



## **6.0 Committee Reports**

### **6.1 Buildings and Grounds Committee**

German gave the Buildings and Grounds Committee report. The Committee, German, Ehlert and Petro, met with Finance Coordinator Cheryl Capiak and Interim Middle/High School Principal Wayne Warner on May 15 at 4:30 p.m. to discuss marketing of the upcoming bond proposal. They reviewed a marketing brochure created for the bond proposal. German stated that once the Committee finished their edits, the brochure would be presented to the Board for final approval. He noted the cost of the brochure would be paid by the Wolgast Corporation construction management firm, not the District.

Farhat thanked German for the report.

### **6.2 Finance Committee**

Petro reported the Finance Committee met on May 15 at 4:00 p.m. prior to the Buildings and Grounds Committee meeting. The Committee, Petro, Ehlert and Farhat, met with Finance Coordinator Capiak and Interim Middle/High School Principal Warner, to review the 2008-2009 (Fiscal Year 2009) budget. Farhat acknowledged Capiak and thanked her for keeping the school budget "on track."

Farhat thanked Petro for his report.

## **7.0 Correspondence**

### **7.1 Grant Award Notification**

Interim Middle/High School Principal Warner reported the Three Oaks Elementary School had received a mini-grant from the State of Michigan Department of Education through the 2008-2009 MyPyramid for Kids for "healthy eating programming and nutrition education resources." He recognized River Valley Elementary School Principal Garry Lange who reported that the elementary schools applied for and received a \$1,700 award to promote healthy eating and a healthier lifestyle. Petro noted the grant was contingent upon meeting certain criteria, specifically that two mini-grant team members attend the May 21 MyPyramid for Kids Training in East Lansing. Lange replied the District would be able to meet the grant conditions. He said the program would serve as part of the school's health initiative which included several events throughout the school year: a hike in Warren Woods, St. Patrick's Day Spring Fling dance, a sledding party, a walk-a-thon, a fruit and vegetable challenge, and incorporating music and dance in gym class.

Board members congratulated Principal Lange for receiving the grant award.

### **7.2 BCISD Renaming Notification**

Farhat shared correspondence he received from Sharon Kalling, Board of Education President of the Berrien County Intermediate School District (BCISD). The May 5 letter indicated BCISD would officially change its name to Berrien RESA, which stands for Berrien Regional Education Service Agency.

## **8.0 Old Business**

Farhat asked Wagner to report on telephone calls she had received concerning the construction of the practice soccer field. Wagner thanked Farhat for addressing the issue. She said that on Saturday morning, May 10, and again on Sunday, May 18, she had received over a dozen telephone calls from District residents, including a former Board member. All were extremely upset with the destruction of the woods along the back property line of the Middle/High School grounds and the part of the cross-country course that was destroyed. Wagner was surprised as she had no idea why the trees were being cut, especially with their proximity to Warren Woods Forest Preserve, the only climax maple beech forest remaining in lower Michigan. As a member of the Board, Wagner said she was embarrassed that she could not respond to the callers as she was unaware of what was going on. Wagner asked the callers to telephone Board President Farhat, Buildings and Grounds Committee Chair German and the school administration office to: 1) find out what was going on, and 2) to express their concerns. Wagner said she then telephoned Farhat, German and Ehlert, but had to leave voice messages for each. She reached Petro, who recalled that the school would have to make room for a new soccer field because if the bond proposal would pass, Chikaming Elementary would be closed, which would eliminate the current soccer field.

Wagner reported that last week she sent an electronic mail message to the Board and Administration, highlighting a section of the February 4 meeting minutes, which indicted the proposed soccer field at the Middle/High School campus would require surveying and moving of trees. Wagner said that as a conservationist she was upset by the number of trees cut and did not understand how "moving of trees" equated to clear cutting nearly two acres of forest that included part of the cross-country course. She asked why that particular location was selected and why this was done at this time as the bond issue would not be voted on until August and if passed, the soccer field at the Chikaming campus would remain for another year.

German said that one of the reasons the site was selected, as opposed to continue to use the football field, was that football practice is conducted at the same time, and "the football field was destroyed last year, so we decided to build a practice soccer field." He said the reason it was decided to do the field now was to seed it for the next year as it normally takes a year for the grass to fully develop.

Knutel reported that he had received a call from Jim Veldman, former River Valley biology teacher and cross-country coach. Mr. Veldman was upset about the destruction of part of the cross-country track and the wooded area. Knutel said Mr. Veldman stated that property was donated to the District with the stipulation that it would remain as is, that no trees would be cut down. (No one could verify this during the meeting.)

