

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES**

December 14, 2009

The regular business meeting of the Board of Education of the Portage Public Schools held on Monday, December 14, 2009, was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Vice President Posthumus in the Community Room of the Administration Building, 8111 S. Westnedge. He welcomed an audience of 35 people and all in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Trustees Present: Melanie Kurdys, Deb Polderman, Dale Posthumus, Rusty Rathburn, Bo Snyder, Randy Van Antwerp, and John Whyte

Board Trustees Absent: None

ORGANIZATIONAL ITEMS

Motion offered by Mrs. Kurdys, supported by Mr. Rathburn, that the Board of Education appoint Mr. Snyder to the open position on the Board through June 30, 2010.

Trustees welcomed Mr. Snyder and comments pertained to thanking the other 17 citizens who applied, the high caliber of those applicants, Mr. Snyder's strengths in Malcolm Baldrige, bringing a new perspective to the Board, his goal setting, and willingness to serve the District.

Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Snyder affirmed his Oath of Office.

Secretary Polderman opened the floor to nominations for the office of Board President for the 2009/2010 school year.

Mr. Whyte nominated Mr. Posthumus for the position of Board President. Motion carried unanimously. Mrs. Polderman announced Mr. Posthumus will assume the office of President.

Mr. Rathburn nominated Mr. Whyte for the position of Board Vice President. Motion carried unanimously. Mrs. Polderman announced that Mr. Whyte would assume the office of Vice President.

REPORTS

Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Wells shared a recap of the State funding shortfall and the political struggle about how to adequately fund public schools for the 2009/10 school year and beyond. She discussed the Governor's delayed execution of the \$127 per pupil cut, that was to take effect next week, until State economists meet. The Superintendent indicated the District is not optimistic about funding and believe further cuts could take place in February for the current year.

Superintendent Wells asked Mrs. Polderman to share news of a contribution. Mrs. Polderman read a letter of support accompanied by a donation check to the District from Mr. and Mrs. Tanner. Mrs. Polderman acknowledged, as the liaison to the Portage Education Foundation, the Foundation is currently discussing the

parameters for processing future contributions to the District. She will update the Board on this subject at a future meeting.

The Superintendent shared news of the Portage Education Association (PEA) agreement allowing the District to close the \$2.5 million funding gap and avoid mid year lay offs. She invited Mrs. Joy Roach, PEA Vice President to say a few words. Mrs. Roach spoke on behalf of the entire PEA thanking the negotiating team comprised of PEA leadership and Administration for working in a positive manner to put the students of the District first. Superintendent Wells echoed Mrs. Roach's comments commending and thanking the PEA leaders, legal counsel and administrative staff for the efforts and collaboration on this agreement. She discussed the notification process in which teachers will learn their positions will remain intact for the second semester of the 2009/10 school year, discussed the status of support staff layoffs, and administrator concessions made earlier this year. Superintendent Wells noted she will continue to communicate as the District moves forward through this school year and begins to focus on 2010/11.

Financial Report: The Business Manager, Mrs. Karla Colestock, informed the audience of the General Fund Condensed Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for the five month period ending November 30, 2009.

COMMENTS OR COMMUNICATIONS

President Posthumus opened the comments and communications portion of the meeting and asked if there were any citizens who would like to speak to the Board. Mrs. Polderman explained guidelines the Board uses for this portion of the meeting.

Mr. Thomas Drabik, 7587 Dunross, parent, acknowledged the gravity of the budget decisions and shared concerns for future program cuts praising the Districts' athletic programs.

Mr. Bob Walker, 2812 Vanderbilt Rd., a citizen and retired teacher, congratulated the Board, Administration and teachers for collaborating on this agreement. He also welcomed Mr. Snyder to the Board.

Ms. Joanne Willson, 7122 Leawood St., a citizen, congratulated the District on this agreement. She spoke on behalf of the Northern Unified Booster Club regarding District survey questions. Ms. Willson shared support for athletics, art, band, International Baccalaureate, AP and honors programs and urged the District to look at responses from the recent survey regarding these topics.

President Posthumus opened the floor to comments from fellow Board members.

Mr. Whyte acknowledged his pride in being a part of this exceptional community and county that values education. He urged the audience to question candidates running for the State House, Senate, or Governor about their priorities and search for the candidate that lists education as their top priority.

Mrs. Polderman also acknowledged her pride in being a part of this exceptional community and discussed the character and role models of District teachers, staff, administrators, parents and the community. She acknowledged the tough times that still lie ahead and the need to remain committed to the educational opportunities for District students.

Mr. Rathburn thanked the Administrators, Board, and Education Association for doing what's right for the students of the District. He expressed dissolution with the State administrators, discussed anxiety caused by their funding decisions and pleaded for leadership regarding education funding in Lansing.

Mr. Snyder thanked the Education Association for the action taken, and acknowledged teachers for their support of his family. He commended the Administrative staff for sharing the burden of this cut along with the teachers. Mr. Snyder urged the audience to talk to the Legislators about supporting education. He thanked the Board for his appointment and the thorough background information provided on the District.

President Posthumus discussed the need for stable funding of education and urged Legislators to make this a priority. He welcomed Mr. Snyder to the Board and thanked the Education Association and Administration for their commitment to education in the District.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion offered by Mr. Rathburn, supported by Mrs. Polderman, that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda items removing the Minutes of the November 23, 2009, Regular Business Meeting for discussion at the January meeting, as presented. Included on the Consent Agenda was the approval of the Minutes of the December 2, 2009, Special Meeting and December 9, 2009, Special Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

ACTION ITEM

Motion offered by Mr. Whyte, supported by Mrs. Kurdys, that the Board of Education approve the Letter of Agreement to modify the 2009/10 contract with the Portage Education Association, including a voluntary severance plan, as presented.

Superintendent Wells informed the audience of details on the modifications to the already existing PEA contract discussing wage concessions, a reduction in the school calendar of 4 instructional days, the letter of agreement regarding health insurance, and provisions for the voluntary severance plan. She responded to Trustee questions regarding making the agreement details public and communications notifying families of the increase in daily instructional minutes. The Superintendent noted between January and March, the District will begin looking at funding cuts proposed for next year.

Motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Instructional Services Coordinator, Mrs. Sarah Baker presented background on the Human Growth and Development Curriculum Committee recommendation to adopt the JumpStart curriculum for all 8th grade students to be delivered by Prevention Works under the supervision of District middle school teachers. She responded to a Trustee question about the Human Growth and Development Committee meeting attendees and will provide details on how many middle school parents serve on the Committee. President Posthumus noted this recommendation will appear as an action item at the meeting in January.

CLOSED SESSION

Motion offered by Mr. Van Antwerp, supported by Mrs. Polderman, that the Board of Education move into closed session for the purpose of discussing collective bargaining strategy [Section 8 (c) of the Open Meetings Act]. Upon a roll call vote, all Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

The Board moved into closed session at 7:30 p.m.

The Board returned to open session at 8:10 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edna Kent
Recording Secretary