



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

Work Session Meeting: 7:00 p.m. Monday, February 18, 2008
River Valley Middle/High School Library

1.0 Call To Order

President Farhat called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

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

Member absent: Michael Ehlert.

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

2.0 Pledge of Allegiance

President Farhat led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3.0 Review Regular Meeting Minutes of January 28, 2008 and Special Meeting Minutes of February 4, 2008

Moved by German, supported by Knutel, to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 28, 2008 and the Special Meeting Minutes of February 4, 2008. All Ayes. Motion carried.

4.0 Introduction of Staff Member

Superintendent Schroeder introduced George Waning, Interim Assistant Middle/High School Principal. Mr. Waning introduced himself. He said he started as a teacher and basketball coach in Indiana, was an administrator and athletic director at St. Joseph Public Schools for 30 years, worked in the postsecondary field and was the interim middle school principal at Bridgman in 2007. Mr. Waning said that "kids are kids," that he had observed "lots of good things at River Valley" and was happy to be at the District. President Farhat welcomed Mr. Waning on behalf of the Board and River Valley community.

5.0 Hearing of RVEA Grievance

President Farhat recognized Marilyn Griffiths, the River Valley Education Association (RVEA) President. Ms. Griffiths presented the grievance: It is the position of the RVEA that the Board of Education is in violation of Article V, Section F of the Master Agreement, "*The normal work week for part-time teachers shall be adjusted on an individual basis in accordance with the number of hours employed and the duties assigned,*" and of Article V, Section I of the Master Agreement, "*Each time a teacher is required to teach during his/her preparation time as set forth on this article, he/she shall receive additional compensation at his/her pro-rated salary.*" It is the interpretation of the RVEA that the hours employed is referring to the number of classes being taught. Teaching five classes or 5/5 is considered a full-time position and the teacher would receive the full amount of money on his/her given step of the salary schedule. A teacher teaching less than five classes would have their prorated amount based upon a 1/5 calculation. Likewise a teacher teaching during their conference time would have their pro-rated amount based upon a 1/5 calculation. Ms. Griffiths cited past practices, such as four teachers in the early 1980s who were reduced to 3/5 time. Discussion addressed part-time calculations of 2/6 and 4/6 versus 2/5 and 4/5 and a music teacher who had been paid 8/8 in a previous year. Ms. Griffiths stated that based upon the administration's calculations of 1/6, a teacher would "never get to full-time."

Farhat asked if the planning period was “free time.” Ms. Griffiths replied teachers commonly used their planning time to consult with other educators, plan lessons, grade tests, prepare classroom materials, speak with the principal on discipline issues, and other educational tasks.

Farhat asked Ms. Griffiths where she obtained her information about past payment for preparation time. She said she was one of the teachers in the 1980s, a social studies teacher provided information about past River Valley calculations, and that she had looked into several files with Superintendent Schroeder.

Farhat stated teachers were at the school at the start and end of the day with five periods of teaching and one of planning, and that RV teachers had “stepped up” to do extra work and extra pay was provided. He stated he believed the sixth period was part of the formula as teachers were not free to do whatever they wanted, that the point of a planning period was school business. Ms. Griffiths replied that if a teacher did not use their planning period productively, then that teacher would have to do those tasks after hours or on weekends. She added that teachers were responsible for monitoring halls and commonly had after school meetings.

Knutel asked Ms. Griffiths if the people who decided to teach additional sections during their planning periods knew the school paid an additional 1/6 of salary. Ms. Griffiths replied two did not sign the contract and one had signed, but he did so to avoid a “virtual high school,” believing it not in the best interests of students and thus, felt pressured to sign the contract. Knutel asked why this was not brought up sooner and she replied it was “on the docket” for April and May. Farhat said that he and German were not aware of the situation until the grievance was filed.

Farhat asked Superintendent Schroeder if others had been paid 1/6 and he replied that in 2001 and 2002, a teacher had been paid 1/8 when the District utilized an 8-block schedule, that a health and physical education teacher had been paid 4/7 and 5/7, that the same calculations were used for an automotive teacher and with five or six situations at the elementary schools. Farhat asked if those teachers compensated for 5/7 taught 4 or 5 classes and if passing time, before and after school time were compensated. Schroeder replied it was pro-rated at 12 minutes per class. Ms. Griffiths said one could not compare high school to elementary school as passing time was not included for elementary staff.

Petro asked if this was the first experience with this situation, which Ms. Griffiths confirmed. Petro said the teachers were aware of what was offered at the time they began the task and she replied one had signed the contract but two had not.

President Farhat recognized Rich Sullivan who said he was not told the pay arrangements and when he raised the question, could not get an answer. He asked if part-time staff were paid for a planning period and if part-time teachers taught two classes, were they paid for three? Mr. Sullivan said he had emailed Superintendent Schroeder and raised the issue with the previous principal, but no decision had been made. Schroeder replied that at the time, he had suggested doing the same calculations as the elementary. Graziano asked if this was proposed to teachers as a formula, and Mr. Sullivan said he had thought it was going to be 1/5 plus 1/6 divided by 2. Graziano said to Ms. Griffiths that a break down by the minute seemed the fairest and that the “minute thing” might have to be negotiated.