Wagner asked who selected the site and Farhat replied that it was the choice of a collaboration between Buildings and Grounds Supervisor Bob Payne, Dave York and Superintendent Schroeder. Wagner said this was obviously important to many in the community and we needed to understand the "why" and the process for the decision. Farhat said that he would get a briefing from Schroeder to find out the decision-making process. Farhat noted it was difficult to discuss the issue without Superintendent Schroeder present. He said he would find out who had full knowledge of the selection, who made the decision and how to mitigate any loss.

German explained there were few options for placement of the new field. Knutel asked about the space near the "yellow posts." German replied that particular location was the practice football field. He stated the practice football field was so torn up with all the use that a practice soccer field had to be established.

Graziano asked Wagner how she could be "embarrassed" by not knowing about a single matter as Board members could not have answers for all decisions. Wagner replied that she was a community liaison to the District and with something so major, such as cutting nearly two acres of forest for a practice soccer field that was dependant upon the bond passing, it was important that all Board members be informed. Wagner noted this issue had generated more telephone calls to her than any other issue. She said that as per the February 4 meeting, she did not have the impression so many trees would be destroyed. Wagner pointed out that the trees were an asset and that some were probably hardwoods, suitable for lumbering, and others could be sold as firewood. She asked who was taking the wood, as it was a financial asset of the District. Farhat said he would look into it. Wagner noted it was important to keep a positive image, especially with the upcoming bond proposal, and that some of the callers were so upset that they had contacted the local newspapers about the issue.

German said that we had to support students and that sports were important to River Valley students. He reiterated that he supported the students. Wagner said that there was more to school than sports, that there were earth sciences and eco-sciences as well as teaching good stewardship.

Petro interjected that the District did not destroy academic programs based on the removal of trees on school property. He said he recognized the need for and supported construction of a practice soccer field at the Middle/High School. Petro said he had no qualms about removing some trees for the purpose of a soccer field, if that was what was necessary.

Knutel said that he thought Mr. Veldman was most concerned as the cleared area was part of the cross-country course. Ehlert said that he had looked at the field and he did not believe the cross-country course was affected and that "the entire course was not affected." Ehlert said he trusted the superintendent and buildings and grounds personnel and that he did not think there was any "maliciousness going on." Ehlert agreed that it was "not the most environmental thing to do," but believed it could be cleared up and that "we can still hold our heads high as a District."

Farhat added that he trusted the Administration and was "sure there was a lot of thought put into it." Farhat said he would find out the process for the decision.

## **9.0 New Business**

### **9.1 Review Accounts Payable for May, 2008 and the Treasurer's Report for April, 2008**

Finance Coordinator Capiak reviewed accounts payable and gave the treasurer's report:

#### **Accounts Payable for May, 2008**

General Fund \$110,231.82  
General Fund Prepaid \$213,390.40  
General Fund Payroll \$252,070.31  
Athletic Fund \$1,505.59  
Athletic Fund Prepaid \$4,850.46  
Athletic Payroll \$7,168.54  
School Lunch Fund \$12,368.47  
School Lunch Fund Prepaid \$2,812.50  
School Lunch Payroll \$6,228.44  
Total Accounts Payable \$610,626.53

#### **Treasurer's Report for April, 2008**

General Fund \$3,063,096.43  
Combined School Service Fund \$35,350.66  
Activity Fund \$270,204.07, including scholarship dollars and funds donated to the District

Capiak reported the District earned approximately \$55,000 in interest this quarter and over the fiscal year, earned about \$100,000 in interest. She said this was possible due to Chikaming Township's summer tax collection.

Petro asked about the expenditure for MPSERS and Capiak said it was the retirement fund. Capiak noted the \$9,000 payment to the State of Michigan was income tax withholding from payroll.

Graziano complimented Capiak on her excellent accounting and recordkeeping, "especially after what is going on with the Village." Graziano said that the Board always looked for discrepancies, "but we never find any." Board members agreed that Capiak did an excellent job.

Farhat thanked Capiak for her report.

### **9.2 Review Head Coaching Recommendations for 2008-2009 Fall/Winter Sports Season**

Farhat recognized Warner who asked Interim Athletic Director Neil Carter to review the Head Coaching recommendations for the 2008-2009 Fall/Winter Sports Season. Carter reported the recommendation of head coaches as follows: Varsity Boys Basketball, Shawn Gedert; Varsity Boys Soccer, Shawn Beach; Varsity Cross Country, Mark Foreman; and Varsity Wrestling, Alan Berget.

