

**MAINE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT NO. 56**

Frankfort • Searsport • Stockton Springs

Minutes

Board of Directors Meeting

April 15, 2008 – 6:30 P.M.

Central Office - Searsport

Present: Joseph Altilio            Nedra Bellows            Tom Calderwood  
James Cunningham    Denise Dakin            Harold Grove  
Michael Hamilton      Raymond Hart           Twyler Webster  
Lisa Hudson            Julia Martin

Absent: Christopher Krause

Visitors: 36+ (Many did not sign in.)

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Vice-Chairperson Nedra Bellows called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

- Alan Hammond spoke from a prepared statement concerning EPS funding and various departments in the district. He stated that System Administration was \$103,537 over EPS. In Technology, the district owns 907 laptops/desktops to support 752 students and 97 teachers. The national computer ratio is 1:4 in grades 7-12 and 1:6 in grades K-6. The district is \$218,977 over EPS in Technology. District expenditures on regular classroom instruction are lower than the state average (\$3,797 compared to \$4,012). Expenses for school supplies are inconsistent from school to school – perhaps use a figure of \$100/student to save \$11,000. Eliminate all miscellaneous lines to save \$11,000. Look at the lines for Professional and Technical Services, and the Dues and Fees lines. Make reductions there. In total, Mr. Hammond projected savings in the budget of \$360,000 without impacting educational instruction.
- Gabe Baker said there is a cost of doing business, with an inflation increase of 4.25%. He suggested reducing the overall budget to meet inflation. Other districts have increases in the range of 4-5%. More reductions will impact programming. He would not like to see reductions in music which is important to all students. Look elsewhere for cuts. Do not send the class size policy back for revisions. EPS is below our policy and we need to have our policy at or below EPS.
- Charlene Farris, fifth grade teacher, spoke. She has 15 students now, with two more coming after vacation. She would have 29+ students next year. Several children take/need more. She has taught classes with 28-30 students, but she did not have DRAs or MEAs then. She complimented the UltraKey program. Her students used books, the Internet, rough drafts, editing, and publishing to prepare for their last production.
- Abby Norman, a junior at the High School, said students were present to observe. She is not an accountant, and cannot put values on particular items. She pointed out that any decisions made affect students.

- ❑ Gregg Palmer spoke as a Frankfort resident. He disagreed with previous statements concerning technology. At the elementary schools, computers are on carts, not one to one. The laptop program is incredibly valuable to our students. Most students do not see it as excessive. Average does not represent what each of us has. If he lives in a ditch and you live in a \$100,000 home, the average is \$50,000. That does not show the true reality. What is being done with technology is remarkable. There are no places to find money elsewhere. When we are compared with other small districts, we are fine. If we cut music, we can still maintain an equitable program.
- ❑ Wayne Suomi, SES principal, did not feel a reduction in teaching staff was the best idea. He would like class sizes of 12-15 for kindergarten and less than 20 for grades 1-5. Small class sizes make a difference with success of middle and high school students.
- ❑ Jan Leighton, kindergarten teacher, said she started teaching in 1972 with no computers. She spoke on behalf of retaining the Technology Integration Specialist position because of all the support she receives from this position. She also asked the Board to see the needs of children before they make any cuts in positions.
- ❑ Erin Ireland, first grade teacher, spoke about the Technology Integration Specialist and the work done with her class. As a parent, she said if her third grader was in a class of 20 they would look at alternate ways to educate their children. It is not the norm in this district to have 20 students in a classroom.
- ❑ Amber Snow apologized for speaking out of turn in the past. She would have a 10 year old in Mrs. Farris's class and would also look for alternate ways to educate her children. How can we consider this tonight?
- ❑ Bill Wiley, K-5 music teacher, thanked Mr. Suomi for his support this past year and said he was sad to see him leave. Mr. Wiley regularly works with class sizes of 16-90 students, but it is more difficult for classroom teachers with large class loads. He said he would not be able to do what he does without the support of the entire Technology Department, and he thanked them. He said that if you take away half of the high school music position, you will have students not attending school. Students need these class offerings. Once gone, they are hard to replace. The arts can enrich lives.
- ❑ Bud Merrill said he used to teach here. He knows class sizes and programs and has taught class sizes from 20 to 30+ students. It depends on what you want. If you have students with special needs, you can't cut. He has listened to the Governor and the Commissioner of Education, and if they are in office any longer, they will destroy public education here. If you cut positions, you will peeve off many people in the communities.

