the study, parents want to see the study too. Doesn't want a rushed decision made because of day care needs.

Action Items - 2005-06 Audit Report

Auditing firm gave a brief report of their findings. Comments made included: the District has done a good job with tax caps; operates within their budget; said that 76 cents of every dollar comes from property taxes and similar amount going out in services; healthcare costs are rising; noted expenditures dropped this year; said they had favorable experience with the district staff. Would be happy to come back to answer questions because there was a busy agenda tonight. Continued with overview of management letter – had suggestion of how to allocate investments. Also mentioned changes happening in the auditing profession because of the Enron scandal that will affect how audits will be done in the future for school districts. Outlined several of these changes. Board member concerns/questions revolved around fiscal control reports; balancing of accounts; controls in place if someone is on vacation, etc.; the accounting for sick days for union and non-union employees. Auditor stated that if there was an issue with the administration, they would report to the Board; stated school districts have monitoring controls at a high level, said it would be difficult to conceal something and that the District did not have any material weaknesses.

Vote to approve the 2005-2006 Audit Report

Unanimously approved.

Kevin Noehly, Business department will bring a recommendation to the Board at the March 14th BOE meeting for auditing services for the coming year. His department received seven proposals, currently reviewing them and will have in-depth interviews with them before making a recommendation.

Board Discussion/Reports - Board Member e-mail addresses on district Web site

McKanna provided some background for this discussion. A subpoena had come into the district and the district attorney found it a challenge to obtain the information because of district e-mail addresses vs. personal e-mail addresses on the District's Web site. The district attorney suggested that all Board members use the ccsd15.net e-mail address. McKanna spoke with Carlson and Board member, Scott Boucher about this issue, decided to make the change but then found that more discussion was needed among all seven Board members. McKanna asked the district attorney to give a legal opinion on this issue.

Carlson – Wanted to add that the IASB (Illinois Association of School Boards) had a recommendation on this issue. It was the ISAB's opinion that it is a violation of the open meetings act to use personal e-mail addresses on the district's Web site.

Keenan – Upset that the district is paying a substantial amount of money to attorneys for an opinion on this issue. Asked who is directing the attorneys to look into this? Keenan called the district attorney who advised Keenan that she (the attorney) did not agree with the IASB's opinion; there is no law on Illinois books that require this. The district attorney told Keenan that personal e-mails can also be subpoenaed.

McKanna – Stated that he asked the district attorney for the opinion. McKanna knew that there were strong Board member opinions on this issue and felt that there needed to be a legal opinion.

Board Vice President, Linda Silverman – Her thoughts are that regardless of the legality of this issue, the Board has been asked to be transparent. When personal e-mail addresses are

used, other Board members cannot share in that information. If an e-mail comes through the district e-mail, then that information can be shared with all Board members.

Keenan – Says that the flow of information is not flowing both ways – either through phone calls or legal opinions. There are two sets of rules. Keenan stated that there are Board members engaging in legal opinions that the rest of the Board does not know about.

Boucher – Asked what legal opinions Keenan was referring to?

Keenan – Referenced the legal opinion obtained to look into the District 15 Concerned Parents group. Said that nobody else on the Board had any knowledge of that opinion.

Boucher – Stated that there is a current lawsuit in Illinois that directly relates to that. Boucher said it was actually the subject of a Tribune editorial page a couple of weeks ago. Stated that there is definitely a District concern with that.

Carlson – Interrupted and said that at the last Board meeting, the Board voted not to discuss this issue.

Keenan – Replied that the Board said that they would not share the bill, the Board didn't say that they would not talk about it. Keenan said that there is not a free flow of information in everything, but the District is spending thousands of dollars to force e-mail accounts.

Boucher – Stated that the Board is leaving the District in a legal landmine. If the District gets another subpoena, the District cannot say it has definitive knowledge of all e-mails to Board members. District has no control over e-mails to personal accounts. Boucher stated that anything that comes into them as a Board member is part of the District's knowledge, something that can be subpoenaed as the District has already seen. If the District doesn't have control, the District is not in compliance.

Board member, Paula Mikula – Said that it is the recommendation of the District's law firm that Board members use district e-mail addresses.