### **9.3 Review Recommendation to Hire Girls Head Varsity Volleyball Coach**

Carter reported on the recommendation of Tia Roberts as the Head Coach for Varsity Girls Volleyball. Carter said Ms. Roberts was the former Junior Varsity Volleyball Coach under Jim Ragosta and that he thought she would do a "great job." He said she was excited to have an opportunity to be a head coach.

Farhat thanked Carter for his reports.

## **9.4 Review 2008-2009 Handbook Changes**

### **9.4.1 Elementary Student Handbook**

Farhat recognized Principal Lange who briefly reviewed a few minor changes to the Elementary Student Handbook. Changes reflected the concept of River Valley Elementary rather than two separate elementary schools.

Petro asked about the "insert former mission statement" section on Page 1. Lange explained there were two mission statements, the original mission statement that was adopted formally and another mission statement that was never formally adopted by the District. Farhat said that Wagner had suggested changing the mission statement to better reflect the District's goals and objectives. Warner said the team from the North Central Association (NCA) Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (CASI) audit visit also suggested updating the District's mission statement.

### **9.4.2 Middle/High School Student Handbook**

Interim Middle/High School Principal Warner reviewed the proposed Middle/High School Student Handbook changes. Specifically, the following were proposed: graduation ceremony is a privilege, not a right; changing infraction penalties to reflect the current schedule (former infractions were based upon Block Scheduling); verifiable appointments for students invoking their right to privacy when signing in/out; allowing use of cellular devices during designated lunch periods, before and after school, and during passing times; a second infraction of cellular telephone usage would result in holding the device until a parent came in to pick it up; 20 years of age would be the maximum age for an individual to attend a school dance; and permitted use of CD/MP3 players during lunch period.

Graziano asked about the attendance policy that was changed during the current (2007-2008) fiscal year. Warner replied the District could not refuse credit for lack of attendance. He said it seemed to work well, but some students took so many liberties that they fell behind with their work.

### **9.4.3 Athletic Handbook**

Interim Athletic Director Carter reported he had no major changes to the 2008-2009 Athletic Handbook except some minor updates. He wanted to keep the requirement that grades would be checked every three weeks which would motivate students to maintain their academic standing in order to play in fall sports. He said if students were checked only on March 20, they might fall behind with their schoolwork the remainder of the school year and thus, would not be able to play sports in the fall. Carter said it was not in the best interests of the students "to use March 20."

Graziano said he supported the decision, but personally, thought it should be up to parents and students to decide if students were on track to pass and graduate. Warner said some students were "on the bubble" and if not checked periodically, would fall behind and be ineligible to play. Carter said many parents were working to support their families and not always able to check students' grades regularly. Farhat said that parents relied on the school "to make up the difference."

Graziano said it is difficult for students when they only have one test and fail it. Wagner said teachers should not be giving one test every three weeks, rather true measurement of knowledge attainment had to be conducted frequently and regularly. Graziano agreed.

## **9.5 Review Administrative and Supervisory Contract Extensions**

Farhat asked Knutel to review the proposed contract extensions. Knutel said the Personnel Committee, consisting of Knutel, German and Graziano, recommended the following contract extensions:

Garry Lange, Elementary Principal = two-year contract  
Wayne Warner, Interim Middle/High School Principal = two-year contract  
Cheryl Capiak, Finance Coordinator = two-year contract

Robert Payne, Buildings and Grounds Supervisor = one-year contract  
Linda Weigel, Transportation Supervisor = one-year contract  
Teri Brown, Working Food Service Supervisor = one-year contract

The Personnel Committee also recognized that the current administrators have received one raise in the past six years. Farhat asked if the one-year contracts were based upon past practice, which was confirmed.

**9.6 Consider Approval of Resolution for Public Notice on Hearing on the Proposed 2008-2009 Budget – June 9, 6:45 p.m.**

Farhat explained a resolution for public notice of a hearing on the proposed 2008-2009 budget was required. He read the following resolution:

*WHEREAS, This Board has reviewed a proposed budget and desires to establish a hearing thereon for the fiscal year 2008-2009.*

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:*

*1. This Board does hereby set 6:45 o'clock, P.M., June 9, 2008, at the River Valley Middle/High Library, Three Oaks, Michigan, as the time, date and location for the public hearing on the proposed budget for the 2008-2009 fiscal year.*

*2. The Board authorizes and directs the Superintendent to cause the Notice of a Public Hearing on the Proposed 2008-2009 Budget, a copy of which is attached hereto as Exhibit A, to be published in the newspaper of general circulation in the district, not less than six (6) days prior to the hearing.*

