



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

Work Session: 7:30 p.m. Monday, March 17, 2008
 River Valley Middle/High School Library

1.0 Call To Order

President Farhat called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

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

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 Approval of Agenda as Presented

President Farhat called for an additional agenda item, Approval of Agenda as Presented and to move item 7.1, Discuss Joining Red Arrow Conference, right after Item 4. Moved by Ehlert, supported by Knutel, to accept the agenda with these two changes. All Ayes. Motion carried.

4.0 Review of Regular Meeting Minutes of February 25, 2008

Moved by Petro, supported by Ehlert, to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 25, 2008. All Ayes. Motion carried.

7.1 Discuss Joining Red Arrow Conference

Superintendent Schroeder acknowledged Interim Athletic Director Neil Carter who presented the Board with a chart indicating schools and enrollment figures for the Lakeland and Red Arrow Conferences.

Lakeland Conference		Red Arrow Conference	
<i>School</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>
Edwardsburg	732	Eau Claire	287
Coloma	507*	New Buffalo	285
Buchanan	545	River Valley	274
Berrien Springs	544	Covert	209
Brandywine	440	Lake Michigan Catholic	162
Bridgman	349	Michigan Lutheran	125
Cassopolis	315	Countryside	119
River Valley	274	Grace Christian	57

* Grades 10-12

Mr. Carter reported that he, former Principal Vera and Interim Middle/High School Principal Warner were invited to a meeting with the Red Arrow Conference (RAC) athletic directors and they discussed the teams. Since then, Mr. Carter has communicated via electronic mail (e-mail) with RAC coaches and found no “negatives” to the Conference. Mr. Carter and Mr. David York will have to create new schedules. Mr. Carter reported on a February 28 meeting with the RAC athletic directors to discuss the bylaws. Mr. Carter reported only one school did not offer all that River Valley sports offered – Countryside shares services. Five of the RAC schools have football and if the District joined the RAC, the football team would compete against more schools of similar size. Mr. Carter said that at the next regular meeting of the Board, he will recommend joining the RAC and allowing the District to remain in

the Lakeland Conference through the fall of 2010 as River Valley has a two-year contract with the Conference.

Farhat asked about creating schedules for teams and Mr. Carter said there would be a few non-conference slots available for the football schedule. Graziano asked if Lakeland Conference officials were agreeable to this and Mr. Carter said there were no guarantees as there was nothing in writing to date. Graziano said that as a former player and previous coach at River Valley, he was emotionally tied to the Lakeland Conference but believed the RAC would be best for students. Farhat said it was a good plan and thanked Mr. Carter.

Superintendent Schroeder asked about spring sports enrollment. Mr. Carter replied there were approximately 44 track members, baseball had varsity and junior varsity teams, softball had a varsity team, soccer had approximately 19 players, middle school track had over 20 students, and golf had approximately 10 players. Superintendent Schroeder asked if Mr. Carter was encouraged by these numbers and he said that he was. Petro asked about academic eligibility. Mr. Carter said the end of the marking period would be Wednesday, March 19, and if high school students passed, they would be eligible to play the remainder of the school year. He said middle school students were checked every three weeks. Mr. Carter said that Wednesday would be a big day for spring sports and that they might lose some student players. Superintendent Schroeder and President Farhat thanked Mr. Carter for his report.

5.0 Buildings & Grounds

5.1 Discuss Easement/Water Main

Superintendent Schroeder reported when city water was installed at River Valley Middle/High School, it was agreed upon that an easement would be negotiated between River Valley School District and Chikaming Township. This easement would allow first, the township to perform routine maintenance and checks, and second, if necessary, to expand services by "running a loop." This agreement was negotiated previously, but no action has been taken since those negotiations. The Superintendent said that at the next regular meeting of the Board he will ask to be given permission to sign such an easement with Chikaming Township.

Petro asked if the proposed easement for maintenance and possible expansion had been part of the original deal, which Superintendent Schroeder confirmed. Petro asked if the proposed easement for the "loop" fit the proposed construction and renovations. Superintendent Schroeder said there would be no problem and that wording could be changed in the easement. He stated Chikaming officials were very good working with the school, which Petro confirmed.