### 3. 2008-09 Proposed District Budget:

Nedra Bellows asked the Superintendent to provide feedback on items from the last meeting.

- ❑ We need to have a quorum on April 17 at the Region 7 meeting. Thus far we have Joe, Ray, Nedra, Harold, Denise, and Twyler.
- ❑ She reviewed all items funded by the Gates Grant and the CSR grant. These included interventions, courses, Sister School facilitator, and the radio station for a total of \$20,334.30. The Superintendent supports the interventions at the high school and we have seen the academic results.
- ❑ The cost of the NWEA testing from the CSR Grant (\$1,875) can be taken from the district's assessment line, thus reducing the SDMS by \$1,875.

- The Superintendent read a letter from Mark Quigley, President of the MSAD #56 Education Association which stated that the Association would not agree to freezing wages for teachers and support staff.
- The Superintendent reported on a meeting with legal council concerning a retirement/incentive program. A school district may offer a retirement/incentive program which can consist of money and/or a portion of health insurance paid. However, this type of incentive program can only be offered to those eligible teachers who are ready for normal retirement: 1) 60 years of age with 25 years of teaching/service or 2) 62 years of age with 25 years of teaching/service. This can be a one time only incentive and we were advised to discuss/negotiate this with the Teacher's Association. You may not offer an incentive to anyone who would leave the district or who does not meet the eligibility, for the district would have to pay the retirement for X number of years.

Discussion followed. The Superintendent shared that the Board has difficult decisions to make. We need to think of positions, not names. We need to make cuts; the Board will decide where.

Nedra Bellows went down the list of proposed cuts one by one.

1. 80% speech therapist is leaving the area; other speech therapies moved to a full time position for a **savings of \$44,257**. Ray Hart asked if this reduction would impact IEPs/504s. Sharon Goguen will review this – we will make it work.
2. Reduce a social worker to half-time for a **savings of \$26,419**. There was a strong feeling that special education needs to participate in the cuts. It would be nice to have full-time, but we will do it with a half-time person.
3. Eliminate an Ed Tech III for Project Success for a **savings of \$8,559**. This program is funded through a VISTA grant; we contribute \$4,000. We will move a certified teacher in to replace the Ed Tech.
4. Reduction of five elementary teaching positions for a **savings of \$189,008**. The Superintendent explained that there would be one straight kindergarten class, one grade one teacher, and one multiage teacher for a reduction of one person. The other positions would involve creating double grades. Denise Dakin and Twyler Webster were not happy with this suggestion; they said it did not work and students would not get the education they need. The FAME Program is here because of the cuts and double grades. Gregg Palmer said that FAME addresses students reading below grade level. Twyler Webster said that is not the teacher's fault. It takes a special teacher to teach double grades. Denise Dakin said research says not to go to large class sizes. She will share her information. Discussion followed. Ray Hart said that in order to cut a budget you need to cut salaries and benefits. He wants to see the data, including data on retentions. We have too many teachers; will the data support the number of teachers? It doesn't do any good to do remediation at the middle/high school level. We need to start in the lower grades. Harold Grove would like to see the ratio of teachers to students. The State's ratio is 17:1. We need to re-examine our policy and bring it to the state's ratio.
5. Reduce a 7/8<sup>th</sup> Foreign Language teacher for a **savings of \$39,985**. Gregg Palmer said this area would impact the lowest number of students. We would look at which language to offer: French or Spanish. We offer Latin and some Chinese on the ATM, but could not find French I, II or Spanish there. We could not offer it virtually.
6. A new half-time science teacher at the High School for an **increase of \$25,804**. The Superintendent explained that changes in Maine's Learning Results are requiring us

