

School District of Rhinelander  
Board of Education

Regular Monthly Meeting  
Monday, January 21, 2019

**BOARD MEETING UPDATE**

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Education was called to order on Monday, January 21, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the Superior Diesel Advanced Learning Center of Rhinelander High School; located at 665 Coolidge Avenue, Rhinelander, WI.

Ronald Counter, Board President, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Board Members Present: Mike Roberts, David Holperin, Dennis O'Brien, Duane Frey, Ann Munninghoff Eshelman and Ron Counter

Board Members Absent: Judy Conlin, Mary Peterson, and Benjamin Roskoskey

Approximately 15 guests were present for this meeting, as well as Superintendent Kelli Jacobi, Eileen Persike of the North Star Journal and Jamie Taylor of the Northwoods River News.

Declaration of Public Notice

President Counter indicated that the 'Declaration of Public Notice' was printed with the meeting agenda. This notice identifies the public places at which the meeting agenda was posted and/or shared.

School Board Professional Development

Mr. John Traytman, CPA from Schenk Certified Public Accountants, was present to give a report to the Board of the District's 2017-2018 financial audit. He reported that the District's financial status is excellent and his firm did not find anything of concern. He thanked the Business Office staff and all other District staff for their cooperation during the audit process. A copy of the audit report can be obtained by contacting the Business Office (kwiattmar@rhinelander.k12.wi.us)

Report Topics

President's Report

President Counter shared the following statement regarding the second lock-down drill held at each of the school buildings in January:

*"The second series of lockdown drills at the schools were held on January 10th at Northwoods Community Elementary School, January 11th at Rhinelander High School, January 15th at Crescent Elementary School, January 16th at Pelican Elementary School, and January 17th at Central Intermediate School and James Williams Middle School. An announcement was made at each school that a lockdown drill was going to happen, procedures were followed, and the schools reported that the drills were successful.*

*Principals held meetings after the drill to debrief and give staff members an opportunity to ask questions and share concerns.*

*Procedures for violence/lockdown drills have been developed in coordination with the Oneida County Sheriff's Dept. and will be reported to the Dept. of Justice School Safety Grant Office as may be required in the future."*

As part of the School Safety Grant, an official report form signed by President Counter will be submitted to the Dept. of Justice-School Safety to confirm that the District did conduct a second lock-down drill in all of its school buildings.

Mr. Counter also announced that he, Board members Judy Conlin, Duane Frey, and Dennis O'Brien, and Superintendent Jacobi will be attending the 2019 State Education Convention being held Tuesday, January 22-Friday, January 25th in Milwaukee. On Thursday, January 24th, they will all attend a special luncheon at which Marta Kwiatkowski, Director of Business Services, will officially receive her 'Business Manager of the Year' award from the WI Association of School Business Officials (WASBO) organization.

Vice-President's Report

No report was provided since Vice-President Conlin was not present at this meeting.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Jacobi reported that due to the close of the Rhinelander Petco/Drs. Foster and Smith facility, members of administration will be attending the community meetings at which ways to help those families that may be in need due to

the closure will be considered. Superintendent Jacobi stated that the school district is willing to help those families and other needy families of the District in any way possible (i.e. applications for free/reduced lunch, collect donations to the 'Hodags Care' program, etc.).

#### Rhineland Education Association (REA) Report

Shari Wendland, REA representative, shared a "cross brain" exercise she has learned through her involvement with trauma training. She also reminded the Board that good communication is vital between the Board, Administration, and all District employees. She shared the six steps of communication, indicating that 96% of conflict is due to a breakdown in communication. The six steps are

1. Listen
2. Reassure
3. Validate
4. Respond
5. Repair
6. Resolve

#### Student Representative Report - Rhineland High School

Ben Kubisiak, Student Council Representative, reported that the Council has been working on amendments to its Constitution, has begun a recycling program, and will be making paper hearts to give to high school teachers on Valentine's Day.

#### Committee Reports

##### Instruction and Accountability Committee

Ann Munninghoff Eshelman, Committee member, reported that the Committee met on Monday, January 14, 2019 and recommended school board approval to award high school credit to middle school students taking and passing some math and science courses (Algebra I, Geometry, Physical Science).

##### Operations and Strategic Planning Committee

Mike Roberts, Committee Chair, reported that the Committee did not meet in January.

##### Employee Relations Committee

Committee Chair Duane Frey reported that the Committee had not met in January.

##### Capital Projects Ad Hoc Committee

Mike Roberts, Committee Chair, reported that the Committee did not meet in January.

##### CESA 9 Report

Mr. Holperin, the Board's representative to the CESA 9 Board of Control, reported that the Board met for general business, as well as a teleconference.

##### Oneida/Vilas School Supt.-Board Report

Superintendent Jacobi reported that the Oneida/Vilas group has not recently met.

##### Citizens/Delegations

No citizens/delegations wished to address the Board.

