

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

Special Meeting

MINUTES

October 12, 2015

Allyson Lambert, board treasurer, called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m. in the board room of the FNSBSD Administrative Center at 520 Fifth Avenue. The special meeting was called to consider Resolution 2016-05: Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Mrs. Lambert read the district's mission statement: *"Our mission is to provide an excellent, equitable education in a safe, supportive environment so all students will succeed and contribute to a diverse and changing society."*

Present:

Allyson Lambert, Treasurer
Lisa Gentry, Clerk
Sue Hull, Member
Michael O'Brien, Member
Sean Rice, Member

Absent:

Heidi Haas, President
Wendy Dominique, Vice President

Staff Present:

Dr. Karen Gaborik, Superintendent of Schools
Lisa Pearce, Chief Financial Officer
Sharon Tuttle, Executive Assistant to the Board of Education

Public Testimony – *limited to items on the agenda only* [0:00:37]

Mrs. Lambert called for public testimony.

Steve Ginnis, Fairbanks Native Association executive director, urged the board to pass the Indigenous Peoples' Day resolution. Mr. Ginnis asked for an amendment to the resolution to include language regarding the "monetary contributions" of the Native community. Mr. Ginnis announced Governor Walker and Anchorage Mayor Berkowitz had both proclaimed the day as Indigenous Peoples' Day. Mr. Ginnis recognized and appreciated the district's working relationship with the Fairbanks Native Association.

Quannah Potts, Randy Smith Middle School student, was before the board representing her family. Ms. Potts encouraged the board to adopt the Indigenous Peoples' Day resolution. She thought the resolution would be helpful to her and her fellow students to understand the importance of Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Tanya Kaquatosh, vice president of the Alaska Native Education (ANE) Parent Advisory Committee, thanked the board for the special meeting to consider the Indigenous Peoples' Day resolution. Ms. Kaquatosh thought the resolution would be very important to Native students and would help them validate their identity as Indigenous People and make them proud and confident of who they were. She thought the passage of the resolution would also show that Native people were survivors and not victims.

Geri Simon, product of school district and current parent of a West Valley student, shared her and her son's support for the Indigenous Peoples' Day resolution. They both appreciated the resolution and thought it allowed other people to learn about and celebrate their beautiful culture and tradition. Ms. Simon said the resolution meant a lot to people in the community who planned to continue to live here.

Public Testimony (continued)

Cathy Brooks, a four-year member of the Alaska Native Education (ANE) Parent Advisory Committee, supported the Indigenous Peoples' Day resolution. Ms. Brooks wanted to make the board aware there would have been more people at the meeting, including the ANE coordinator, but there were a couple of events going on, including an Elders and Youth event, where many students, staff, and parents were participating and taking care of students and helping them address many things and to put all the talk into action. Ms. Brooks asked the board to also stop talking about change and take action. By approving the resolution, the board would be endorsing the concept of putting all the talk into action.

Edward Alexander, certified teacher, spoke in support of the resolution. Mr. Alexander referenced Governor Walker and Anchorage Mayor Berkowitz's endorsement of Indigenous Peoples' Day. As an indication of how important the resolution was to Mr. Alexander, he shared that he and his wife had just had a baby and were, in fact on their way home from the hospital, but he wanted to stop to testify in support of the resolution before heading home.

Resolution 2016-05: Indigenous Peoples' Day [0:12:03]

The board, at its October 6, 2015 Regular Meeting, after hearing public testimony supporting a resolution for Indigenous Peoples' Day, called a special meeting to consider Resolution 2016-05: Indigenous Peoples' Day.

RICE MOVED, O'BRIEN SECONDED, TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2016-05:
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY.

Mr. Rice read the resolution for the public record.

BOARD QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Board members had several amendments.

Amendment #1 [0:12:03]

O'BRIEN MOVED, HULL SECONDED, TO AMEND THE RESOLUTION REGARDING WHEREAS #7, TO INSERT LANGUAGE SUGGESTED BY MR. GINNIS AND INSERT "MONETARY CONTRIBUTION" AFTER THE WORD "SKILLS."

There were no comments or questions from board members regarding the first amendment.

AMENDMENT #1 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.
5 AYES: RICE, O'BRIEN, HULL, GENTRY, LAMBERT

Amendment #2 [0:16:58]

O'BRIEN MOVED, GENTRY SECONDED, TO AMEND THE RESOLUTION REGARDING WHEREAS #8, TO STRIKE THE LANGUAGE, "HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO OPPOSE" AND INSERT THE WORD, "OPPOSES" AFTER THE WORD "PROMOTES," AND STRIKE THE LANGUAGE, "PERPETUATES HIGH RATES OF EXACERBATING" AND INSERT THE WORD, "EXACERBATES" AFTER THE WORD "WHICH."

There were no comments or questions from board members regarding the second amendment.

AMENDMENT #2 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.
5 AYES: RICE, O'BRIEN, HULL, GENTRY, LAMBERT

Resolution 2016-05: Indigenous Peoples' Day (continued)

Amendment #3 [0:18:43]

O'BRIEN MOVED, GENTRY SECONDED, TO AMEND THE RESOLUTION REGARDING WHEREAS #4, TO STRIKE THE LANGUAGE, "FIFTY TEACHERS" AND INSERT THE LANGUAGE, "100 EDUCATORS" AFTER THE WORD "OVER."

