



River Valley Board of Education
River Valley School District
15480 Three Oaks Road, Three Oaks, Michigan 49128
www.RiverValleySchools.org

Work Session Meeting: 7:30 p.m. Monday, January 14, 2008
River Valley Middle/High School Library

1.0 Call To Order

President Farhat called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

Members present: Michael Ehlert, William Farhat, J.C. German, Steve Graziano, Ronald Petro and Vickie Wagner.

Member absent: Fred Knutel

Superintendent Robert Schroeder and Finance Coordinator Cheryl Capiak were in attendance.

2.0 Pledge of Allegiance

President Farhat led the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Farhat called for additional agenda items: 6.3 Student Board Representative Report (which would move the District School Improvement Meeting to item 6.4); 7.6 The Pokagon Fund, Inc. Awards; 8.2 Resignation of the Middle/High School Principal; 8.3 Appointment of an Interim Middle/High School Principal; 8.4 Appointment of an Interim Athletic Director; 8.5 Appointment of a Wrestling Coach; and 9.2 Overnight Trip Requests by both Culinary Arts and the Band.

3.0 Recognition of School Board Members

Superintendent Schroeder noted Governor Jennifer Granholm proclaimed January 2008 as School Board Recognition Month in Michigan. Schroeder said he appreciated the many contributions Board members make to our children and communities. He noted Board members spend a lot of time on and attention to school matters and that serving on the Board of Education is not simply showing up for a meeting every two weeks. Schroeder offered a quote on education as he presented a certificate of appreciation to Ehlert, Farhat, German, Graziano, Petro and Wagner. President Farhat said the Board wished Knutel well with his knee surgery and Schroeder thanked Board members again.

4.0 Review Regular Meeting Minutes of December 17, 2007

Moved by German, supported by Graziano, to accept the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 17, 2007. All Ayes. Motion carried.

5.0 Building and Grounds

5.1 Next Meeting

German reported that the Buildings and Grounds Committee anticipated having a proposal ready for the January 28 Board meeting. Farhat asked if the Committee report would include how the Committee came to their conclusions, which German confirmed. German stated the report would include the feasibility of the proposal, the demographics and other information pertinent to their decisions. President Farhat thanked German for the update.

6.0 Curriculum/Policy

6.1 Board Policy Revision

Superintendent Schroeder asked if Board members had any questions or concerns with the current Board Policy. None were expressed.

6.2 Update on Attendance/Dress Code

High School Principal Jose Vera reported that there were no issues with the new Attendance and Dress Codes. He said student absences were up, but there were no losses of academic credits. Vera and Assistant Principal Warner reported the change in dress code has worked well and that teen fashion calls for holes in the knees of pants, which would have previously been a dress code violation. President Farhat thanked Vera and Warner for their report.

6.3 Student Board Representative Report

Samantha Lee presented a Student Board Report. Lee reported that the Girls Basketball Team would play a January 15 game at Cassopolis and a January 19 home game against New Buffalo, that the Boys Basketball Team would play a January 17 home game against Cassopolis and the Wrestling Team would attend a meet this evening at Countryside, a January 16 meet at Cassopolis and a tournament on January 19. Lee reported the Student Congress was preparing for the February 8 Winterfest and the spring Blood Drive, students were studying for examinations and the Band and Choir were preparing for the Spring Festivals.

President Farhat thanked Miss Lee for her report.

6.4 District School Improvement Meeting

Superintendent Schroeder stated the District's School Improvement Team is scheduled to meet at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 22 in the Superintendent's Conference Room to review test score data. Schroeder invited Board members to the meeting.

7.0 Finance

7.1 Review Accounts Payable for January, 2008 and the Treasure's Report for December, 2007

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

Accounts Payable for January, 2008

General Fund \$64,799.48
General Fund Prepaid \$200,851.85
General Fund Payroll \$255,969.69
Athletic Fund \$692.20
Athletic Fund Prepaid \$5,004.03
Athletic Payroll \$10,351.38
School Lunch Fund \$6,267.51
School Lunch Fund Prepaid \$2,281.65
School Lunch Payroll \$8,579.39
Total Accounts Payable \$554,797.18

Treasurer's Report for December, 2007

General Fund \$3,653,031.00
Combined School Service Fund \$24,468.89
Activity Fund \$286,712.11, including scholarship dollars and funds donated to the school district

President Farhat thanked Capiak for her report.

7.2 Review Second Quarterly Report for FY 2008

Finance Coordinator Capiak reviewed the Second Quarterly Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 and noted the District was doing well financially.

Revenues:

Local Revenue was unchanged.

State Revenue increased by \$316,965, reflecting an increase in state aid.

Federal Revenue increased by \$34,068, reflecting an increase in Title I, Part A grant carryover.

Expenditures:

Instruction increased by \$40,909, due to an additional Elementary Special Education Teacher. *Support Services* increased by \$13,043, due to purchase of a food and mail van and increased unemployment expenses.