President Farhat asked Ms. Griffiths if they would like to discuss the matter for a moment as the RVEA was asking for 1/5 and the administration recommended 1/6. Wagner confirmed the Board decision would be either 1/5 or 1/6. Farhat then excused the RVEA members in order that they have time to discuss the issue and return with their decision. The RVEA members departed at 7:31 p.m.

6.0 Building and Grounds

6.1 New Troy Property

Superintendent Schroeder recognized Dr. Gary Campbell who explained that there had been a property description error for the previous New Troy campus. He said he had spoken with a realtor and representatives of the group Friends of New Troy, which had purchased the campus for a sum conveyed in a warranty deed. When the group had the property surveyed, they found the actual

boundaries to be different than what was recorded. Imperfect boundaries had been conveyed and technically, the District still had claim to a small section of that property. Dr. Campbell said Friends of New Troy were asking for a clear, clean title to the New Troy property and that the District quit any claim and transfer any claim it has to the Friends of New Troy. He emphasized that the District would be quitting all claims, not that the District had any actual claims.

Graziano questioned how much the District had paid to survey that property and Dr. Campbell said it was a description error rather than a surveying error. Superintendent Schroeder said it would be in the best interest of the District and the Friends of New Troy for the District to quit all claims to any of that property. After discussion, Wagner read the resolution:

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the River Valley School District Board of Education grants the Superintendent of Schools authority to execute a quit claim deed in order to convey any and all property of the former New Troy school campus to the group Friends of New Troy.

Moved by Petro, supported by Graziano, to adopt the resolution. Roll call vote: Farhat, Aye; German, Aye; Graziano, Aye; Knutel, Aye; Petro, Aye; Wagner, Aye (all Ayes). The Quit Claim Deed Resolution was declared adopted.

6.2 Buildings and Grounds Committee Report

President Farhat recognized German, Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee. German reported that 30 people had shown up for a forum and the proposed building plan had received positive support. On February 18, German, Ehlert, Farhat, Superintendent Schroeder and Principal Garry Lange attended the Three Oaks Township meeting, regarding a piece of Township property that would be required for construction of a new elementary school if approved by District voters. German said the Township was unanimous in their decision to give the property to the District for the purpose of construction of a new elementary school, pending approval of the plan by voters. Farhat commented how nice it was to have the support of Township officials.

Superintendent Schroeder said there was some controversy on the proposed building site and that a Board member had received several telephone calls regarding such. Knutel then said, "Don't take this the wrong way," and explained he had received calls from District residents indicating the problem with the proposed building plan was it was all slanted to Three Oaks and Chikaming and Weesaw residents were feeling "left out." Knutel said if we looked at New Troy, the area had tool and die and other manufacturing sites, that they made a contribution to the District just as lakefront property owners contribute to the District through tax revenue. Farhat asked how they did not feel included, if it was "meetings." Knutel said he felt the Board needed a representative from Weesaw Township as they felt "left out." Farhat asked if that meant meetings in different areas and said he wished someone from New Troy was on the Board. Knutel said he had held back his election petition, hoping someone from Weesaw would file for the upcoming Board election. When that did not happen, Knutel said he had filed.

President Farhat, a Chikaming resident, said he had hoped to have a central location for the elementary school but it was not supported by the voters of the District. He said that we would have to go to the next best plan, which was not to disregard any of the District. Farhat said, again, that his personal desires would be for a centralized campus, but this was not realized by the voters so he recognized that "it was time to move on."

Graziano said the Board was an elected body and that people of Weesaw Township needed to get involved and he wished some had run for office. Petro reminded all that the current Board members had been elected by all precincts in the District. Farhat said he was trying to impress upon everyone that the proposed building plan was an even-handed decision. Graziano said the best thing for the District would be a new elementary school and now the proposed location is Three Oaks Village. He said once educated and seeing the facts, he understands why that decision was made.

German said the Board would need to make a decision at the next regular meeting if members wished to go forward with the proposed building plan. Petro commented that the State of Michigan required a complete, final plan to approve before it can even go to the voters. He said a lot of effort had been put into community forums, the Board had received a great deal of input and was acting "in accordance with what people have told us, not what we necessarily want."

Farhat said the issue would be placed on the agenda of the next regular meeting for a decision by the Board. Superintendent Schroeder said the proposed plan had to be in Lansing by March 24 for the next election cycle.

7.0 Finance

7.1 Review Accounts Payable for February, 2008 and the Treasurer's Report for January, 2008

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

Accounts Payable for February, 2008

General Fund \$104,967.97
General Fund Prepaid \$197,472.42
General Fund Payroll \$250,042.32
Athletic Fund \$464.59
Athletic Fund Prepaid \$4,699.81
Athletic Payroll \$9,078.57
School Lunch Fund \$12,752.22
School Lunch Fund Prepaid \$2,407.39
School Lunch Payroll \$4,832.95
Total Accounts Payable \$586,718.24

Knutel questioned the expenditure for Thrun Law Firm and Capiak replied it has the retainer fee for the year and was paid every January. She also explained the \$44 payment to Thrun Law Firm for the River Valley School District's portion of the Durant lawsuit regarding mandated programs without program funding.