- to do more in physical science. Gregg Palmer said we would need to eliminate other science classes in order to do the new Maine Learning Results.
7. Reduction of one English/Language Arts teacher at the Searsport District Middle School for a **savings of \$54,947**. Brian Corrigan said we had four teachers when he came. We cut one teacher in grades 6-7, and last year we kept a teacher due to the focus on literacy. We can survive. Questions followed.
  8. Reduce the HS/MS music teacher position from full-time to half-time for a **savings of \$24,390**. Denise Dakin said this would be a disservice. We have students who have accomplished a great deal. Twyler Webster was concerned with this also. A student shared how difficult it was to try to get in a chorus due to its offering. The Superintendent shared that the expectation would be to schedule times when students could participate in chorus, band, or both in grades 6-12.
  9. Increase the Middle School health/PE teacher from half-time to full-time for an **increase of \$22,490** and reduce the Middle School guidance counselor to a half-time position for a **savings of \$25,151**. The thought is to have guidance working with students and not perform any teaching components which would be done by the health teacher. This was not in the original budget because the directive was to continue all programs as they were. Mike Hamilton said that this was basically a financial wash. We are trying to go to one class of health and one class of PE. Twyler Webster asked if the guidance counselor was already doing it, why isn't the person integrating the course. The Superintendent said that the new Maine Learning Results are requiring more content and we need to address how we can meet this with our current half-time position. Would we be doing an injustice by reducing guidance? Yes, we have a lot of students with needs. Brian Corrigan addressed the current situation and what he hopes to accomplish. Ray Hart said we need a half-time PE/Health position. The Superintendent said these are not easy decisions and no one wants to see cuts. But we cannot reduce the budget without cutting somewhere. It is important for the Board to make their decisions in a timely manner for affected people have a right to know as soon as possible so they can seek employment elsewhere. It is not fair to them to wait until the last minute. We are also under a legal deadline on when teachers must be notified of whether or not they will be employed. Tina Boone said we have a bare bones budget and we are jeopardizing education by what is happening in Augusta. She is angry as a taxpayer, parent, and administrator. The administrators analyzed with equity in mind.
  10. Transition funding for the new RSU for an **increase of \$50,000**. The Superintendent shared that both current Boards need to have a transition time with the new RSU to review policies, seek legal council, plan, etc. in order to be ready for full implementation on July 1, 2009. Harold Grove said the costs should be apportioned by size of district. Belfast is larger and should be paying more. The Superintendent recommended that one of the RPC members make that motion on April 23<sup>rd</sup> at the next RPC meeting.
  11. No funding for Middle School Extra Curricular (Bus Line Sports) for a **savings of \$32,323**. Start a new intramural program with a coordinator and supplies for an **increase of \$5,000**. There are concerns with the Bus Line League – can we participate in a different one? Brian Corrigan looked at other leagues where the distances were further. It is not that simple. Ruth Fitzpatrick will survey other leagues to see if they will regionalize. Discussion followed. Mike Hamilton wants Ruth to investigate the possibility of other leagues. Harold Grove feels an intramural program would allow all students to participate. Everyone would have an opportunity to play and develop their skills.

12. Reduce one Technology Integration Specialist position for a **savings of \$58,932**. Joe Altilio said that we need people to fix the computers when they break. The Superintendent said that our district is known and respected throughout the state for its integration of technology and what we have been able to accomplish. Computers and laptops are used by personnel to do the required work of the state. All State forms are now done electronically. Our students do not want to lose their laptops because they use them all the time. Laptops are an integral part of instruction and learning. Jobs and colleges require students to be highly qualified in technology. If there is only one Technology Integration Specialist, that person would cover grades K-12.
13. Reduce one building administrator position for a **savings of \$74, 843**. Everyone thought this was a good idea.
14. Reduce the superintendent position and instead hire an interim superintendent at \$300/day for 260 days for a **savings of \$30,061**. The Superintendent recommends this with only one year left before going into the RSU or this may be a time to have the MSAD #34 superintendent also cover MSAD #56 during the interim time. Ray Hart said to reduce this to three days a week. He said that Mary is correct in thinking of sharing. If we have a part-time superintendent, we only need a part-time secretary to the superintendent. Mary has done a wonderful job. We could increase the **cost savings to \$61,000**. He has heard we are overstaffed with administrators – he said we are giving up one full-time administrator and 2-3 days of a superintendent. As a superintendent, he said the best thing to cut was athletics because people would come out to support that. Cutting budgets is very difficult – you need to cut staff which cuts programs, etc. Administrators should be able to work on curriculum. The curriculum secretary can assist with the work. We are fortunate to have a superintendent who has expertise with curriculum.

Discussion followed. We need very specific directions on what to do with an emergency. There needs to be a centralization of information. The Board will need to give us a strict flow chart with priorities and what to do.