Transfer Expenses increased by \$1,808, due to a change in athletic coaching staff.

Revenues Less Expenditures:

Revenues increased by \$351,033 and *Expenditures* increased by \$55,760, resulting in a net increase of revenues minus expenses that totaled \$295,273. This had a positive effect on the current budget. The District's second quarter update increased our fund equity by an additional \$295,273, resulting in a projected fund equity for June 30, 2008 of \$1,360,595.

Farhat commented that this would be the first time in three or four years that the District would not be in deficit. Petro asked about the need for replacement buses. When recognized, David York stated staff had worked with the state's online program, Build A Bus, and that they were researching financial aspects of trade-ins. Capiak stated the desire to have a new bus purchased each fiscal year, but the District would need four new buses to catch up. Farhat stated he would be addressing a local foundation on the District's transportation needs.

President Farhat thanked Capiak for her report.

7.3 Headlee Vote – January 15, 2008

Superintendent Schroeder asked everyone to please support the Headlee proposal on the January 15 ballot, which will maintain current District revenues. Capiak stated without passage of this proposal, the District would lose approximately \$65,000 which would not be made up by the state. President Farhat asked the community to vote Yes on this ballot proposal. Farhat commented that approximately 87% of the District's funds are from local revenues and there is just no way to make up this amount if the proposal is not passed. Wagner thanked Schroeder for his Letter to the Editor which may help with the election.

7.4 Preschool Slots

Finance Coordinator Capiak reviewed the Michigan Department of Education School Readiness Program and the recent communication regarding our preschool funding. She reported the District is eligible to receive an allocation of \$30,600 for FY 2008 to operate a school readiness program for a maximum of nine (9) children and/or provide comprehensive parent involvement and education programs for all families of children birth to kindergarten entry. This represents an increase from \$3,300 to \$3,400 per capita. Capiak stated a resolution would be presented at the next Board meeting.

7.5 Donation

Superintendent Schroeder reported on a \$50 donation to the high school basketball program by Denise Poyer in honor of her father, Richard Brush, who grew up in Three Oaks. Ms. Poyer's employer, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, matched the donation two to one (2:1) representing a total donation of \$150.

President Farhat thanked Ms. Poyer for the donation in honor of her father and the Kellogg Foundation for their generous match.

7.6 The Pokagon Fund, Inc. Awards

Wagner, a member of The Pokagon Fund, Inc. (TPF) Board of Directors, announced TPF had awarded funds for two River Valley applications: 1) \$4,350 to resurface and repair the tennis courts; and 2) \$5,000 for Mr. Latus' program, Hands On Astronomy. She noted Latus had requested a total

budget of approximately \$1,400 and that because of the quality of the project, TPF awarded more funds than requested.

President Farhat thanked TPF for these awards.

8.0 Personnel

8.1 Board of Education Elections

Superintendent Schroeder reminded all that elections for the Board of Education would be held in May and that applications for two seats must be filed by February 12. Graziano stated he would not seek reelection. Knutel currently holds the other seat that will be up for election. Farhat expressed the need for motivated Board members to assist with the District's goals.

8.2 Resignation of the Middle/High School Principal

Superintendent Schroeder announced that River Valley Middle/High School Principal Jose Vera resigned Monday, January 14, effective January 25. Mr. Vera addressed the board. He said that he was drawn by "the opportunity of a lifetime" and would begin a new job the following week, working with at-risk Spanish-speaking youngsters in Detroit's "deepest ghettos," its poverty-stricken central-city neighborhoods. Vera said it had been a "wonderful seven years, and I've learned a lot."

Moved by Petro, supported by Ehlert, to reluctantly accept the resignation of Jose Vera, River Valley Middle/High School Principal and to thank Mr. Vera for seven years of service to the District. Five Ayes: Ehlert, Farhat, German, Petro and Wagner (5). Nay: Graziano (1). Motion carried.

President Farhat thanked Vera for his service to the community and the school during a period of declining enrollment and several years of financial straits. Vera approached each member of the Board, shook hands and thanked them. Board members thanked Mr. Vera and wished him the best with his new position.

President Farhat thanked Vera and said he knew how hard he had worked and had done a wonderful job managing our largest school.

8.3 Appointment of an Interim Middle/High School Principal

Superintendent Schroeder reported he had spoken with Assistant Principal Wayne Warner about the Interim Middle/High School Principal position. Schroeder said Warner agreed to take the post with the condition that he could "look at where he is and how he feels about where he wants to be" at the end of the 2007-2008 school year.

Moved by German, supported by Petro, to appoint Wayne Warner as Interim Middle/High School Principal.

Schroeder stated Warner has served the District as a teacher, coach and administrator for 38 years and that he has been assistant principal for seven years. Graziano asked about the Interim Principal pay. Schroeder stated that because the District just learned of Vera's plan to resign, he had not had time to work through financial considerations. Wagner stated Warner has a good reputation in the community and should be well received as principal. She commented on the positive aspects of having someone with longevity, an institutional memory, in the position.