#### Action and/or Discussion Topics

##### Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the December 17, 2018 Regular Monthly School Board Meeting and Minutes from the December 18, 2018 School Board Special Meeting/Retreat were approved/accepted as printed

##### Payment of December 2018 Claims and Contracted Services

The Board approved the December 2018 payment of claims in the amount of \$468,739.86 and the December 2018 payment of contracted services in the amount of \$673,377.55

##### Hodag Schools Foundation Donation

At the December 17, 2018 regular monthly school board meeting, Superintendent Jacobi had shared a statement from the Hodag Schools Foundation (HSF) which stated that HSF has been working with Dr. Lee Swank regarding an overall gift/pledge of \$500,000 to the District. Since the December meeting, an agreement was drafted between HSF, Dr. Swank, and the District. Pursuant to the agreement, the gift/donation would be used for the following purpose or purposes:

Option #1            Multi-Purpose Facility (including potential for seasonal dome/turf) and/or

## Donor Directed Improvements

### Option #2 Facility Improvements for Indoor High School

David Heck, President of HSF, introduced Dr. Swank who explained his reason for donating the funds and the purpose they should be used for. The Board accepted the donation with sincere gratitude and approved the agreement between HSF and the District as submitted.

#### Gifts/Donations Contributed to the District

The Board accepted the following gifts/donations:

- Donations given to help defer the Rhinelander High School Dance Team's travel costs to National competition:
  - ◇ \$100 from Holiday Acres Resort of Rhinelander
  - ◇ \$100 from Theilman Home Improvements LLC of Rhinelander
  - ◇ \$100 from Scott Denis, ST Plumbing LLC of Rhinelander
  - ◇ \$100 from CoVantage Credit Union of Antigo, WI
  - ◇ \$100 from Nicolet National Bank of Green Bay, WI
  - ◇ \$50 from Dahlquist Heating and Cooling, Inc. of Rhinelander
- \$50 from Lifts and Docks of Rhinelander to be used by the high school FBLA/DECA program to supplement costs for members, trips, competitions, etc.
- Small toys, valued at \$40, from the Retired Military Group of Rhinelander to be given as gifts to students in need over the holiday season
- An assortment of school supplies (value unknown) from Health In Motion of Rhinelander, to be used by students during their field trips at the CAVOC site

#### Middle School Math and Science Courses to Receive High School Math and Science Credit

At the December 18, 2018 regular monthly meeting, the Board approved the proposal for high school math credit to be awarded at the middle school level beginning with the 2019-20 school year. With that approval, students would be offered the opportunity to take up to two high school level math courses (Algebra I and Geometry) while enrolled at the middle school. Students passing either of the two courses would have the opportunity to earn one (1) elective credit for each course while enrolled at the middle school.

At the January 14th Instruction and Accountability Committee meeting, the middle school requested that the math credit be awarded with the current school year rather than waiting until the 2019-20 school year. Administration also proposed that middle school students be allowed a high school science credit if they take and pass Physical Science. There are a number of middle school students currently enrolled in the two math and the Physical Science classes, and the current middle school math and science teachers are both licensed to teach at the high school level, which follows all state requirements. Allowing the current middle school students who are taking the courses, working hard, and passing will benefit them as they enter the high school level.

The Board approved the proposal. The change in how credits are awarded will also be added to the 2019-20 middle school course descriptions and noted in the school's parent/student handbook.

#### Changes to the Support Staff Handbook -Disability Leave

At the December 17, 2018 Employee Relations Committee meeting, the Committee reviewed and recommended Board approval of changes to the 'Disability Leave' section of the support staff handbook. The title of this section was changed to eliminate reference to a qualifying leave period, and the language changes reflect that the period of coverage for a support staff member on disability leave will be no more than 12 months. If the employee is unable to return to work after 12 months, he/she will no longer be employed by the District but will be able to apply for future positions. The District is under no obligation to hold a support staff position open for an employee on disability leave. Since it is hard to replace an employee for a long period of time, 12 months of disability leave was considered reasonable. The Administration also recommended that the language in the handbook be changed to indicate that the employee will be responsible for insurance benefit costs while on leave. The recommended changes follow all Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requirements.

The current handbook language is:

##### Section 5.4 LTD (Long-Term Disability) Qualifying Period Coverage

For employees on an approved medical leave of absence and applying for LTD benefits, with insufficient sick leave or vacation to extend benefits for sixty (60) calendar days, the District will continue health and life insurance coverage, after the sick leave and/or vacation coverage is exhausted, at District expense, so that the total time between the sick leave and/or vacation coverage and this medical leave coverage is a maximum of sixty calendar days. Thereafter, the employee may continue such benefits at personal expense. The District is only required to extend this insurance coverage benefit one time should the employee not qualify for LTD. However, the District may extend this benefit an additional time at their discretion but not for arbitrary and capricious reasons.

The new language would be:

Section 5.4 Disability Leave

A support employee receiving disability leave will be allowed no more than twelve (12) months of leave. If the employee is not able to return to work after twelve (12) months, employment with the District will end, but he/she will be able to apply for future job openings. Life, health, and dental insurance benefits will be available to the employee while on leave at no cost to the District. The employee will be offered COBRA when family medical leave (FMLA) has been exhausted.