There were no comments or questions from board members regarding the third amendment.

AMENDMENT #3 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.
5 AYES: GENTRY, RICE, O'BRIEN, HULL, LAMBERT

Mrs. Lambert asked about data in Whereas #3 regarding 18 percent of students being of Indigenous Peoples' heritage. Dr. Gaborik stated the 2015 data wasn't available yet, but in 2014, the district total for Alaska Native students was 9.1 percent and the percentage of American Indian students was 1.2, for a total 10.3 percent.

Mr. O'Brien asked about the data for students selecting multiple groups. Dr. Gaborik stated she wasn't able to get the data at the current time.

Amendment #4 [0:20:43]

HULL MOVED, GENTRY SECONDED, TO AMEND THE RESOLUTION REGARDING WHEREAS #3, TO STRIKE THE LANGUAGE, "MORE THAN 18 PERCENT" AND INSERT THE LANGUAGE, "A SIGNIFICANT PORTION" AFTER THE WORD "COMPROMISE."

There were no comments or questions from board members regarding the fourth amendment.

AMENDMENT #4 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.
5 AYES: HULL, GENTRY, RICE, O'BRIEN, LAMBERT

Mrs. Lambert asked board members about Whereas #9 and the equity and/or achievement gap.

Mrs. Hull spoke to an equity and/or achievement gap. Over the time she has been on the board, the board and district had worked consistently to eliminate any equity gaps that might have existed. The wording of "closing the equity gap" made it appear there was an equity gap. She was aware achievement gaps existed and the district needed to work on those. Mrs. Hull was a little uncomfortable with the current wording as the district had worked very conscientiously about ensuring there wasn't an equity gap.

Mr. Rice shared that as a student in the district, he knew there was an equity gap and although the district had gotten better, he personally believed there was still an equity gap. Growing up, he never heard a person speak his own language and consequently lost a lot of his language. It was important to work on the equity gap to help students be successful.

Amendment #5 [0:25:43]

HULL MOVED, GENTRY SECONDED, TO AMEND THE RESOLUTION REGARDING WHEREAS #9, TO STRIKE THE LANGUAGE, "THE EQUITY GAP" AND INSERT THE LANGUAGE, "ANY ACHIEVEMENT AND EQUITY GAPS" AFTER THE WORDS "CLOSING OF" AND ADD AN APOSTROPHE AFTER THE "S" IN REGIONS TO READ "REGION'S."

Mr. O'Brien supported having both the achievement and equity gaps noted, but did not think the Whereas was specific to the Fairbanks school district and there was an equity gap in the country.

Resolution 2016-05: Indigenous Peoples' Day (continued)

Mrs. Hull agreed, as did Mrs. Lambert. Mrs. Hull was just concerned about the possible perception the district knew of an equity gap and was not addressing it.

AMENDMENT #5 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.
5 AYES: O'BRIEN, HULL, GENTRY, RICE, LAMBERT

Mrs. Hull supported the resolution, but questioned the last two Whereas paragraphs addressing history. She was also concerned about the possible perception that the resolution would replace Columbus Day. She was interested and honoring Indigenous People, but she was not interested in the school board taking a position at the present time to eliminate Columbus Day, which raised an entire other level of issues. Mrs. Hull wasn't trying to make a political statement about Columbus Day. She liked the resolve proclaiming the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples' Day, but she was not interested in having the resolve include the elimination of Columbus Day, which was a federal holiday. Mrs. Hull asked other board members for input. She would need additional information about the last two statements before she would be in favor of including them in the resolution. She liked being inclusive, not exclusive.

Mr. O'Brien thought the last two statements provided the history of how Indigenous Peoples' Day came to be. The resolution noted in the last Whereas was titled in support of changing Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day, the board's resolution was not titled that same way. Mr. O'Brien understood the district did not recognize Columbus Day as a holiday. He believed the two paragraphs in question provided an appropriate context as to why the resolution was before the board and the history of how it came to be. Mr. O'Brien thought the paragraphs provided an important timeline to the process and was important to the board's decision.

Mrs. Lambert stated both Governor Walker and Mayor Berkowitz's resolutions included the same two paragraphs.

Mr. Rice agreed with Mr. O'Brien. He did not think the resolution supported changing Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day, but helped to show the history of the resolution. He was concerned that removing the paragraphs would lose the history of the day and Native culture was all about traditions being handed down.

Mrs. Lambert asked about the word "honor" in the resolve. The Governor and Mayor's resolutions used the word "celebrate."

Mrs. Hull liked the word "honor" rather than "celebrate" as it put it at a higher level. She didn't want the day to just be a holiday, but rather to be an honoring.

Administration checked and most of the board's resolutions used the word "honor."

The board voted on the main motion, as amended. [0:36:50]

MAIN MOTION AS AMENDED CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.
5 AYES: RICE, O'BRIEN, HULL, GENTRY, LAMBERT

Board Comments/Discussion [0:37:40]

Board members thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting, their testimony, and their work to get the resolution before the board. They believed it was very fitting to pass the resolution on the actual day.

The meeting adjourned at 12:43 p.m.

Submitted by Sharon Tuttle, executive assistant to the Board of Education.