

MINUTES - REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

February 28, 2007

6:30 P.M.

Educational Services Center

The Board of Education of the Bloomington Public Schools, School District 87, McLean County, Illinois, met in Regular Session.

Ms. Marianne Clancy, Board Secretary, established a quorum and the following Members were present: Mrs. Janet Smith, Mrs. Millicent Roth, Mr. John Dirks, Mr. Michael Harrison, Mrs. Cheryl Jackson, Mr. Keith Davis and Mr. Joseph Butcher.

Present from the administrative staff were Dr. Robert Nielsen, Mr. David Wood, Mr. Barry Reilly, and Mrs. Teresa Hill.

Ms. Linda Aschenbrener, Public Relations Facilitator, was also in attendance.

Present from the news media was Ms. Sharon Wolfe, The Pantagraph.

Mrs. Smith presented the Minutes for approval.

It was moved by Mrs. Roth, seconded by Mr. Dirks, that the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education held on January 24, 2007, the Minutes of the Closed Meeting of the Board of Education held on January 24, 2007, the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Education on February 19, 2007 and the Minutes of the Closed Meeting of the Board of Education on February 19, 2007 be approved. Upon a roll call vote, Mr. Davis "Abstained", as he was not in attendance at the Meetings on January 24, 2007. Mr. Butcher "Abstained", as he was not in attendance at the Meetings on February 19, 2007. Mrs. Jackson "Abstained" as she was not in attendance at the Meetings on January 24, 2007. Mr. Dirks, Mrs. Roth, Mr. Harrison and Mrs. Smith voted "Aye". Motion carried.

Mr. Butcher stated he met with several members of the McLean County Regional Planning Commission on February 21. He stated he received introductory information on the Commission as a new member.

Mr. Dirks stated he met with the Facilities Committee on Monday to talk about the exterior of the Stevenson School.

Mrs. Smith stated that she too met with the Facilities Committee to discuss Stevenson School.

Ms. Angela Scott, District 87 parent, stated that she gave Dr. Nielsen a letter regarding concerns she has about the District renewing the First Student, District 87's contracted bus transportation company, contract. She would like the Board to review her letter and take into consideration the issues and hopes she has before approving the renewal of the contract.

Mrs. Jackson stated that last night was the Intercity Scholastic Bowl Tournament. She stated that District 87 brought home the Varsity and the Junior Varsity first place trophies. She congratulated the team members for doing a terrific job.

Mr. Wood discussed issues related to the recommendation to extend the bus transportation contract with First Student. Mr. Wood made four main points:

1. First Student, or its predecessor, has provided bus transportation services to the District for nearly 40 years. The company knows the community and schools and its performance of the contract terms is satisfactory. The company's 3.1% rate increase proposal for the next two years is reasonable, within the means of the anticipated budget, and compares favorably with similar services in other communities.
2. While bus transportation is generally an area prone to complaints, the number of complaints is reasonable in the context of the 1.4 million student trips per year provided under the contract. Moreover, First Student continually works with the Principals and administration to address issues as they occur. Some issues such as crowding and scheduling occur because the District, for cost reasons, operates a very efficient three tiered system with little flexibility.
3. The District has recently solicited information about transportation services and bullying in two separate surveys. In general, most parents are satisfied with the current transportation services. While bullying occurs on the bus and while students go to and from school, it is more prevalent in other places where larger groups of less supervised students congregate. Bullying is a complicated, intractable and pervasive issue and the survey provided good information to help the District improve its anti-bullying efforts.
4. The District and First Student continue to work together to improve transportation services. Information from these two surveys will be incorporated into that improvement process.

Mrs. Smith presented the Consent Agenda for Approval. It was moved by Mrs. Jackson, seconded by Mr. Harrison, that the Consent Agenda (Human Resources Report, Bills, Payroll, Treasurer's Report, Financial Summary, Bent School Paving Bid Recommendation, Bent School Fencing Bid Recommendation, Bent School Landscaping Bid Recommendation, BHS Asbestos Abatement Bid Recommendation, BJHS Roof Flashing Bid Recommendation, District Floor Covering Bid Recommendation, Oakland Siding Replacement Bid Recommendation, and Letter of Understanding: Advanced Placement Audits at BHS, be approved. Upon a roll call vote, all Members present voted "Aye". Motion carried. (See with Original Minutes, Attachment 2-28-07/1)

Dr. Nielsen reminded everyone that the Illinois State Scholars Banquet is tomorrow night at BHS and hopes all the Board Members can attend.

It was moved by Mr. Dirks, seconded by Mrs. Jackson, that Summer School 2007 be approved. Upon a roll call vote, all Members present voted "Aye". Motion carried. (See with Original Minutes, Attachment 2-28-07/2)

Several parents expressed concerns with First Student. One suggested that there was a disconnect in the communication between parents, First Student and District 87's administration. The parent maintained that First Student had become complacent in the contract and was not interested in customer service. Another parent and bus driver pointed out that the equipment in the buses, e.g. heaters, cameras, was not always in working

order. The parent also maintained that drivers had no way to make sure whether a BHS student was allowed on a particular bus route and that drivers, not First Student, should make the decision whether to bring a bus back to the school for student behavior issues. Finally, a parent asked how the District decided not to use a particular driver on District bus routes.

Dr. Nielsen and several Board members indicated that school officials are concerned about student safety and would ask First Student about the issues the parents raised.

Another issue addressed by parents was bullying in the District. One parent thanked the District for surveying parents and students and another asked for clarification of the district's "zero tolerance" policy on the topic.

Dr. Nielsen stated that the District did not have a "zero tolerance" policy and every case is decided on its own facts and merits. He pointed out that some cases are complicated because it's not always easy to tell what exactly happened. Dr. Nielsen also stated that there is an appeals process if parents/students are not convinced the student discipline was warranted.

The Board Members indicated that they had not previously heard these complaints and there was general consensus to improve communication with parents and others concerning safety for students. They asked the administration to investigate and have First Student respond at a future Board meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Mrs. Smith adjourned the meeting.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

President

Secretary