Rowden – If transparency is an issue, Rowden is not clear of the parameters. If there are phone calls and other communication between Board members/administrators, other Board members do not know about it and do not get information. Asked how that is different from personal e-mail. Stated that sometimes people want to communicate with a Board member and want to keep the matter private. If it goes through the District e-mail, that is not a possibility because the e-mail can be read by others. People value privacy. No one has stated that they suspect a violation of Board business being conducted over e-mail. If the Board talks of transparency, the Board needs to talk about all avenues of communication.

Carlson – Would like to look at the IASB's opinion. Says that conducting Board business over ccsd15.net protects the Board and administration. Her name as Board president was on a recent subpoena. Wants to comply with the laws. Doesn't see any issue with this. Stated that if someone wanted to add a personal e-mail along with the District e-mail address, Carlson thinks that would make sense.

Keenan – Would also suggest having both e-mail addresses posted. Keenan objects to the insistence of using only one e-mail address.

Boucher – Says that the only reason a Board member's name is out on the Web site is because they were elected to the Board. If someone is communicating with you, it is because you are a member of the Board of Education. As long as one side of the e-mails is anchored in the District's system, those e-mails can be captured. Said that a Board member could put their personal phone number on the Web site for personal communication. Said only e-mails that should be on the District's Web site should be District e-mail addresses that can be supported by the District.

Millar – Stated that the Board represents the constituents. Millar received an email from a legislator using a non-State of Illinois address. Almost all Millar's communications with elected officials are with non-official e-mail accounts. Says it is natural because there is politics involved

and the issue of protecting individuals. Referenced that constituents email him with complaints about staff members and want it handled differently than all out there. Millar said that it is important that the Board does serve the public, unfortunately politics do happen.

Carlson – Thinks the Board should have further discussion on this issue. Carlson said that perhaps the Board should have had counsel (attorney) come this evening.

Boucher – Wants to vote at the next Board meeting on this issue, may need attorney there to answer questions.

Keenan – Thinks it is a waste of time/money (for attorney) that could be better spent on the children.

McKanna – Will try to get more detail on this issue, get the IASB information and make this an action item for February 28th. Only one Board member's request is needed to make this an action item.

Procedure for Board Members requesting legal services

McKanna introduced the discussion regarding what to do when Board members want to request legal services. Currently, there are attorneys on a retainer. Board members can ask questions on different matters and there is not an extra charge. McKanna understood the concern that the Board wanted a procedure that if a Board member makes a request of the attorneys that requires research and additional costs – then all Board members should be made aware of that request.

McKanna introduced a form that could be used to obtain that information – a checklist that stated the date of the request, reason for request, feedback received, date received, etc.

Rowden asked **Mikula** if this form was similar to what was done on the Board in the past. Rowden's biggest problem is not knowing what Board members are asking the attorneys and then not knowing what the answer was that the Board member received. Rowden thought she may learn from questions/answers that other Board members receive before making important decisions. Another Board member may have done extensive research on a subject. Thought it would be relevant to decision making at upcoming meetings.

Boucher – Said this form would put requests in writing, be sent in, staff would work on it and then the information would be sent out to Board members along with the sheet as to who requested the information. Boucher mentioned that state laws have been changed, Board members can no longer make circular phone calls as they did in the past, calls used to be routine, now those calls are against the law. Board is forced to do this – all Board members come to Board meetings with their opinions and reach decision at that point in time. Boucher said that it makes it more difficult, it is not pretty but that's what the state wants the Board to do. This form would be something for Board members to submit, would be an ongoing thing if Board members want more information. Board must be careful of not violating the open meetings act.

Rowden – Agrees this form is good for long-term items, but Rowden is aiming at short-term as well because of the need to make very important decisions. Sometimes a Board member brings an issue up and if the rest of the Board knew ahead of time, all Board members could be on better footing to make a decision.

Carlson – Likes the form, it can be e-mailed or faxed in. Doesn't have to be just once a week, it can be whenever a Board member has a question. The form doesn't preclude the Board from calling a staff member and asking a question.

Keenan – Has a long-term suggestion about having Board members responsible for knowing the subject of different committees such as: legislation, facilities, curriculum, budget, audit, etc. That Board member would collect information and then report back at Board meetings prior to making decisions.

Silverman – Has two reactions to that proposal. Says this goes beyond just seven areas of concern. Said that when it comes to reports from budget meetings, etc. – the Board is there as an audit of those meetings. Silverman doesn't want to be giving the report, wants the professional giving the report.

