

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORK SESSION**

November 10, 2008

The committee of the whole work session of the Board of Education of the Portage Public Schools held on Monday, November 10, 2008, was called to order at 6:28 p.m. by President Johnson in the Professional Development Center of the Administration Building, 8111 S. Westnedge. She welcomed an audience of 20 people and all in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Trustees Present: Shirley Johnson, Melanie Kurdys, Deb Polderman, Dale Posthumus, Rusty Rathburn, and Jennifer Whistler

Board Trustees Absent: None

COMMENTS OR COMMUNICATIONS

President Johnson read a resignation letter from Mrs. Mazer effective November 6, 2008. She thanked Mrs. Mazer for all her efforts during her years of service to the Board and is respectful her decision.

Superintendent Wells offered condolences to the Burland family. She thanked District staff and Crisis Team members that are relied upon in these situations and commented on continuing work taking place regarding substance abuse.

The Superintendent shared an updated redistricting timeline, planning a presentation to the Board at their November 24th meeting but delaying final affirmation of the boundaries until the December 15th meeting. The period of time allows the public more opportunity for comment.

Superintendent Wells discussed the Bond building projects at 12th Street Elementary, preparation work at Lake Center Elementary, and the core bid package due the end of November for Northern High School. She commented on recent meetings with several concerned staff and citizens pertaining to the construction projects. The Superintendent mentioned the third technology bid package on tonight's agenda adding the Director of Technology Systems, Mr. Michael Batterson, will revisit a District-wide technology update proposal. She reminded the audience to refer to the District web site for regularly updated information.

Superintendent Wells reminded the audience of the District musical "Bye-Bye Birdie" which began on November 7th at Northern High School.

The Superintendent offered best wishes to Mrs. Mazer and thanked her for her service to the District.

Mrs. Kurdys inquired about the District pursuing 8 tennis courts at the high school sites as opposed to 10. Superintendent Wells responded the District is continuing to pursue the 10 court possibility.

Mrs. Kurdys acknowledged she was deeply saddened by the resignation of Mrs. Mazer, was respectful of her decision, and sincerely appreciated her years of service on the Board. Mrs. Kurdys shared some agenda item requests submitted to the Board.

Mr. Rathburn commented he has enjoyed working with Mrs. Mazer and commended her for the dialog she created with the Board as well as balancing Board and family responsibilities.

Mrs. Whistler thanked Mrs. Mazer for her service to the Board; the spirited debate generated, and was respectful of her decision to resign. She shared some Policy Governance views, stressing accountability, and reiterated decisions would continue to be made in a thorough and thoughtful manner.

Mrs. Polderman acknowledged she will miss Mrs. Mazer and thanked her for her service to the Board. She thanked the community for getting involved with the District and shared some Policy Governance views.

Mr. Posthumus thanked Mrs. Mazer for her service to the Board. He appreciated what she brought to the Board and will miss her. He commented that the transition to the Carver Model is difficult and reassured the audience the Board is making progress. Mr. Posthumus read the following statement on behalf of the Portage Athletic Foundation: "The mission of the Portage Athletic Foundation (PAF) is to enhance athletics district-wide and to insure equity for the maximum number of student athletes. To this end, PAF is opposed to any reduction in access to athletic opportunities for Portage Public School students and neighborhood taxpayers who may use the facilities for recreational purposes. PAF believes that students and taxpayers are better served by positioning tennis courts near their present sites." Mr. Posthumus acknowledged his support for researching the installation of 8 tennis courts at each high school site.

President Johnson again thanked Mrs. Mazer and discussed the challenging and sometimes overwhelming responsibilities of serving as a Trustee. She acknowledged responding to numerous e-mails from concerned citizens regarding tennis court plans. She briefed the audience on conversations during several Board meetings, open house sessions, and *Gazette* articles pertaining to this topic. She stressed a decision has not been made on the tennis courts and discussed maintaining community confidence to do the right thing. President Johnson also discussed the Policy Governance Model transition, priorities and reminded the audience the District Policy Manual is a living/working document. President Johnson introduced the consultant working with the Board during this transition period, Mr. Eric Craymer.

President Johnson 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 informed the audience of the public comment guidelines.

Mr. Bob Schafer, 7667 Cobblewood, a citizen, shared concerns for traffic flow at both high school sites, flat roofs, and maintaining the Administration Building and Waylee.

Ms. Judy Acker-Smith, 7202 Angling Rd., a citizen, spoke in support of keeping tennis courts at both high school sites.

Mr. Mark Anthony Martin, 10519 Dandale St., a parent, shared observations of parents behaving inappropriately at a football game, concern for high school tennis courts, concern for the Community Education Center facility, and thanked Mrs. Mazer for her service to the Board.