The Board approved the proposed changes to the handbook as proposed.

Determination of Space Availability for Public School Open Enrollment Applications for the 2019-2020 School Year

Pursuant to Wisconsin Act 114, in January of each school year school boards are to make a determination of the number of spaces available in regular and special education programs prior to accepting open enrollment applications for the following year. Last year, the District had no limit on the number of special or regular education students open enrolling into the District.

After review of the space and staffing needs, as well as funding the 2019-20 school year, Administration proposed that no new open enrollment applications for those students with a disability (Special Education students) be approved. This would be the case whether the proposal for rooms are added to the elementary schools is approved or denied by the Board.

School districts are provided an amount of \$12,000 for each open enrolled special education student; however, some special education students enroll into a non-resident district may have a disability that requires services costing well above the \$12,000. This puts a financial strain on the non-resident district.

The Board passed a motion to deny the special education student open enrolled applications; however Board Member O'Brien voted "no" on the motion indicating that more pressure should be put on the state to change its funding for those special education students wishing to attend a non-resident district rather than having a district deny the applications.

*NOTE: New regular education students open enrolling into the District for 2019-20 would be approved or denied pursuant to state requirements and as determined by Administration. Current open enrolled students (special and regular education) will be allowed to remain in the District, unless they choose to go back to their resident school district or to another non-resident district.*

Grade Reconfiguration of the Central, Crescent, and Pelican Schools for the 2019-2020 School Year

The Board met on November 26, 2018 and again on December 18, 2018 for special meetings/retreats to consider grade level reconfigurations at the Central, Crescent, and Pelican school buildings. Administration proposed that Crescent and Pelican schools go from the current PreK-Grade 3 levels to PreK-Grade 5, and that Central school changes from Grades 4-5 to PreK-Grade 5, and the Board directed the Administration to continue its investigation of this change.

With the proposed reconfigurations and based on the projected student enrollments, Administration informed the Board that the grade reconfigurations would be possible and boundaries within the District could be created that would provide a level of student equality between the three elementary schools. With the State's requirement for student success at all levels, and to maintain a school district that is recognized as providing excellent educational opportunities, Administration indicated that it feels strongly that by creating PreK-Grade 5 elementary schools student achievement will improve. With the grade reconfiguration, no additional staffing is anticipated.

After discussion of this topic, the Board approved of the reconfiguration proposal. Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, Central, Crescent, and Pelican will be PreK-Grade 5 elementary schools.

Proposal for the Classroom Additions to the Central, Crescent, and Pelican Elementary School Buildings

With the anticipation of the Board's approval to change the grade levels at the elementary school buildings, the Administration was directed to get quotes for the addition of two classrooms at each of the elementary buildings, as well as construction/renovation of a new office location for the Central School office and a new driveway at that school. With that directive, a 'Request for Proposal' (RFP) was sent to the following firms for quotes on the projects:

- Miron Construction Co., Inc. - Wausau, WI
- Greenfire Management Systems - Wausau, WI
- The Samuels Group - Wausau, WI
- CG Schmidt, Inc. - Madison, WI
- MSA Professional Services, Inc. - Rhinelander, WI
- J.H. Findorff & Son, Inc. - Wausau, WI

Proposals were due on Friday, January 11th. Two proposals were received; one from Miron Construction for approximately \$3.32 million dollars and one from Greenfire Management Systems for approximately \$2.96 million. After closely comparing the two proposals, Greenfire's proposal provided a savings of approximately \$500,000.00, and it included a 5% contingency fee. Neither proposal included the cost of furnishings for the new classrooms. Furnishings will be the responsibility of the District.

Marta Kwiatkowski, Director of Business Services, and Jeff Zdroik, Supervisor of Plant Operations, personally met with Greenfire's representative, Mike Murphy, to review the proposal and make sure there were no other costs involved. The District also received a letter from Mr. Kip Ritchie, President of Greenfire, confirming the company's willingness to contract with the District for an amount of \$2,958,420.00. Mr. Ritchie stated that Greenfire will lead the design-build process in conjunction with the Rod Cox and Associates architectural firm. The building project will be Greenfire's top priority for 2019, with a completion date of August 1st. The company understands the importance of safety during the construction process and will use proper barriers and fencing as necessary to assure safety. Greenfire will ensure all background checks of its employees and committed to contract with as many local contractors/businesses as possible. It will also work closely with Mr. Zdroik and Administration on any and all possible cost-savings measures.

After consideration of the proposals, the Board passed a motion to accept the proposal from Greenfire. Board Member Holperin voted "no" on the motion stating that he would like to see more investigation into community buildings that may be available for classroom space rather than building on to the existing elementary schools.

The Board entered closed session at 7:30 p.m. to consider the hire of a professional staff member and to consider histories and/or disciplinary data of specific persons.