

Minutes

COMBINED MEETING OF THE DISTRICT 87 AND UNIT 5 BOARDS OF EDUCATION Special Session May 31, 2006

The Boards of Education of Community Unit School District No. 5 and Bloomington District No. 87 met in a special joint session on May 31, 2006, at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the McLean County Farm Bureau Building, 402 N. Hershey, Bloomington, Illinois.

1.0 Roll Call

Unit 5 Board Members present: Gail Ann Briggs, Scott Lay, Meta Mickens-Baker, John Puzauskas, and Jay Reece. Members absent: Martin O'Connor and Steve Whittington

District 87 Board Members present: Joe Butcher, Keith Davis, John Dirks, Uvaldo Herrera, Millicent Roth, and Janet Smith. Members absent: Cheryl Jackson

Also present: Senator Bill Brady, Representative Dan Brady, Representative Keith Sommer, Unit 5 Superintendent Dr. Alan Chapman, District 87 Superintendent Dr. Robert Nielsen, Unit 5 Assistant Superintendent of Operations/Human Resources John Pye, District 87 Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Barry Reilly, Unit 5 Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Jim Braksick, District 87 Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum (as of July 1, 2006) Teresa Hill, Unit 5 Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer Tod Altenburg, District 87 Chief Financial and Legal Officer David Wood, Donna Evans (Clerk of the Unit 5 Board as of July 1, 2006), Colleen Attebury, Vickie Mahrt, Meghan Leiseberg, Christina Rogers, Donna Lutkehaus, Parker Lawlis, Charles Bartlett, Andrea Wilson, Michelle Steinbacher from The Pantagraph, and others.

2.0 Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3.0 Statement of Purpose

Lay welcomed everyone to the first Legislative Forum held jointly by Unit 5 and District 87. Superintendents for both districts had previously discussed and organized the forum for the purpose of sharing dialog relative to education and current state legislative issues and how they impact the districts on a daily basis. Lay indicated that all four state legislators representing Unit 5 and District 87 were invited and expressed appreciation to Senator Brady, Representative Brady, and Representative Sommer for attending. Herrera also expressed appreciation to the legislators, administration, and board members for both districts.

4.0 Legislator Presentations

Senator Brady (44th District) expressed his appreciation for the invitation to speak to the joint forum.

Topics Brady commented on included but were not limited to:

- Local government control in relation to education
- Class size reductions and Pre-K programs
- Disadvantages and advantages to funding education with increased taxes
- Increasing revenue through additional job opportunities
- Reduction of property taxes and its affect on education
- School construction grant resources
- Illinois pension debt and the need to refinance the pension debt
- Defined benefit program vs. defined contribution pension program

Representative Brady (88th District) introduced Colleen Attebury, Deputy Director of Education for the House Republican staff. Brady shared his comments on the following additional topics regarding legislation relative to education:

- Kindergarten through 3rd grade class size reduction pilot program
- Pre-School For All program
- School principals' mentoring program
- School voucher bill
- Six percent salary increase for the Teachers Retirement System

Representative Sommer (106th District) thanked the Boards of Education for the opportunity to speak at the Legislative Forum. Sommer presented observations on topics including but not limited to the following:

- Lobby groups and the value of their representation of various educational groups such as administration, teachers, support staff, etc.
- Importance of school visitations by legislators to provide the best representation
- Professional cooperation between District 87 and Unit 5
- Importance of establishing involvement between individual taxpayers and the school district

5.0 Board of Education Presentations

Dr. Alan Chapman provided the forum with a Power Point presentation and report. (Attachment #1) Information on the following Unit 5 topics was shared with the forum:

- Mission Statement
- Strategic Plan
- Curriculum initiatives
- Population and enrollment projections
- Potential school sites
- Budget reports, summaries, and financial projections

Dr. Robert Nielsen summarized District 87's Financial Review report. (Attachment # 2) Nielsen also highlighted topics on:

- District 87 student achievement and assessments
- Bilingual program
- Curriculum programs
- Graduation percentages from Bloomington High School
- Additions to Bloomington Jr. High School and improvements to other existing buildings
- Full day kindergarten
- Enrollment stability
- Achievement Gap Task Force
- Technology available to schools

6.0 Questions ~ Discussion

Board members, administrators, and legislators entered into a question and discussion period for approximately one hour. Topics discussed, questions raised and observations included but were not limited to the following:

- Will school construction grants and funding be available in the future as they have been in the past? Concerns were expressed about where funding for these grants would come from. Currently there are no capital funds to support school construction. Legislators stated that there would be state legislative support for this program if funding guidelines were established and managed properly.
- How would legislation have to be structured to promote the acceptance of a restructured taxing system? Discussion followed on how funds should be used, the property tax system and local control of funds available to school districts.
- Addressed were class size reduction proposals and how these proposals would result in additional costs to hire more teachers and provide new classrooms. Board members stated that school districts need to retain the ability to make decisions in the best interest of students and community in regard to how funds are spent. Concerns from the legislators were expressed that some items such as the class size proposals would become mandated categorical and funds for these pilot programs would not be available.
- Board members expressed concern that the State would attempt to reduce debt by adding more financial responsibility to the school districts. Legislators indicated to the Boards that holding these forums provide an opportunity for problems and concerns to be addressed to their state legislative representatives. Legislators are listening and understand the school districts' concerns.
- Questions and concerns were expressed regarding the proposal to sell the Illinois lottery. Legislators stated that the proposal would provide a short term gain only. It was stated that private sector companies could possibly provide better management of the lottery, but this would not be a sound financial solution. Legislators also indicated there would be a future challenge to this proposal in the House.
- Addressing proposals in the veto session was discussed. Legislators expressed concern that this offered more media focus for political reasons rather than focusing on working together in the best interest of education.

- Concerns were discussed regarding allocation of funds among school districts. Questions were raised on how school districts throughout the state will use these funds. It was also noted that funding for higher education, especially downstate, has dropped considerably.

7.0 Public Comments

None.

8.0 Announcements

Chapman and Nielsen expressed appreciation to Senator Brady, Representative Brady and Representative Sommer for their participation in the Legislative Forum. Chapman noted the struggles that school districts face trying to provide quality education services with the resources available. Chapman stated that he would like to see the state take a bigger role in contributing so that there is less of a burden on the districts' taxpayers. Nielsen added that it is very important that the community understand that District 87 and Unit 5 are working together for the common goal of providing the best possible education for its students. It was recommended that some time in the future, the legislative forum reconvene.

9.0 Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

President

ATTEST:

Secretary