



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

**Work Session: 7:30 PM, Monday, September 17, 2007  
River Valley Middle/High School Library**

**1.0 Call To Order**

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

Members present: Michael Ehlert, William Farhat, J.C. German, Steve Graziano, Fred Knutel and Vickie Wagner. Ronald Petro joined the meeting at 7:57 PM.

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 Introduce The Pokagon Fund, Inc. Executive Director**

Wagner introduced Mary Dunbar, Executive Director of The Pokagon Fund, Inc. (TPF). Dunbar explained the TPF philanthropic mission and noted the official launch of the non-profit organization would be September 25. She stated all applications for funds would be electronic submissions through the TPF website, [www.PokagonFund.org](http://www.PokagonFund.org) and that she would be available to assist with funding requests. One percent (1%) of TPF distributions each year shall be made for projects requested by the River Valley School District's governing body and approved by TPF Board of Directors. The River Valley School District can compete for additional funds through on-going grant applications. Dunbar explained there would be no pre-sorting or filtering of applications as the seven-member TPF Board of Directors would review all applications and make decisions on awards within 90 days of submission. Dunbar said she looked forward to receiving applications from the District.

**4.0 Curriculum/Policy**

**4.1 Secondary School Improvement Team**

Principal Vera stated he was approached by the Superintendent of Schools after the last Board meeting regarding the recent 11<sup>th</sup> grade test scores. Vera asked his School Improvement Team, Michelle Sykora, Sabine Vera, Marie Maloney and Heather Caid, to address the Board on basic skills and math scores at the middle/high school. Team members Sykora, Vera and Caid were in attendance. Mrs. Caid addressed the Board and presented their improvement plan for mathematics.

A math lab, designed on Lake Michigan College's Math Lab, will be implemented after school two days a week, which will be 120 hours this school year. This voluntary program for grades 6-12 is designed to improve basic math skills and offer tutoring for class work. The school received a grant through the Michigan Department of Education to purchase math software, which can be used for drill work; Mr. Latus, mathematics department chair, is researching software options in partnership with the Berrien County Intermediate School District (BCISD). The program will be staffed by persons qualified to teach, tutor and/or supervise students.

The math teachers are part of the BCISD consortium, which provides professional development workshops and conferences; teachers will attend these activities as applicable. Teachers will use the MI-Tracker program to track students' scores to produce data to determine areas of weakness for additional instruction and remediation. The Math Department will review and share information during department meetings on research-driven strategies and best practices of instruction.

Discussion addressed obstacles, including class size, costs of math manipulatives and an individual qualified to staff the after-school math lab. Caid stated research shows class sizes can affect student scores as quality relationships between students and teachers have shown increased student achievement. Wagner commented the RV scores were nearly double those of New Buffalo students' test scores. Board members thanked teachers for their presentation and stated their appreciation of the teachers' continued efforts to improve teaching and learning at River Valley.

## **5.0 Finance**

### **5.1 Review Accounts Payable & Treasurer's Report**

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

#### **Accounts Payable for September, 2007**

General Fund \$99,450.55  
General Fund Prepaid \$170,681.81  
General Fund Payroll \$165,191.76  
Athletic Fund \$2,593.54  
Athletic Fund Prepaid \$2,276.34  
Athletic Payroll \$0  
School Lunch Fund \$13,625.51  
School Lunch Fund Prepaid \$2,913.17  
School Lunch Payroll \$0  
Total Accounts Payable \$456,732.68

#### **Treasurer's Report for August, 2007**

General Fund \$1,696,955.40  
Combined School Service Fund \$17,333.06  
Activity Fund \$275,431.99, including scholarship dollars and funds donated to the school district

President Farhat thanked Capiak for her report. Petro joined the meeting at 7:57 PM.

### **5.2 Enrollment**

Finance Coordinator Capiak reviewed enrollment as of September 12, 2007: River Valley Elementary, 159 students at the Chikaming campus, 203 students at the Three Oaks campus, including 171 elementary students and 32 PreSchool students; Middle School, 68 6<sup>th</sup> graders, 60 7<sup>th</sup> graders and 68 8<sup>th</sup> graders; High School, 56 9<sup>th</sup> graders, 61 10<sup>th</sup> graders, 83 11<sup>th</sup> graders and 88 12<sup>th</sup> graders; total P-12 enrollment is currently 846 students.

### **5.3 Mail Van**

Superintendent Schroeder stated Dave York had reported the mail van has over 292,000 miles and needs replacing. German shared his experiences with and the condition of the van. The van has been used to haul food, sports equipment and band instruments. Resident Priscilla Hellinga suggested the district request a vehicle donation or a dealer's in-kind contribution to cover part of the cost of a replacement vehicle.