- Mike Hamilton asked if staff should be asked for ideas. Gregg Palmer said administrators looked to do the cuts with the least amount of impact.
- Are we divorcing the Dean of Students and administrator? The Dean of Students will be separate and the co-curricular coordinator will be a stipend position. This will add to the budget.
- Someone asked about having one bus run K-12 for a huge savings. The Superintendent said we looked at this two years ago and found we would need more buses and bus drivers. There are behavior issues. Students need to behave or they should walk/have parents transport them. Denise Dakin would like to see the numbers if we go to one bus run. The Superintendent will have the Director come up with the cost.
- Ray Hart proposed that the Board accept the following cuts for a total savings of \$247,662 which moves us from a 6% increase to a 4.5% increase:
  1. 80% speech therapist is leaving the area; other speech therapies moved to a full time position for a **savings of \$44,257**.
  2. Reduce a social worker to half-time for a **savings of \$26,419**.
  3. Eliminate an Ed Tech III for Project Success for a **savings of \$8,559**.
  4. No funding for Middle School Extra Curricular (Bus Line Sports) for a **savings of \$32,323**. Add an intramural program for the Middle School at a **cost of \$5,000**.

5. Reduce one building administrator position for a **savings of \$74, 843.**
  6. Reduce the superintendent position and instead hire an interim superintendent at \$300/day for 3 days/week for a **savings of \$61,361** and reduce the Superintendent's secretary position to 3 days/week.
- ❑ By making the above cuts we would not need to cut the five elementary teachers or the foreign language teacher.
  - ❑ Maybe we should only buy one bus instead of two.
  - ❑ Harold Grove will save us some money in the RSU by requesting that the payments be apportioned according to the size of the district.
  - ❑ Ray Hart addressed the comment about handling emergencies. Your chairperson becomes a critical person to deliver information.
  - ❑ Ray Hart suggested reducing contingency by \$50,000, leaving \$50,000. One out-of district placement could use up all of that money. The Superintendent is not comfortable with that.
  - ❑ The Superintendent is also not comfortable with assuming \$100,000 in Medicare revenues.
  - ❑ There is \$900,000 in undesignated fund balance in the proposed budget.
  - ❑ There is a 5% increase in assessments.
  - ❑ There was a question about the new RSU. There would be one pot of money. The two systems become one system. Two different salary agreements would be combined. We are talking a \$600,000-\$700,000 increase.
  - ❑ Kindergarten numbers will have an impact on us. There may be potential savings if the numbers are low.
  - ❑ The Superintendent will see if any staff meet the requirements for age and years of service for an incentive.
  - ❑ Twyler Webster asked in the new high school science position could be filled by the floating position at the Middle School. The Superintendent said the person would have to be certified in all appropriate subjects. Gregg Palmer said we would have to eliminate elective classes. Many students are interested in health-type careers; science classes are important in this.
  - ❑ Do the High School and Middle School each have their own PE teacher? The Superintendent will get information on class sizes at those levels, as well as tentative numbers for next year.
  - ❑ Can we cut the foreign language position? Gregg Palmer said we could have all students take a foreign language for two years, just not all at the same time. We could survey the eighth grade.
  - ❑ Ray Hart commended the superintendent and her administrators for their work on the budget savings. This is not an easy task.
  - ❑ Harold Grove asked where the cuts would be made at the elementary level. Is there any other choice besides double classes? The Superintendent responded that we could restructure as previously discussed. If you look at projected kindergarten class sizes for next year, we show 43 students across the district. With four teachers, class sizes are 10, 11, 11, and 11. With three teachers, class sizes are 14, 14, and 15.
  - ❑ With larger class sizes, we could hire ed techs.
  - ❑ We need to see busing. Leave the teachers alone.
  - ❑ At the next meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, we will look at one bus run, health and PE, science position, intramurals, and teaching positions.
  - ❑ What will be the cost to the towns with a 3.9% increase in the budget?

The Superintendent will try to get everything out in time for the next Board meeting. The location will be announced.

Mike Hamilton commended the students for attending and speaking out.

4. **ADJOURNMENT.** A motion was made by Denise Dakin and seconded by Jim Cunningham to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 pm.

**VOTE: 9-0-0**

Respectfully submitted,