

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
BOARD RETREAT MINUTES**

August 2, 2006

The retreat meeting of the Board of Education for Portage Public Schools was held in the Long Lake Room at the Portage Public Library, 300 Library Lane, Portage, Michigan, on Wednesday, August 2, 2006. The meeting was called to order by President Mrs. Johnson at 8:16 a.m.

Board Trustees Present: Tom Eddy, Kathy Howland, Shirley Johnson, Linda Lueth, Wendy Mazer, Deb Polderman, and Jennifer Whistler

Administrative Staff Present: Pete McFarlane, Superintendent; Tom Noverr, Assistant Superintendent for Operations; Tom Vance, Community Relations Manager; Michael Batterson, Director of Technology Systems; Dan Vomastek, Director of Assessment and Student Information Systems; and Ric Perry, Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services

Mr. Noverr provided a brief update for the Board on the Center Street property sale. He indicated that the buyers have chosen to execute a component of the contract that allows for a thirty-day waiting period. The buyers will supply an additional \$30,000 (\$20,000 was provided as earnest money with the original bid on the property) in order to execute this extension.

A motion was offered by Mr. Eddy, supported by Mrs. Whistler, that the Board of Education approve the administrative request to hire a custodial supervisor through Hi-Tec Building Services. Mr. Noverr provided further information and facilitated some discussion by Board members. The motion passed unanimously.

President Johnson discussed the role of the Board and compared the Board's responsibilities to those of a cruise ship line board of directors. She indicated that the Board is responsible for policy, process, budget, and other "50,000 foot" issues. The administration is responsible for the development of regulations and daily operations. President Johnson also discussed "grey areas" related to the question of micromanagement. Finally, she informed the Board about an Michigan Association of School Boards webinar that deals with Board-superintendent relations. She indicated that more information would be coming for those who might be interested in attending.

Superintendent McFarlane and Mr. Noverr introduced the topic of facilities, technology, and redistricting planning. A presentation was provided by three individuals from TMP Architectural Consultants. Their presentation focused on recommendations for site improvements or changes that were recommended by staff members and parent representatives at each school site. The first round of facilities schematics were shared in a PowerPoint demonstration. Board members also received a listing of recommendations for each site.

Following the TMP presentation, Mr. Batterson presented a brief review of technology upgrades that are recommended as part of the developing facilities plan. Mr. Batterson previously shared information with the Board about the "enhanced technology classroom" recommendations that are part of the technology component of this plan.

Mr. Vomastek with support from Mr. Perry, presented a very preliminary report on planning related to redistricting. Recommendations from the District Advisory Council (DAC) to focus on a neighborhood approach and provide a balance in terms of student enrollments and SES (socio-economic status) at each building were used to prepare this preliminary report.

President Johnson announced that there would be a fifteen minute break, after which the Board would begin discussion of District Goals for 2006-07.

Next, the Board discussed District Goals and spent a considerable period of time talking about the resource constraints that the District was facing as well as the time that the Board would have to give to three major areas of emphasis (i.e. Facilities, Finance, and Transitions) for the 2006-07 school year. It was decided that five general goal areas would be developed around the themes of finance, transitions, facilities planning, curriculum/instruction/assessment issues, and communication. Based on the Board's discussion with regards to the five goal areas, the Board's Executive Committee and the Superintendent were charged with the job of composing the goal statements, which will be reviewed and approved by the entire Board at a later date.

A motion was offered by Mr. Eddy, supported by Mrs. Lueth, that the Board of Education move into closed session to discuss negotiations. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board moved into closed session at 1:05 p.m.

The Board returned to open session at 2:10 p.m.

Mr. Noverr presented the Board with an update of budget issues. He included a brief summary of the budget recommendations that have been sent to the Governor related to school funding. There was some discussion of the deficit that is part of the preliminary budget projection for 2006-07.

Mr. Eddy presented a review of committee meeting discussions that were held to review issues around a superintendent search process. It was decided that the committee would continue working to develop a timeline of activities, and that the committee would make recommendations about focus groups and brochure development. All of this information would be used in preparing a request for proposal that could be used to contact firms that conduct superintendent searches.

Mrs. Whistler recommended that the Board consider development of a set of "group norms." The purpose would be to outline how the Board members would work to achieve their goals and how Board members would interact with one another. It was agreed that all suggestions for such "norms" be sent to Ms. Whistler's attention. She will develop some ideas for Board review.

There being no further business for the Board, the meeting adjourned at 4:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Pete McFarlane
Secretary Pro Tem