

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

Work Session

MINUTES

November 17, 2008

President Hajdukovich called the work session to order at 7:33 p.m. in the Board Room of the FNSBSD Administrative Center at 520 Fifth Avenue to discuss legislative priorities.

Present:

Leslie Hajdukovich, President
Wendy Dominique, Vice President
Sue Hull, Treasurer
Patrick Lee, Clerk
Sean Rice, Member
Howard Thies, Member

Absent:

Kristina Brophy, Member
Timothy Fitzgerald, Base Representative
Timothy A. Jones, Post Representative
Ken Sample, Student Representative

Staff Present:

Nancy Wagner, Superintendent
Wayne Gerke, Assistant Superintendent – Secondary
Roxa Hawkins, Assistant Superintendent - Elementary
Dave Ferree, Assistant Superintendent – Facilities Management
Mike Fisher, Chief Financial Officer
Jim Cobb, Executive Director of Technology & Information Systems
Bill Bailey, Director of Public Relations
Sharon Tuttle, Executive Assistant to the School Board

Others:

John Ringstad, Lobbyist

Legislative Priorities

Mrs. Hull, legislative committee chair person, led the Board's work session discussion on legislative issues and priorities. During the recent Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) conference, Board members, along with educators, administrators, and others throughout the state, had reviewed many issues and resolutions. Those discussions and resolutions, along with the district's management team recommendations, were the basis for the Board's discussion. Mrs. Hull organized those topics, along with a few additional ones, into categories of Funding, Capital, and Other.

Funding

- Boys & Girls Home Supplemental
- Increase 20% Block Grant (vocational, special education, bilingual)
- Energy Relief

Capital

- Major Projects List
- Discretionary Grants
- Instructional Technology

Other

- Charter Schools
- Early Childhood
- Guns
- Tuition Reimbursement for Teachers
- Compulsory Attendance Age

Boys & Girls Home Supplemental

Mike Fisher, chief financial officer, gave an overview of the program and funding concerns. Enrollment in the program was expected to grow after the official enrollment count and with many of the students in the program expected to be intensive needs, the financial repercussions to the district could be great. The Board discussed avenues for requesting the supplemental funding – whether from the commissioner’s budget or the legislature.

Increase 20% Block Grant (vocational, special education, bilingual)

AASB suggested increasing the grant to 25% pending determination by the Education Committee of the true amount necessary to adequately fund the services. Much of the block grant funding was used for special education. In previous discussions with a couple of legislators, Mrs. Hull said they recognized the funding was not sufficient and they were not unfavorable to increasing the block grant. The Board discussed dropout prevention and how vocational education was a way of combating the problem.

Energy Relief

Energy costs were a problem throughout the state, but rural districts would be impacted the most; to the extent some districts may not be able to keep schools open. It was thought it would be unlikely that any energy relief would be for rural areas only.

Major Projects List

Dave Ferree, assistant superintendent of facilities management, spoke about the district’s capital project list. The scoring of the projects had been completed and he had been surprised by the results and wasn’t certain what was going on with the process. Fairbanks had done the best of the urban districts, with the highest ranking project at twenty-five. The best Anchorage did was sixty-five. Usually, urban districts such as Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai, Mat-Su, and Juneau had projects in the top ten to fifteen. Mr. Ferree stated he was working on an appeal to the scoring and would get back to the Board when he had more information.

Mr. Rice arrived at 7:47 p.m.

Discretionary Grants

The district was working on putting together a list of possible small legislative discretionary grant purchases.

Instructional Technology

The Board discussed technology issues including bandwidth, wireless, and other infrastructure issues. Districtwide technology upgrades were fifth on the district’s capital projects list for 2010, at a cost of almost \$9 million. It was suggested that the upgrades be broken down into smaller segments or stages, which might be easier to fund.

Charter Schools

The Board discussed options for the enrollment cutoff numbers in regards to funding for charter schools, including a sliding scale, lowering the enrollment number for funding, and funding as a regular school. It was noted some of the other urban districts had charter schools with low enrollments, similar to the situation at Effie Kokrine Charter School.

Early Childhood

The focus of early childhood was expanding from 3-4 year olds to 0 and up; which was gaining momentum. Everyone agreed on the benefits of early learning for children, whether it is at home with parents, in a preschool setting, or other avenue. The Board discussed whether the issue would be a matter for school boards or more a state issue.

Guns

The district had a no tolerance policy regarding guns on school grounds. Federal law prohibited guns on school property, but the infraction was only a misdemeanor. There was discussion of making the infraction a felony and the Board discussed whether to support the change.

Tuition Reimbursement for Teachers

The Board discussed teacher recruitment including tuition reimbursement and the need for recruiting incentives. There were federal programs that could offset education costs for students in the field of teaching.

Compulsory Attendance Age

Current state law required compulsory school attendance from ages 7-16. The AASB supported changing the mandatory age for school attendance from 6 to the earlier of 18 years old or high school graduation. The Board discussed how changing the mandatory age for school attendance might help with dropout prevention.

Other issues mentioned and discussed included the PERS/TRS Retirement Program, additional funding and resources for drug and alcohol awareness, dropout prevention, graduation success, GO bonds, and the recommendations from the Joint Legislative Education Funding Task Force.

After their discussions, although all the issues were legitimate concerns, the Board determined their legislative priorities to be:

- Technology
- Dropout Prevention/Graduation Success
- Vocational Education
- GO Bond
- Boys and Girls Home (if an issue)

Mrs. Hull stated the legislative committee would wordsmith the priorities for the Interior Delegation Briefing scheduled for December 4, 2008.

Mr. Ringstad thought it would be beneficial for the Board to determine how they wanted to move forward with their legislative priorities – whether to take the lead in an issue or support it as needed. Mrs. Hajdukovich noted the importance of the Interior Delegation members knowing the Board's stance on certain issues.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Submitted by Sharon Tuttle, executive assistant to the Board.