5.2 Discuss Bond Proposal

President Farhat recognized German, Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee. German introduced Ken Hebard of Hebard & Hebard Architects, Inc. Mr. Hebard explained that the February 4 presentation's scope had not changed and that they were "good to go." He said the application would be presented to the State Treasury in Lansing. Mr. Hebard and Finance Coordinator Cheryl Capiak reviewed the financial information. The levy would be for 1.5 mills with an average of 1.2 mills, reflecting 5% growth in the first five years and 3% thereafter. Mr. Hebard said the financial estimates were well below what has actually happened in the past few years. The final figure for the proposal is \$16,690,000, which includes close to 6% contingency funds that will help offset any new furniture costs. Mr. Hebard said the District's legal council would hand deliver the final package to the State Treasury office on Monday, March 24 at 9:00 a.m. Graziano asked what the millage ballot would indicate and Hebard replied 1.5 mills and that it would go down from there. Capiak said she would have the official ballot language on Monday, March 24. German and Farhat thanked Mr. Hebard.

5.3 Board Representation at March 24, 2008 Lansing Meeting

On March 24, there will be a meeting in Lansing regarding the District's bond proposal. Superintendent Schroeder asked if any Board members would like to accompany him and Capiak to Lansing. Farhat said he would like to attend the meeting.

6.0 Finance

6.1 Review Accounts Payable for March, 2008 and the Treasurer's Report for February, 2008

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

Accounts Payable for March, 2008

General Fund \$89,783.11
General Fund Prepaid \$202,708.65
General Fund Payroll \$256,000.83
Athletic Fund \$4,448.98
Athletic Fund Prepaid \$6,138.79
Athletic Payroll \$14,230.39
School Lunch Fund \$22,218.48
School Lunch Fund Prepaid \$3,446.64
School Lunch Payroll \$9,253.70
Total Accounts Payable \$608,229.57

Petro asked if anything had been done with the card system. Capiak replied the Meal Magic program for lunch was in place but the back office still had to enter student names and ala carte items into the system. She said the Meal Magic program should be in place before the end of the school year. Farhat asked about the snowplowing invoice. Capiak said the District had five snow days and two 2-hour delays this winter and that the snowplowing service had not changed their rates for several years. Farhat asked about payment for ticket-takers and Capiak confirmed winter sports ticket-takers were paid.

Treasurer's Report for February, 2008

General Fund \$3,605,926.51
Combined School Service Fund \$24,680.20
Activity Fund \$286,546.31, including scholarship dollars and funds donated to the school district

Farhat thanked Capiak for her report. He asked who approved activity expenses and if there were any processes in place. Capiak said the principals oversee the expenses, i.e., the German Club advisor signs off on an expense and submits it to the principal who reviews it, signs off and submits it to the administration. Capiak said there are two sign-offs on everything.

6.2 Review Resolution to Purchase Two Buses

Superintendent Schroeder said that at the next regular meeting he would ask for a formal resolution to participate in the Michigan School Business Officials (MSBO)/Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT) Bus Purchasing Program, regarding the purchase of the two buses for the District. Graziano asked if the need for a resolution would delay the projected timeframe and Superintendent Schroeder replied it would not as the District had 90 days for the order process.

6.3 Budget Reductions

Superintendent Schroeder reminded Board members that a year ago the District had large lay-offs and that he anticipates up to six staff retirements which will allow the District to keep layoffs to a minimum. Superintendent Schroeder said staffing needs are being evaluated, that the elementary will have one less section of fourth grade and that kindergarten registration would determine whether two or three sections would be required. Knutel asked about full-time kindergarten and Superintendent Schroeder said the District offered full-time kindergarten for ten years. He noted there was some discussion among state legislators about full funding for full-time kindergarten classes that enrolled less-than-full-time students.

7.0 Personnel

7.1 Notification of Intent to Return From Leave of Absence

Superintendent Schroeder reported that Joy Savenas, a District teacher on a one-year leave of absence for the current school year (2007-2008), has indicated that she would like to return to her position in the District for the 2008-2009 school year. He said it would depend upon staff openings.

7.2 Recommendation to Appoint Two At Risk Advocates

Superintendent Schroeder stated that at the next regular meeting of the Board of Education he would recommend the appointments of Heather Caid and Stephany Williams, effective March 17, 2008, for the positions of At Risk Advocates at the River Valley Middle/High School.