Keenan – Stated that she is just trying to be a Board representative knowing what is going on. Not trying to usurp authority. Just a way of keeping the Board updated.

McKanna – Stated he respectively disagrees. Mentioned the issue of micromanaging vs. policy making. Said that the Board of Education is supposed to be a policy making group – it is not the role of a Board member to take the work of a committee and bring it back on a regular basis. McKanna knows there is disagreement about this. There is a difference of opinion about role in policy/government. This is somewhere to start with new Board members after election.

Carlson – Would like to start with this form and see if it works.

Rowden – Would like the form to come back to group sooner than every 3 weeks.

McKanna – Said that it could be done every Friday.

Rowden – Has more to discuss regarding legal services. Wants to know who directed writing a legal opinion, needs to know if someone is contacting the attorney and why.

McKanna – Will share recent district attorneys' bill, the magnitude of the number of contacts, said it is hard to try to summarize that.

Mikula – Stated that the district attorneys' bills are very lengthy, the bills are broken down by category, there is always a description of what the district attorney was contacted about by a Board member/staff member. Mikula said that at least you know why someone is contacting the district attorney.

Keenan – Bigger question for her is to request legal bills when there is an additional cost incurred. Referenced Dr. McKanna's contract. Keenan said that the Board should have known prior to that happening that it was going to happen, not after a vote had to be taken.

Boucher – Said that this form spells it out; anything that is billable has to be submitted in writing. The form offers some flexibility.

Rowden – Needs clarification as to why Board members are contacting the attorney. Rowden has not done that – should she be contacting the attorney?

Keenan – Stated that due to new reporting laws, Keenan had a situation come up involving possible abuse. Keenan didn't know what her role was so she contacted the district attorney.

Rowden – Said that this is something all Board members should have known about – the definition of what Keenan's role was in that situation.

Millar – Concerned with limiting Board members other than the Board President of contacting the district attorney. Believes all Board members have the same status/authority from the public. Recent challenges in using attorneys for inappropriateness came from the Board President.

McKanna – Said that attorney Mr. Loizzi deals with 130 school districts, Loizzi has said that most school districts don't give all Board members authority to contact the attorney, Loizzi has said that normal protocol is to go through the Board President. McKanna said that District 15 is not at that stage. McKanna said that if an issue is billable, Board member needs to let the superintendent know, he'll check with the lawyer, see what is happening. This would provide checks and balances. McKanna doesn't think this will be an issue in the future.

Action Items

Personnel Report

Approved 6:1 Keenan voting "no"

Bids – Remote Refrigeration Units

Unanimously approved.

Bids - Buses

McKanna wanted to explain that if this is approved tonight, it is an authorization to have buses built. The buses will come out of the money for the 2007/08 budget. **Noehlty** allocated money (\$750,000) for bus replacement in the budget. **Millar** says that the district does get a percentage of the cost reimbursed. **Rowden** asked if there was a cap on the dollars reimbursed each year. **Noehlty** said buses are depreciated each year up to five years – it is to the Board's benefit to replace buses more frequently than is done now. The longer we keep the buses after five years, we get into maintenance costs. The buses approved tonight are replacing buses that are 14 to 15 years old. **Keenan** asked how much we end up paying after reimbursement. **Noehlty** says it depends on purchase price/depreciation.

Bid unanimously approved.

Consent Calendar

Keenan had question on Item C – Report of Payroll Vouchers and Invoices
Discussion on Item C - \$52,000 invoice for architects.

Noehlty explained that it refers to the life-safety improvements from last year as well as upcoming improvements. **Keenan** asked how architects were involved in various aspects of the improvements such as carpeting, paint, etc. **Noehlty** explained why it is important to have licensed architects involved in the process. **Keenan** would like a copy of the original contract signed with the architects.

Motion to approve entire consent calendar. Unanimously approved.

Freedom of Information Requests (FOIA)

Three FOIAs were received in January.

January 9th, 2007 – Identical requests were received from Susan K. Quinn and Lisa C. Neal, residents of Palatine and Rolling Meadows respectively – for information and supporting documentation relating to a specific bill. After an extension of time allowed by law, the information was provided on January 30th.

January 22nd, 2007 – A request received from a resident of NJ for specific results of which additional time is required.

Board adjourned to Executive session at approximately 10:10 p.m.