

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES**

April 20, 2009

The regular business meeting of the Board of Education of the Portage Public Schools held on Monday, April 20, 2009, was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President Johnson in the Community Room of the Administration Building, 8111 S. Westnedge. She welcomed an audience of 75 people and all in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Board Trustees Absent: None

DISTRICT RECOGNITIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

President Johnson invited the Community Relations Manager, Mr. Tom Vance, to introduce the National Merit Scholarship Finalists. Five of the seven District student finalists were present and briefly shared their future plans. On behalf of the Board, President Johnson congratulated the students and presented them with recognition certificates.

REPORTS

Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Wells informed the audience there are only 37 days of school remaining this year and many families are gearing up for graduations, proms and other events. She shared an immediate focus of the Substance Abuse Task Force is to approach Portage businesses with liquor licenses as a visible presence and communicate the important message about preventing under age drinking. She mentioned the police are planning local check points and ramping up their visibility on this important issue. The Superintendent updated the audience on the Youth Substance Abuse Prevention initiative adding the District is continuing work with Kalamazoo Community Mental Health to identify a point person to serve as a District-based consultant who will act as a liaison resource person for students and families. She plans to introduce this person at the May Board meeting and anticipates the consultant will begin this fall.

Superintendent Wells invited the Director of Assessment and Student Information Systems, Mr. Dan Vomastek, to share an overview of the 2008 Fall Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) results. Mr. Vomastek provided District data, shared a comparative analysis, and responded to Trustee questions. Mr. Vomastek plans to pursue further details regarding per pupil foundation allowance and adjustments for cost of living standards to the Board on the five peer schools selected for the comparative analysis to examine whether this has a significant impact on the data. The Director of Curriculum and Professional Development, Ms. Denise Bresson, shared District curriculum highlights on mathematics and writing. She discussed reviewing new math textbooks that are aligned to the new standards; shared adjustments made and informed the audience of summer math camp that assists District students. Ms. Bresson discussed professional development plans, highlighting the writing curriculum course and the impact of that training. She responded to Trustee questions pertaining to differentiation strategies and adjusting curriculum.

Superintendent Wells shared some financial background and commented on beginning the process of evaluating outsourcing options. With enrollment decreasing and revenue from the state questionable, she acknowledged it is the District's priority to protect classroom funds.

Financial Report: The Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Mr. Tom Noverr, presented the General Fund Condensed Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for the seven month period ending March 31, 2009. He also provided an update on the 2009/10 budget development process noting the information he is presenting is also on the web site. He responded to Trustee questions pertaining to funding balances, specific requirements and regulations for use of District funds, variables impacting budget development, stimulus funds, salaries and step increases, keeping reductions away from instruction, potential revenue sources, Bond savings, and how everything impacts the District Bond ratings. Mr. Noverr added he was pleased to report the District was notified it will receive a Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association.

COMMENTS OR COMMUNICATIONS

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 explained guidelines the Board uses for this portion of the meeting.

Mr. Eric VerHey, 50314 Fulton Road, Leonidas, Portage Education Association President and teacher, clarified step increases and mandates placed on teachers. He shared concern regarding privatization of 2nd and 3rd shift custodial positions.

Mr. Ken Dumas, 4503 Cedar Street, parent, inquired about school construction projects. President Johnson informed Mr. Dumas that Mr. Noverr would contact him.

Mr. Jeff Plunkett, 5650 Cranston, Custodial and Maintenance Union President and custodian, thanked fellow staff members and community members for their support and shared concern regarding privatization of 2nd and 3rd shift custodial positions.

Ms. Debra Miller, 2104 Eckener Drive, Secretarial Union President and secretary, discussed the unique situation the District faces regarding privatizing custodial positions, evaluating all costs of outsourcing, the economic impact to the community, and examining every option.

Ms. Millie Taraszka, 410 Marylynn Court, a citizen, discussed MEAP scores and testing and urged the District to focus on math scores and broaden comparison beyond the state.

Janet LaVasseur, 3255 N. 38th Street, a teacher, shared concern regarding privatization of 2nd and 3rd shift custodial positions, discussed these valued members of the learning community, and suggested closing the Administration Building to cut costs.