Ms. Millie Taraszka, 410 Marylynn Ct., a citizen, spoke in support of 8 tennis courts at both high school sites, ranking of U.S. K-12 education worldwide, and teacher salaries.

Ms. Connie Swartley, 9693 Palmetto Ct., a citizen, commented on the Board's transition to the Policy Governance Model, access to District Policies, seeking support from and working together with the community.

Mr. Douglas Greiner, 5812 Tradewind Dr., a parent, shared concerns with the District educating students who are required to serve out of school suspensions.

Ms. Judi Santek 7537 Autumn St., a citizen, expressed a desire to have the Work Study Sessions broadcast similar to the Regular Meetings. She also reaffirmed the need for tennis courts at both high school sites and requested the District research 8 courts rather than 10.

Ms. Diana Bernard, 5555 Whippoorwill, a citizen, shared concerns with District substance abuse prevention.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

President Johnson announced she was moving the Policy Governance discussion item ahead in the agenda and invited Mr. Eric Craymer to lead this portion of the meeting.

Policy Governance Discussion, Board Bylaws. Mr. Craymer gave background on the Policy Governance Model and commended the Board for their passion to do the best thing for student outcomes. He emphasized that the new process is a progressive tool. It helps the Board identify underlying values and develop policies that will drive decisions and lead to greater student outcomes – How student lives should be different as a result of being in this District, not average, but exceptional. Trustees shared ideas, changes, and corrections to the Bylaws.

Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, supported by Mrs. Polderman, that the Board of Education move the adoption of Bylaws with changes, as noted, to an action item. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, supported by Mrs. Polderman, that the Board of Education adopt the Bylaws with changes, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Policy Development, Bond Construction Projects Discussion. President Johnson inquired how the Board anticipates their involvement. Trustee comments pertained to an agenda item request, changes in scope, priority, approval amounts, budgets, updates, and the request to form a Bond Committee. Mr. Craymer shared thoughts on committee framework and the decision making process. A request for an estimate of 8 tennis courts was presented. There was a discussion on the

need for a stand alone Board Policy 2.11 pertaining to Bond Construction as well as a revision to Policy 3.9 regarding a committee addition.

Policy Development, Operational/Instructional Programs Discussion. Mrs. Whistler offered comments on a number of options and Mrs. Kurdys added there was language missing regarding programs. President Johnson commented the Board is responsible for approving District budgets and amendments and tabled further discussion on this topic for the November 22 meeting agenda.

Policy Development, Ends Statements Discussion. President Johnson announced this discussion topic will be held for the November 22 meeting agenda.

President Johnson moved to the 12th Street Elementary Technology Infrastructure Bid discussion item.

12th Street Elementary Technology Infrastructure Bid Discussion. The Director of Technology Systems, Mr. Michael Batterson, provided background information received for Bid Package #3. Mr. Batterson introduced Mr. Alex Ellingsen, Technology Consultant from Secant Technologies, for further details. Mr. Ellingsen responded to Trustee questions pertaining to budgets and bids, compliance, and accountability. President Johnson added this item will be brought for a vote at the November 24 Board meeting.

District Legal Services Discussion. Mr. John Manske, Legal Counsel, provided background information on District legal services and responded to Trustee questions.

Motion offered by Mrs. Kurdys, supported by Mr. Rathburn, that the Board of Education move the selection of the Thrun Law Firm as the new provider of the District's legal services and authorize the Superintendent to execute a contractual agreement accordingly, to an action item. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion offered by Mr. Rathburn, supported by Mrs. Kurdys, that the Board of Education approve the selection of the Thrun Law Firm as the new provider of the District's legal services and authorize the Superintendent to execute a contractual agreement accordingly, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Superintendent Wells will make arrangements for Mr. Kevin Harty, Thrun Law Firm, to attend a future Board meeting.

Owners Linkage Committee Discussion. President Johnson announced this discussion topic will be held for the November 22 meeting agenda.

President Johnson shared a draft application form to fill a vacated Board of Education position and processed updates with fellow Trustees. Mr. Manske informed the audience the Board has 30 days to appoint someone to this vacancy. If they exceed the 30 days, this process will be referred to the Kalamazoo Regional Education Service Agency to appoint a Trustee. Superintendent Wells clarified the deadline for candidates will be November 21, 2008 at 2 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, supported by Mr. Posthumus, that the Board of Education move into closed session for the purpose of discussing negotiations strategy, the purchase of real property, and attorney-client privileged information. Upon a roll call vote, all Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

The Board moved into closed session at 9:25 p.m.

The Board returned to open session at 10:40 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edna Kent
Recording Secretary