*3. All resolutions and parts of resolutions insofar as they conflict with the provisions of this resolution be and the same are hereby rescinded.*

**EXHIBIT A**

**RIVER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BERRIEN COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

**NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING  
ON PROPOSED 2008-2009 BUDGET**

*PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on June 9, 2008 at 6:45 o'clock P.M., at the River Valley Middle/High School Library, Three Oaks, Michigan, the Board of Education of River Valley School District will hold a public hearing to consider the District's proposed 2008-2009 budget.*

*The Board may not adopt its proposed 2008-2009 budget until after the public hearing. A copy of the proposed 2008-2009 budget, including the proposed property tax millage rate, is available for public inspection during normal business hours at the River Valley School District Business Office, 15480 Three Oaks Road, Three Oaks, Michigan.*

*The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of this hearing.<sup>1</sup>*

*This notice is given by order of the Board of Education.*

Moved by Petro, supported by Graziano, to adopt the Public Notice on Hearing the Proposed 2008-2009 Budget Resolution. Roll call vote: Ehlert, Aye; Farhat, Aye; German, Aye; Graziano, Aye; Knutel, Aye; Petro, Aye; Wagner, Aye (all Ayes). The resolution motion was declared adopted.

**9.7 Consider Approval of the Proposed Changes Recommended by the RVEA Contract Negotiations Committee to the 2008-2009 Teachers' Contract**

Farhat said the Board needed to approve changes in the contract wording with the River Valley Education Association. The RVEA approved the contract wording changes at their meeting on May 7, 2008. The items were discussed and tentatively approved during the year in Collective Bargaining Negotiations Committee meetings.

Moved by Graziano, supported by Knutel, to approve the contract wording with the River Valley Education Association (RVEA) as presented. All Ayes. Motion carried.

**9.8 Discuss and Approve the Appointment of an Acting Superintendent**

Farhat recognized Interim Middle/High School Principal Warner, who shared his discussion with District attorneys while he was in Lansing on school business. The attorneys said the District needed someone officially designated as the school representative for the superintendent. Warner contacted Farhat who, in turn, contacted the attorneys. Farhat said he was informed he could appoint an Acting Superintendent and the Board could then approve or disapprove the appointment. Farhat said that he had appointed Warner, based upon past practices, and that Warner had done an excellent job handling the duties to date. Board members concurred and thanked Warner for taking on the added duties. Farhat said Warner had immediately accepted the additional duties without any thought or mention of additional compensation. He said he "was humbled" that Warner had not sought compensation for the interim appointment.

Petro said he was curious and asked if this had ever happened in the past. Capiak said it had once with the Head Custodian position. Graziano asked how many additional hours were required. Farhat said Warner "never questioned the money, he just stepped up." Discussion addressed compensation and Capiak suggested payment might be in the form of a stipend. Wagner suggested the Personnel Committee recommend to the Board a fair compensation for Warner's additional duties as Acting Superintendent.

Moved by Graziano, supported by Ehlert, to appoint Wayne Warner as Acting Superintendent. All Ayes. Motion carried.

In other business, Interim Middle/High School Principal Warner reported four River Valley students would participate at the State Track Meet next week. Farhat congratulated the students on behalf of the Board.

Graziano asked about the Assistant Principal position, and Knutel said they had interviewed three potential candidates.

Finance Coordinator Cheryl Capiak reported she had received a telephone call from Mary Dunbar, Executive Director of The Pokagon Fund, Inc. Ms. Dunbar reported the District's Technology Curriculum grant application was awarded \$29,500 from the District's designated municipal funds.

**9.9 Closed Session to Discuss RVEA Contract Negotiations**

Farhat said the Board would go into closed session to discuss RVEA contract negotiations. He explained to the audience that no other District business would be discussed after the Board returned from closed session to an open session. At 8:30 p.m. Board members agreed to a ten-minute recess before going into closed session.

Moved by Graziano, supported by Petro, to go into closed session at 8:42 p.m. to discuss RVEA contract negotiations. Roll call vote: Ehlert, Aye; Farhat, Aye; German, Aye; Graziano, Aye; Knutel, Aye; Petro, Aye; Wagner, Aye (all Ayes). The Board went into Closed Session.

**9.10 Open Session**

Moved by Wagner, supported by Ehlert, to return to open session at 9:07 p.m. All Ayes. Motion carried. The Board returned to Open Session.

**10.0 Adjournment**

Moved by Petro, supported by Knutel, to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 p.m. All Ayes. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Vickie Wagner, Secretary