Ms. Janet Wydendorf, 226 Marigold, a teacher, shared concern regarding privatization of 2nd and 3rd shift custodial positions and discussed the safety factor with evening custodians in a building.

Ms. Nancy Nott, 16703 East CD, a teacher, shared concern regarding privatization of 2nd and 3rd shift custodial positions and the quality of building care.

Ms. Michele Helner, 929 Schuring Road, a teacher, shared concern regarding privatization of 2nd and 3rd shift custodial positions, trust and safety concerns with outsourced staff, and the assistance her program receives.

Ms. Sharon Curtis, 4687 N. 6th Street, a teacher, shared concern regarding privatization of 2nd and 3rd shift custodial positions and discussed outsourcing problems she has experienced. She stressed the importance of background checks for these employees.

Ms. Michelle Kounelis, 50314 Fulton Road, Leonidas, a teacher, shared concern regarding privatization of 2nd and 3rd shift custodial positions, discussed safety and trust important to the students and faculty, and urged the District to carefully consider this decision.

Ms. Ann Soper, 5525 Blue Spruce, a parent, offered thanks to the Board for their services and dedication. She commended the District for the educational opportunities provided to her children and recognized the following Central High School teachers: Mr. Kent Baker, Ms. Rachel Kubinski, Mrs. Deb Ross, and Principal, Mr. Eric Alburtus. Ms. Soper also recognized and thanked President Johnson, Mrs. Polderman, and Mrs. Kurdys for their Board service and desire to make the District the best it can be.

Mr. Bob Walker, 2812 Vanderbilt Road, a citizen and retired teacher, shared concern regarding privatization of 2nd and 3rd shift custodial positions and discussed the educational family value. He urged both sides to go to the table and represent the best interest of District students.

Ms. Penny Barber, 321 Velvet, member of the Bus Driver Association and a bus driver, shared concern regarding privatization of 2nd and 3rd shift custodial positions, discussing how they impact the learning community.

Ms. Christine Price, 10627 Sudan, a parent, shared concern regarding privatization of 2nd and 3rd shift custodial positions and the amount of bids awarded outside the local community.

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

Mrs. Polderman acknowledged student achievement, highlighting the National Merit Scholarship Finalists and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Reception for the IB Diploma students. She also thanked the community members for their comments.

Superintendent Wells invited the Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services, Dr. Ric Perry, to provide further background on the IB Reception. Dr. Perry shared details of the reception held in honor of the District's 30 IB Diploma candidates. Each student was offered the opportunity to invite and recognize two distinguished educators and family to the event. Awards were created by the students in Northern High Education For Employment teacher, Mr. Matt Kamm's class and the event was sponsored by Mr. Neal Miedema, a Financial Advisor from Ameriprise Financial. This event was organized by the IB coordinator from Northern High, Ms. Linda Trepanier, and Central High, Mr. Chuck Schira, Northern Principal, Mr. Jim French, Central Principal, Mr. Eric Alburtus, Ms. Denise Bresson, and administrative assistants Mrs. Ann Frazee and Mrs. Connie Webb.

Mrs. Whistler wanted to clarify comments made by a citizen that over 50% of the Bond dollars were spent outside Kalamazoo County and she invited Mr. Noverr to provide details for the audience. Mr. Noverr responded about 62% of the dollars went to local bidders, representing about \$42 million dollars.

Mrs. Polderman reminded the audience cuts have previously been made to the Administration and asked Mr. Noverr to further clarify. Mr. Noverr discussed cuts in the budget over numerous years and through attrition across the administrative and support staff. He will provide statistics on those cuts to the Board and acknowledged District administrative costs are extremely low in percentage in comparison to other districts across the state.

Mr. Whyte acknowledged he appreciated the comments from Mr. Walker regarding custodian privatization. He agreed everyone is in this together as a family and everyone will have to make sacrifices with no rancor or posturing on any side of this issue.