### **5.4 Special Education**

#### **5.4.1 Transportation**

Transportation Supervisor Linda Weigel reported on additional transportation needs. One special education student requires transportation to Oak Manor in Niles by 7:25 AM, which will require a morning driver. Costs of individual transportation were researched and the most cost-efficient manner would be to hire a morning driver. The student can return via the regular bus schedule.

#### **5.4.2 Enrollment**

Superintendent Schroeder reported the elementary and middle school programs are currently full with the possible addition of three more students at the elementary level. Further enrollment may result in the need to hire additional staff.

## **5.5 Class Size Reduction**

Superintendent Schroeder reported the District has the opportunity to offer additional assistance to students in grades 1-3 through a Class Size Reduction Grant. An elementary teacher would be recalled if approved at 62% FTE. The position would be funded 100% with the grant.

## **6.0 Personnel**

### **6.1 Need for Kindergarten Teacher**

With enrollment at 56 students, an additional section of Kindergarten is required. The process for adding a section and recalling a teacher has begun. Schroeder reported Karen Goodenough, currently on layoff, would be able to work a third section of Kindergarten and has started under the direction of Principal Garry Lange. Another teacher, Joy Savenas, is ahead of Goodenough in seniority. Savenas has been contacted to determine if she will be returning or asking for a leave of absence. When asked, Principal Lange stated approximately 10 students were enrolled as a direct result of the Four Winds Casino Resort, that the District was thankful for their enrollment and would take excellent care of them.

### **6.2 Junior Varsity Volleyball Coach**

Superintendent Schroeder reported pending receipt of two items there would be a recommendation at the next regular Board meeting to hire Mrs. Briney-Kelm as the Junior Varsity Volleyball Coach. Briney-Kelm is currently assisting under the supervision of the current coach.

### **6.3 Staff Assistant for High School Physical Education Class**

Superintendent Schroeder reported that with staff reductions, class offerings were limited and the last hour secondary physical education class had 55 students enrolled. He stated he would be recommending the addition of a staff assistant for the class, had started an individual with the class and would be requesting permission to hire a staff assistant for that period of the day.

### **6.4 Custodial Recommendation**

Superintendent Schroeder reported the maintenance department is in the process of shuffling custodial hours in order to cover for a person that is currently on a leave of absence.

### **6.5 Additional Transportation Position**

Superintendent Schroeder briefly reviewed the discussion under 5.4.1, regarding the need for a morning driver to transport special education students.

## **7.0 Buildings & Grounds**

### **7.1 Committee Work**

Superintendent Schroeder reported he had spoken with German, Building and Grounds Committee Chair, about the best use of current space and renovations. He stated the issue was brought up at the 6:30 PM Community Forum and that the Bridgman Public Schools Board of Education did not wish to pursue the matter of consolidation.

Schroeder reported an energy firm would be conducting a review of facilities at each campus and provide, at no cost to the District, an energy efficiency plan. The firm would provide a proposal and a presentation to the Board after their assessment. The firm has worked with other schools in the area, including Bridgman Public Schools.

## **8.0 Other**

### **8.1 Donation from Corvette Central**

Superintendent Schroeder reported Corvette Central donated \$338 in school supplies and employees contributed an additional \$60. A letter of appreciation was sent and the Board expressed the District's appreciation.

## **8.2 Berrien Community Foundation Donations for August, 2007**

Superintendent Schroeder reported Charles Sittig donated \$100 toward Capital Improvements. A letter of appreciation was sent and the Board expressed the District's appreciation.

## **8.3 FFA Overnight Trip**

Superintendent Schroeder reported students involved with the Future Farmers of America organization would be requesting Board approval for two overnight trips, one in September to Pennsylvania and another in October to Indianapolis, Indiana.

## **8.4 Discuss Mission Statement**

Superintendent Schroeder reviewed the two mission statements: 1) *We believe all children can learn and we are committed to providing a positive learning environment in which all students have the opportunity to achieve academic success, to learn to communicate clearly and think critically, and to become productive lifelong learners and self-directed responsible citizens through a STRONG working partnership with school, home and community;* and 2) *The mission of the River Valley School District, embracing our unique location, cultural opportunities and community, is to produce responsible, contributing lifelong learners through instilling value in self and others, enriching our curriculum, and meeting the demands of a changing world.* Schroeder noted the second mission statement was developed by the Strategic Planning Committee. Farhat stated it would be desirable to review the District's mission to reflect the academic direction. Discussion addressed metrics and measurements of attainment of mission statements. Board members agreed that with the tasks ahead requiring Board focus, the current mission statement would remain the official mission of the District: *We believe all children can learn and we are committed to providing a positive learning environment in which all students have the opportunity to achieve academic success, to learn to communicate clearly and think critically, and to become productive lifelong learners and self-directed responsible citizens through a STRONG working partnership with school, home and community.*

## **9.0 Adjournment**

Motion made by Graziano, supported by Knutel, to adjourn the meeting at 8:29 p.m. All Ayes. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Vickie Wagner, Secretary