

REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BELOIT
September 27, 2011

The Board of Education held its regular meeting on September 27, 2011 at the Kolak Education Center in the Board Room. President Scharmer called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Members Present: John Acomb, Nora Gard, Missy Henderson, Tia Johnson, Michael Ramsdail, Shannon Scharmer and John Winkelmann. Also present: Steve McNeal.

Ramsdail moved approval of the agenda. Seconded by Winkelmann. Motion carried unanimously of the members present.

Acomb led the group in the pledge of allegiance.

Winkelmann moved acceptance of Emily Olszewski and Uniqua Quillins as student board representatives. Seconded by Acomb. Motion carried unanimously of the members present.

Johnson announced upcoming activities in the district.

Badger recognized members of the Stuff the Bus committee. Jason Reed of Messiah Lutheran Church and Spencer Waite of the City of Beloit Leisure Services spoke on behalf of the committee on this great effort to collect donations and supplies for school district students. Badger, along with Chuck Seils, Assistant Principal for Athletics and Activities, also recognized Todd Champion of Print N Stitch for his generosity to the high school football team with clothing and labor cost donations of team logo wear warm ups.

Winkelmann moved approval of the donation from Print 'N Stitch of logo wear warm ups for the BMHS football team, with a value of \$4,000. Seconded by Acomb. Motion carried unanimously of the members present.

Badger recognized Gaston Elementary School principal, Melody Wirgau and staff members for receiving National Blue Ribbon School Status from the U.S. Department of Education. Gaston was one of eight schools nominated to receive this honor in the State of Wisconsin.

Scharmer opened up the podium for citizens to speak on items not on the agenda. No one came forward.

McNeal introduced Jeff Larson from The Larson Group, who presented the new district logo to board members and the community. He explained the process used to create the new logo. He also stated that he is impressed by the enthusiasm in the district. He explained that the three key words are Think, Lead and Move. He explained that the cube shape is based on the four relationships among parents, students, staff and the community. He stated that thinking, leading and moving beyond now was key and that "we are tomorrow" says it all.

Scharmer welcomed Uniqua Quillins as the student representative reporting this evening and asked her to share some information about herself as well as concerns, highlights and hot topics for the students. Quillins informed the members of the current happenings at the high school. Ramsdail asked Quillins to clarify the concerns around the GPA requirement for athletics.

Winkelmann reviewed the topics of the September Finance, Transportation and Property Committee meetings.

Acomb reviewed the topics of the September Curriculum and Instruction Committee meetings.

Johnson reviewed the topics of the August Special and September Regular Policy and Personnel Committee meetings.

Ramsdail moved approval of the consent list: 1) Bills, Payroll and Cash Position Statement; 2) Special Board Meetings of August 23, August 30 and September 13; and 3) Regular Business Meeting of August 23, 2011. Seconded by Gard. Motion carried unanimously of the members present.

Winkelmann moved approval of the payment of the leave request for Mary Burke. Seconded by Ramsdail. Motion carried unanimously of the members present.

Winkelmann moved approval of the revision and layover of Policy 661 RULE 1 School District Depositories for first reading. Seconded by Ramsdail. Motion carried 6-0-1 with Acomb abstaining.

Winkelmann moved approval of the revision and layover of Policy 671.2 RULE 1 Guidelines Regulating Expense Reimbursement for first reading. Seconded by Gard. Motion carried unanimously of the members present.

Gard moved approval of the revision and layover of Policy 691 Purchase, Sale and Disposal of Materials and Equipment for first reading. Seconded by Henderson. Motion carried 6-1 with Ramsdail voting in the negative.

Acomb moved approval of the revision of Policy 131 Board Elections for final reading. Seconded by Ramsdail. Motion carried unanimously of the members present.

Winkelmann moved approval of the revision of Policy 345.1 Grading System for final reading. Seconded by Gard. Motion failed on a roll call vote, 3-4 with Acomb, Johnson, Ramsdail and Scharmer voting in the negative. Winkelmann asked how the district should proceed since there was no discussion from board members this evening.

Acomb moved approval of the revision of Policy 345.1 Grading System for final reading with leaving the fifth grade proficiency level and letter grades in the policy. Seconded by Johnson. McNeal stated his disappointment in voting down this policy since the district is making great strides academically and the best grading practice was recommended. Members felt there was not enough discussion at the board level only at the committee level. Members asked questions about how clearly proficiency levels are explained, why the district does not use proficiency grading K-12, how widely is the proficiency grading system used, how long has it been in use, McNeal stated that letter grades are used in Middle and High School to calculate GPA and for higher education. He also stated that people are not ready to move to a full K-12 proficiency grading system. Gard reminded board members that there was discussion on the subjectivity of letter grades as well as proficiencies and ensuring that students are learning. Members continued to discuss this issue at length. Motion carried 4-3 with Henderson, Johnson and Winkelmann voting in the negative.

Winkelmann moved approval of the revision of Policy 345.41 Specific Middle School Promotion Requirements for final reading. Seconded by Ramsdail. Motion carried unanimously of the members present.

Winkelmann moved approval of the revision of Policy 377 Interscholastic Athletics for final reading. Seconded by Ramsdail. Motion carried unanimously of the members present.

Winkelmann moved approval of the revision of Policy 377 RULE 1 Interscholastic Athletic Program Rules and Guidelines for final reading. Seconded by Ramsdail. Motion carried unanimously of the members present.