8.0 Other

8.1 Discuss Joining Red Arrow Conference

The agenda item was discussed after Item 4.0

8.2 Announcement

Superintendent Schroeder recognized Elementary Principal Garry Lange who reviewed the kindergarten registration schedule as follows:

- Kindergarten Registration, April 14, 6:00 p.m. at New Troy
- Kindergarten Registration, April 15, 6:00 p.m. at Three Oaks
- Kindergarten Registration, April 16, 6:00 p.m. at Chikaming
- Preschool Registration, April 17, 6:00 p.m. at Three Oaks
- Preschool Registration, April 18, 9:00 a.m. at Three Oaks

Principal Lange said they would enroll students during the school day as needed. Farhat asked when most students registered. Lange replied that there are fewer kindergarten enrollments at the end of the summer as it is difficult for families to find a place to live that late in the summer. He said there were 32 pre-kindergarten students advancing to kindergarten and that the school provided morning and afternoon pre-kindergarten sections. Parents could have their children ride the buses to school in the morning and pick up their children before lunch or they could drop off the children after lunch and the children would ride the buses home in the afternoons.

8.3 CTE Banquet – May 1, 2008

Superintendent Schroeder reminded Board members that a Career Technical Awards Banquet will be held at Lake Michigan College on May 1 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. He asked that Board members let him know if they are planning to attend.

8.4 Congratulations

Superintendent Schroeder reviewed the following awards received by River Valley students:

- RVHS Choir – One (I) rating at district competition allowing advancement to state competition
- Katie DeFreez – Silver Medal in Prepared Public Speaking
- FFA – Silver Award
- Dustin McMullin – State Wrestling Competition
- Paul Goodman, Guidance Counselor – Finalist for the Parent Advisory Committee of Berrien County Excellence in Education Award

Superintendent Schroeder said Mr. Jim Nevil, BPA Advisor, would update the Board at the next meeting about the River Valley High School Business Professionals of America (BPA).

Farhat said this was wonderful news and congratulated students and Mr. Goodman on behalf of the Board.

8.5 Lunch Buddies

Superintendent Schroeder recognized Elementary Principal Garry Lange who reported on the Lunch Buddies program at the Chikaming and Three Oaks campuses. The program is a partnership between the River Valley Elementary Schools and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Berrien and Cass Counties. The Lunch Buddies program will pair elementary school students with caring adult mentors. Buddies will meet once a week during the academic year for lunch at the child's school. Lunch will take place in a classroom where children and their Lunch Buddies will eat, talk, play games, read and just take time to visit. Volunteer Lunch Buddy mentors will receive extensive training and have background checks. This program is perfect for people with tight schedules or people who want to volunteer with a youth but in a more structured environment. If anyone is interested in becoming a Big Brother or Big Sister in the Lunch Buddy program, he/she can telephone the Niles office toll free at 1-877/367-2244 or contact Principal Lange.

Superintendent Schroeder asked Principal Lange to report on the elementary school dance held over the past weekend. Mr. Lange reported that Mr. Rick Maxon integrated elementary gym classes with music education and that students had learned the Electric Slide, YMCA and Chicken Dances among others. He said attendance for the St. Patrick's Day dance party at Chikaming campus on March 15 was approximately 100 and that participating families had a great time. Principal Lange said Mr. Maxon had also challenged students to eat 4,000 portions of fruits and vegetables and because they met that challenge, students received a reward, a roller skating field trip.

9.0 Closed Session – Conduct Superintendent's Year-End Performance Evaluation

Farhat stated the Superintendent preferred to have his year-end performance evaluation conducted in closed session. Moved by Graziano, supported by Petro, to go into closed session at 8:18 p.m. to discuss the Superintendent's year-end performance evaluation. 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.

10.0 Open Session – Present Public Statement on Superintendent's Year-End Performance Evaluation

Moved by Graziano, supported by Petro, to return to open session at 9:05 p.m. All Ayes. The Board returned to Open Session.

The Board issued the following statement: The Board of Education discussed the year-end performance evaluation with the Superintendent and overall, the evaluation was very positive. Superintendent Schroeder met or exceeded expectations at all areas of the evaluation. The Board of Education looks forward to working with Mr. Schroeder in the upcoming school year.

Wagner asked about the Math and Homework Labs. Superintendent Schroeder said the Math Lab was going well but the Homework Lab was not developed.

11.0 Adjournment

Moved by Graziano, supported by Ehlert, to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m. All Ayes. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Vickie Wagner, Secretary