Mrs. Kurdys thanked the Administration for acknowledging the IB Diploma candidates and National Merit Scholars. She thanked Superintendent Wells for following up on substance abuse and the joint partnership with the community which will be beneficial to all students. Mrs. Kurdys inquired about assurances on the best levels of traffic safety at the high schools acknowledging Superintendent Wells will be working on this. She thanked the community members for their thoughts and suggestions. She acknowledged further budget discussions will take place at the May 4th meeting. Mrs. Kurdys responded to community members regarding the Board President speaking for the Board as a whole. She emphasized the Board does care, is listening, and trying to keep communications open. There was no Legislative update and Mrs. Kurdys mentioned the next Governance Education Committee meeting will be held Wednesday.

Mr. Rathburn echoed Mr. Whyte's comments regarding custodian privatization. He informed the audience he and Mr. Posthumus have conducted site visits at Amberly, Woodland, and Angling Road Elementary Schools. He shared observations about the amazing classroom happenings and the technically advanced classrooms. He discussed volunteerism and commented the District needs more male volunteers in the buildings.

President Johnson thanked those citizens that stayed to listen to Trustee comments. She complimented the *Gazette* on their recent article regarding the privatization of 2nd and 3rd shift custodial positions and reminded the audience the Board is researching this option, no decisions have been made. President Johnson appreciated the comments received and recognized the difficult decisions that must be made. She echoed earlier Trustee comments regarding working together as a family with no rancor or posturing on any side of this issue. President Johnson thanked Ms. Trepanier, Mr. Schira, Mr. French, Mr. Alburtus, Ms. Bresson, and Dr. Perry for their efforts to coordinate the IB Honors Reception. She acknowledged the variety and diversity of teachers recognized at this event as well as the students and offered special thanks to Mr. Miedema for his sponsorship support. President Johnson thanked Mrs. Kurdys and Superintendent Wells for recognizing the National Merit Scholarship Finalists. She discussed citizen comments pertaining to the Building and Site Sinking Fund and bids.

Mrs. Kurdys inquired about the General Fund finance report and Mr. Noverr responded he was comfortable with the fact that it was tracking similarly to previous years.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, supported by Mrs. Polderman, that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda items, as presented. Included on the Consent Agenda was the approval of the revised Minutes of March 23, 2009, Regular Business Meeting, April 2, 2009, Policy Development Meeting; Child Nutrition Employee Appreciation Week Proclamation; and Staff Appreciation Week Proclamation. Motion carried unanimously.

President Johnson called a recess at 8:50 p.m.

President Johnson called the meeting to order at 8:55 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS

Motion offered by Mrs. Polderman, supported by Mr. Posthumus, that the Board of Education accept the playground contract with Miracle of Michigan for the purpose of furnishing and installing playground equipment for 12th Street Elementary School for the sum of \$100,000.00, as presented. This expenditure will be allocated to the 2007 Bond Issue #2.

Mr. Noverr shared details about this action item and discussed the unique bid process. Mr. Noverr and Mr. Mark Reile, Architect from TMP Associates, responded to Trustee questions regarding equipment provided, the value of current Waylee playground equipment, retaining Bond funds, and inequities created among elementary schools. In the interest of time, Mr. Whyte requested to call a question and take the vote.

Motion carried by a vote of 6-1.

Motion offered by Mrs. Polderman, supported by Mrs. Whistler, that the Board of Education accept the following roofing contract for Angling Road Elementary School; Division 7 Contractor, Inc. in the amount of \$339,331.00, as presented. These expenditures will be from the 2009/10 Building and Site Sinking Fund.

Mr. Noverr provided background information on the roof at Angling Road Elementary. Mr. Noverr and Mr. Reile responded to Trustee questions pertaining to roofing materials, life expectancy, and building occupancy.

Motion carried unanimously.

Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, supported by Mrs. Polderman, that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the March 30, 2009, Special Board Meeting, as revised. Motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Policy Governance, Agenda Item Request. President Johnson inquired if Trustees would agree to make the request regarding Sunshine Week with respect to transparency and accountability, a future agenda item. After much conversation, Mr. Posthumus suggested President Johnson request individual feedback from all Trustees.

Mr. Posthumus agreed this should a future agenda item for a limited amount of time.