Winkelmann moved approval of the revision of Policy 377 RULE 2 Secondary Schools Athletic Code for final reading. Seconded by Acomb. Acomb summarized the changes to the policy since the last committee reading. Acomb and Gard stated they were in favor of the policy with the new revisions. Winkelmann clarified that study tables are open to all students and not just athletes. Winkelmann would like to request information showing how successful the change is by using accountability measures. McNeal stated that the accountability part was missed in previous year, but the district is much better at analyzing data now. He also stated that the revisions have nothing to do with reducing the district's standards or academic goals for students; in fact, it is about doing better academically. Scharmer asked again for an extra-curricular code for activities as well as athletics.

Kevin Leavy, residing at 1616 Royce Avenue, speaking as a parent and not a city council member, thanked members for listening to the input. He is not asking for a "no" vote, he is asking for some more time to educate students and families and community members before rushing into the changes. He asked that the policy not be put into place for a year while the details are being worked out and persons are being informed.

Emmett Riddle, residing at 1754 Virginia, shared concerns on the GPA changes in the athletic codes. He echoed Mr. Leavy's comments on keeping expectations high for students but leaves some questions so appreciates the accountability piece. He also agrees that data should be reviewed and after grading is decided that the policy should be reviewed to see if it is working.

Kevin Pullam, Pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, residing at 1151 East Grand, Dr. Reverend Floyd Prude Drive, addressed the board members stating that he feels better with the 2.0 GPA language remaining in the policy. He is still uncomfortable with the language, "making progress towards 2.0 GPA." He feels this statement is a gray area and would like more specific language to a timeline for progress.

Shirley Williams, residing at 2170 Hayfield Lane, also believes that the board needs to pause and revisit the policy before voting. She feels that the study tables have been around for many years and have not worked. She understands that there are changes being discussed, but they have been discussed before. She too feels that the progress accountability is also unclear. She quoted from a Beloit Daily News Article in June of 2006.

Acomb moved to extend the board meeting. Seconded by Gard. Motion carried unanimously of the members present.

Mary Henry, residing 1730 Gateway Boulevard, asked members to listen to their conscience and review this policy carefully. She feels the theme should be no pass, no play. She stated she wants the students to be academically ready for college. She thanked members for listening to the community members and parents. She gave board members signed petitions.

Howard Ritchie, residing at 2456 Dewey Avenue, stated that in the work world, people under a 3.0 GPA are not even considered for hire at some companies.

Tiffany Henry, residing at 1778 Gateway Boulevard, asked for board members to hold people accountable and that the specifics of those expectations will work. She asked members to take more time to review and make a decision later.

Scharmer stated that she was wrong in 2006 to vote against removing the 2.0 GPA stipulation, but feels that perhaps back then, the district was not ready to address this. She stated that this policy has been reviewed numerous months since 2010. She did state that study tables currently are not effective, but one change will be that a licensed educator will work with students in a structured format as well as students working with the educator for the class they are struggling in.

Chuck Seils stated that study tables previously were not very productive. They will now be improved due to licensed teachers working with the students. He clarified that the policy is for grades 9-12 and that the middle schools have their own procedures related to missing work and attendance. He clarified that the progress will be maintaining and improving grades, and not letting other grades slide while focusing on improving the lowest grade.

Gard stated that she has given this policy great thought. She thanked the community for their input and advocacy for student athletes.

Kevin Pullam addressed the board again stating that this policy change is predominately about African Americans. He proceeded to compare the athletic policy revisions to the historical treatment of African Americans. He also stated that he cares more whether or not students graduate and go on to college than if they play sports.

Johnson stated that she agrees with Rev. Pulliam and feels this is a lowering of the standards. She feels the district is a public institution and is here to educate the students. She stated that she is not ready to compromise her personal values.

Ramsdail moved to end debate and vote on the motion on the table. Seconded by Johnson. Motion failed 3-4 with Acomb, Johnson, Scharmer, and Winkleman voting in the negative.

Members continued to share comments and thoughts about the policy including appreciating thoughts and comments, getting a “hook” for students to stay in school and learn.

Acomb offered the friendly amendment for the policy to start at the beginning of the second term. Scharmer suggested that the friendly amendment be to start the policy with the next season.

Scharmer stated she feels there needs to be more opportunities for coaches and teachers to reach out to students.

Quillins stated that students at school feel this policy is not fair. She stated students feel no scouts come to Beloit so why should we support students being on probation.

Shirley Williams residing at 2170 Hayfield Lane, appreciated Winkelmann's compromise and moving to next term. She believes that the next season begins in October before the next term, therefore she asks that the board go with whichever is later.

Scharmer asked for clarification from Seils on the term or season issue.

Seils stated that beginning second term make more sense than season as the seasons are ending around the term timeframe. Board members agreed with the friendly amendment being at the beginning of the second term.

The motion with friendly amendment carried on a roll call vote 4-3 with Henderson, Johnson and Ramsdail voting in the negative.

Acomb moved approval of reclassifying the para educator positions in in-school suspension to instructional support positions. Seconded by Ramsdail. Motion carried 6-1, with Winkelmann voting in the negative.

Winkelmann moved approval of the revised personnel recommendations, Exhibit A. Seconded by Acomb. Members asked clarifying questions. Motion carried 6-1 with Ramsdail voting in the negative.

Items for consideration at future meetings requested included an update on the reconfiguration and how the first month went.

Scharmer announced future meetings on Tuesday, October 11, and the Board Business meeting will be held on October 25, 2011.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Michelle Shope, Board Secretary

Approved at the regular meeting of October 25, 2011

Shannon Scharmer, President