Treasurer's Report for January, 2008

General Fund \$3,434,329.24
Combined School Service Fund \$31,418.77
Activity Fund \$288,201.67, including scholarship dollars and funds donated to the school district

President Farhat thanked Capiak for her report.

5.0 Hearing of RVEA Grievance Continued

At 7:55 p.m. President Farhat recognized Marilyn Griffiths, who said the RVEA members unanimously decided the pay for teaching an additional class at the Middle/High School should be based on 1/5 of salary. Board members discussed if this would go to arbitration, whether pay would be retroactive, and that the Board had 10 business days to report its decision.

Moved by Petro, supported by Wagner, to lay on the table a decision regarding the RVEA grievance, regarding the teachers' position for 1/5 pay or the administration's position of 1/6 pay for teachers who teach an additional class during their planning period. All Ayes. Motion to table agreed.

President Farhat thanked Ms. Griffiths and the RVEA members for attending the meeting and said they would not be required to attend or present at the next Board meeting.

7.2 Review Information on Possible Bus Purchase

Finance Coordinator Capiak reviewed financial plans for a possible 71-passenger bus purchase in June of the current fiscal year, FY 2007-2008, and another bus purchase in July for FY 2008-2009. She stated the District had not purchased a new bus for the fleet since September 23, 2004 and that

“new” bus has logged over 80,000 miles. Capiak said with over 90 square miles in the District, we are in desperate need of getting back on track for purchasing one new bus per year. She said she will ask the Board at the February regular meeting to transfer \$55,578 from the Maintenance Budget and \$8,015 from the Transportation Budget to cover the cost of \$63,773 for a new bus for the current school year. Capiak said she would like to order one bus in June and a second in July. She reviewed the current fleet and said Transportation Supervisor Linda Weigel had obtained a price quote of \$69,073 minus a trade-in value of \$6,200 from Midwest Transit Equipment. Capiak said the normal trade-in value was approximately \$2,500. Both buses would take 90 days to assemble and thus, be ready at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year. Capiak reported she had applied to The Pokagon Fund, Inc. for a \$300,000 grant for additional bus purchases.

Superintendent Schroeder confirmed past practices were to purchase a new bus every fiscal year and asked for a decision from the Board at the next meeting.

7.3 Budget Procedure

Finance Coordinator Capiak reviewed briefly how the school budget is prepared, including working with the administration team, looking at the past three years’ budgets, arriving at a budget amount and then maintaining current figures. She reported on the Governor’s education funding plan, which has not been approved by the legislature. That plan, however, would increase per pupil spending by \$108 with additional funding up to \$108 on a sliding scale. Capiak said once union contracts were agreed, a budget would be created. She reported the cost of health care insurance would increase approximately 6% but the retirement rate would not. With the possibility of teacher retirements, the District would not have to lay off any staff. Capiak said the District needed new course materials for Social Studies classes.

Capiak said the Board must decide how much input they want to have with the budget. Farhat said Capiak forecasted carefully and that the Board has input when it comes to reducing positions.

7.4 Enrollment Update

Finance Coordinator Capiak gave the enrollment update: the February 13 Wednesday count had 826 students, including 32 preschool students. Without the preschool count, the K-12 student enrollment was 794 students, 20 less than the September count.

President Farhat recognized Principal Lange, who reported on his attempts to make all families feel welcome, regardless of their District location. He said Kindergarten registration would be held at the New Troy Community Center and that the combined parents’ group had over 60 participants at the New Troy sledding event. Lange reported on last year’s summer reading program at New Troy, which will be repeated this year, and the upcoming art show in Sawyer. Principal Lange said if the District had only five square miles, it would be very easy but with such a large district, he tried “to touch everyone.” When asked, Principal Lange reported on the successful Chilly Night Chili Night with approximately 350 to 400 participants. He complimented the volunteers, noting Carrie Ehlert’s efforts preparing the chili and Gayle German’s rolls.

8.0 Personnel

8.1 Set Personnel Meeting

Discussion addressed the need for a Personnel Committee meeting, and Chair Knutel set the meeting for 6:30 p.m. on Monday, February 18, 2008, in the Superintendent’s Office.

President Farhat said he would conduct the Community Forum, also scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Monday, February 18, 2008, in the Middle/High School Library.

8.2 Board Candidates

Superintendent Schroeder announced two individuals had filed for positions on the Board of Education: Vicky Pfauth filed for Graziano’s current seat; and Fred Knutel filed to keep his current seat. Wagner stated Ms. Pfauth was a resident and graduate of Three Oaks High School, a former

student of Knutel's, and a business education teacher and principal at Galien High School. She had retired as the principal of Belleview High School, had experience with grant administration and her family had lived in the area for several generations and owned a Centennial Farm.

9.0 Adjournment

Moved by Wagner, supported by Knutel, to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m. All Ayes. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Vickie Wagner, Secretary