Wagner called the question to appoint Wayne Warner as Interim Middle/High School Principal. All Ayes. Motion carried.

8.4 Appointment of an Interim Athletic Director

Superintendent Schroeder recommended Neil Carter as Interim Athletic Director. Carter has served as baseball coach, basketball coach, special education van driver and buildings and groundskeeper for the District. Vera stated he supported Carter as Interim Athletic Director as Carter was willing to tackle the amount of work required and would "do the job right."

Moved by Wagner, supported by Petro, to appoint Neil Carter as Interim Athletic Director.

Graziano stated there had been no time to discuss salary with Carter. Petro asked if the position would be covered by the Bargaining Unit, which Schroeder said would not. Farhat recognized David York who commented on how important it is to keep activities running smoothly and public relations with parents, students, other coaches and districts. He said Carter was “a class act” and would be a positive influence on the position. Graziano asked about checks and balances as Carter would be both Interim Athletic Director and a head coach.

Wagner called the question to appoint Neil Carter as Interim Athletic Director. All Ayes. Motion carried.

8.5 Search for Interim Assistant Principal

Farhat stated interim personnel arrangements would position four administrators in slots filled by just two men: Vera had served as Middle/High School Principal and co-Athletic Director; Warner had served as disciplinarian, Assistant Middle/High School Principal and co-Athletic Director. Farhat commented that the District has had two administrators working at 110 to 120 percent all the time and with Vera’s resignation, he did not want Warner to try to do everything all by himself. Graziano added that hiring additional administrators in the short term “is a must, a mandate, to assist Mr. Warner.” Wagner suggested contacting the Berrien County Intermediate School District (BCISD) which could refer retired administrators for interim administrative positions, thus saving the District the costs of fringe benefits, specifically health care and retirement plan fees. Schroeder confirmed there are a number of people who contract as temporary staff and that both Bridgman and Buchanan had utilized a retired administrator when their districts had vacancies.

Moved by German, supported by Graziano, to authorize Superintendent Robert Schroeder to find an immediate temporary Interim Middle/High School Assistant Principal as soon as possible to assist Mr. Warner as Interim Middle/High School Assistant Principal, and to begin the process of finding a Middle/High School Assistant Principal. All Ayes. Motion carried.

8.6 Appointment of a Wrestling Coach

Superintendent Schroeder reported he had received and reviewed several applications for the Wrestling Coach position, but a background check would have to be conducted before an appointment could be made. Graziano questioned enrollment in the program. Warner stated during the previous school year twelve (12) students had signed up, but only four (4) had continued with the program so it was cut.

9. Other

9.1 United Way

Superintendent Schroeder and Mr. Warner reported that the River Valley staff would receive an award from United Way for most improved in overall giving.

9.2 Overnight Trip Requests

Superintendent Schroeder reviewed the overnight trip requests by Mrs. Kim Fritz and the Culinary Arts students to attend the 2008 Annual Michigan ProStart Student Competition at the Sheraton Hotel and Resort in Lansing, from Saturday, March 8 through Monday, March 10. Six students will participate in the event.

Schroeder reported the River Valley High School Band has been invited to participate in the 2008 AutoZone Liberty Bowl in Memphis, Tennessee, December 26 through December 30. Mr. Robert Hay, Band Director, had reported to Schroeder on the great educational experience for the band members and the great public relations for the music program. Schroeder said Hay and the Band were confident they would raise the funds to make the trip. Schroeder said the administration had approved both overnight trips.

Moved by Graziano, supported by German, to approve overnight trips for the Culinary Arts students to attend the 2008 Annual Michigan ProStart Student Competition at the Sheraton Hotel and Resort in Lansing, from Saturday, March 8 through Monday, March 10, and the River Valley High School Band to perform at the 2008 AutoZone Liberty Bowl in Memphis, Tennessee, December 26 through December 30. All Ayes. Motion carried.

10 Closed Session to Discuss Negotiations

Superintendent Schroeder said he would conduct a Community Forum before the next Board meeting on Monday, January 28 at 6:30 p.m. President Farhat assured the audience that no action would be taken after the Board returned from Closed Session and that the Board would take a break from 8:30 to 8:40 p.m. to allow community members to depart.

Moved by Farhat, supported by Petro, to go into closed session at 8:40 p.m. to discuss negotiations. Roll call vote: Ehlert, Aye; Farhat, Aye; German, Aye; Graziano, Aye; Petro, Aye; Wagner, Aye (all Ayes). The Board went into Closed Session.

Moved by Wagner, supported by Graziano, to return to open session at 9:30 p.m. All ayes. The Board returned to Open Session.

Graziano asked about the upcoming Building and Grounds Committee report. German gave a brief overview and Petro said the issues are known through the community.

11 Adjournment

Moved by Wagner, supported by Graziano, to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m. All Ayes. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Vickie Wagner, Secretary