Mr. Whyte was not aware the District has a shortfall in this area and did not support the request.

Mrs. Polderman preferred the request go to the Owner's Linkage Committee first and that the Board concentrate on other issues.

Mrs. Kurdys indicated she would like to see further conversation and then deferred the request to the Owner's Linkage Committee.

Mr. Rathburn suggested the Owner's Linkage Committee review the request and draft ideas for the Board.

Mrs. Whistler preferred to send this request to the Owner's Linkage Committee first.

President Johnson felt the District is very transparent, did not see an issue and preferred the Owner's Linkage Committee review it first.

President Johnson stated it was determined this request would be reviewed by the Owner's Linkage Committee in order to determine a process for seeking feedback from the community. The Committee will report back to the Board with its recommendation.

CLOSED SESSION

Motion offered by Mrs. Polderman, supported by Mrs. Whistler, that the Board of Education move into closed session for the purpose of discussing the Superintendent's evaluation and negotiations strategy. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried by a vote of 5-2.

The Board moved into closed session at 9:30 p.m.

The Board returned to open session at 9:55 p.m.

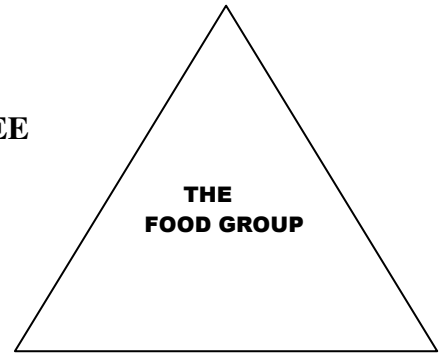
Due to the late hour, the Closed Session discussion pertaining to the Superintendent's Evaluation was postponed.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edna Kent
Recording Secretary

**PROCLAMATION
CHILD NUTRITION EMPLOYEE
APPRECIATION WEEK
May 4 - 8, 2009**



WHEREAS, It is with great respect for the accomplishments of Portage's school food service managers, servers, cashiers and driver personnel and substitutes that we commemorate May 4-8, 2009 as Child Nutrition Employee Appreciation Week. During this special observance, we encourage all citizens to recognize the dedication and skill of our school food service employees; and

WHEREAS, Each year, a total of 70 food service employees prepare and serve over 1 million meals. This is in addition to ordering, storing, and expediting each menu item to each location, adhering to food safety, sanitation, and nutritional guidelines as well as giving each customer the time and consideration to listen, hear and deliver what they are looking for each day. Fortunately, we have exemplary professionals who have devoted their careers to providing high quality service to our children and staff; and

WHEREAS, On behalf of our young people, it is a pleasure to commend the women and men who accept and meet the challenges of school food service. The observance of Child Nutrition Employee Appreciation Week is a welcome opportunity to thank these patient, caring, skilled public servants. Those involved in this pursuit should be very proud of their contribution to education. Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, That we proudly commemorate May 4-8, 2009 as the Child Nutrition Employee Appreciation Week, and we commend everyone who has contributed to the successful operation of our lunch program. By working together, we can make a difference in every student's life.

Proclaimed this 20th day of April, 2009
Portage Public Schools Board Of Education

**STAFF APPRECIATION WEEK
PROCLAMATION**

- Whereas,** public schools are the backbone of our democracy, providing young people with the tools they need to maintain our nation's precious values of freedom, civility, and equality; and
- Whereas,** by equipping young Americans with both practical skills and broader intellectual abilities, schools give them hope for, and access to, a productive future; and
- Whereas,** Portage Public School educators and support staff members work tirelessly to serve our children and community with quality care and expert professionalism; and
- Whereas,** quality schools are community linchpins, bringing together adults and children, educators and volunteers, business leaders and elected officials in a common enterprise;

Now, Therefore, I, Shirley Johnson, President of the Board of Education, do hereby proclaim May 3-9, 2009, as **Staff Appreciation Week** in the Portage School District, and encourage all citizens to support the vital role our staff plays in the success of our learning community.

Signed this 20th day of April 2009

Shirley Johnson, President
Portage Public Schools
Board of Education