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STEILACOOM Historical School District No. 1

Est. 1854

Special Session of the Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
SHSD District Office Professional Development Center · 511 Chambers Street · Steilacoom, WA
February 21, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Scott called the meeting to order at 7:00 a.m.
Chair Scott led the Pledge of Allegiance.
Directors Hogan, McDonald, Rohrer, Scott, and Tinsley all present.
Director McDonald made a motion to approve the agenda, Director Hogan seconded the motion, and the motion passed (5/0).

II. COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Dick Muri, Mayor of Steilacoom, shared about a past school district bond that failed in 1997. After the bond did not pass, they identified hundreds of people who were in support of the bond, but had not voted. They went out person by person to encourage people to vote. The bond vote went from 57% to 61%. The number of "no" votes did not change in the re-vote, but the additional "yes" votes caused the bond to pass. They went to the high school and registered new voters and encouraged them to vote, as well as reached out to military spouses, etc. He shared his encouragement for the district to go for it again and make it happen.

III. APPROVAL OF BOND RESOLUTION 903-02-21-23

Executive Director Shawn Lewis shared Resolution 903-02-21-23, which authorizes a proposition for the issuance of general obligation bonds in the amount of $116 million to be placed on the April 25, 2023, ballot. The funds from the bonds would be used to refinance land and construct a new elementary school, a high school stadium, performing arts center, career and technical education space, and high school and middle school classrooms; and make safety, security, and accessibility improvements district-wide and capital improvements to the district's elementary schools. Director Hogan made a motion to approve Resolution 903-02-21-23, Director Rohrer seconded the motion.

Mr. Lewis shared that this bond proposal for the Board's consideration mirrors the previous proposal approved in October of 2022. The resolution is targeted to the April 2023 deadline, which would require documentation to the county by the end of this week.

Mr. Lewis shared regarding input from many people - both for the bond to be placed on the ballot in April, as well as those who prefer to wait, largely because of the EMS measure also on the April ballot in DuPont. The Bond Committee wants to encourage the Board to put the bond on the ballot again in April because of how close the vote was. Piper Sandler consultants did not feel they were able to give counsel one way or the other as to the timing.

Superintendent Weight shared she had received similar communication - both for running in April and for waiting for later vote. Cost of the district to run in April would be $35,000. If the district runs in November, we are already paying for election costs because it is a required School Board election, so there would not be an additional fee.

Director McDonald mentioned that if we wait until November, we would have to completely rework the bond. Chair Scott also shared that if we wait until November, the bond would be at the very end of the ballot and may get missed in the voting.

Chair Scott shared communication he received from Beth Elliott, and his response regarding gaining additional "yes" votes. He shared Bond Committee members are willing to do further work to reach out to the community to gain more votes. The traffic concerns around the new elementary school seemed to be one of the only concerns in DuPont, so the Bond Committee would need to do a better job communicating what the district has planned that would not cause traffic issues, including start and end times of school not being during high traffic times.

Director Tinsley shared that she had conversations with many people regarding the financial situation, who didn't understand the replacement factor of the expiring bond. She also had people tying it to the levy, who didn't understand the difference. She asked if we had data on yes/no votes for Steilacoom vs. DuPont. Mr. Lewis shared we do not yet have that data for the bond but the Bond Committee is scheduled to receive that communication today.

Director McDonald also mentioned budget concerns, and she is hoping that transparency from the district regarding budgeting will be helpful.

Director Hogan shared regarding community feedback from Anderson Island families, as well as communication regarding budgeting and staffing. Chair Scott expressed that if Anderson Island families wanting 4th and 5th grades back on the island, then the bond needs to pass in order for that to happen. The district moved those grades to the mainland because that is what Anderson Island families requested at that time.

Mr. Lewis discussed why people voted no. He encouraged the thinking to shift from changing no votes, to encouraging people who did not vote, but are in support of the bond, to vote yes. Director Tinsley requested talking points and positive messages from the district regarding budgeting concerns that are arising. Superintendent Weight shared that an all-staff meeting is scheduled for Thursday to address this topic.

Director Rohrer shared that 58.8% yes vote is so close, and encouraged continued messaging and finding those yes votes who did not vote. Her encouragement was not to change anything in the bond, but to remind everyone that the students are the bottom line in this discussion, and to find the yes votes.

Mr. Lewis shared two concerns: when there are multiple tax issues on a ballot, it may drive more no votes. If voters are a "no" vote for EMS, they may also now vote "no" for a school bond. The second issue is that some voters feel they need to choose between two competing measures, and may only be willing to vote for one. Chair Scott shared that the bond expires, so

community members aren't paying additional money. Director McDonald asked if there was a way to communicate the bond differently in the voter pamphlet. Mr. Lewis shared that the district cannot change that. The ballot measure is written by legal counsel and the prosecuting attorney's office. The prosecuting attorney's office determines what can go on the ballot. The For Statement by the committee can be changed. Mr. Lewis encouraged the Board to reach out to the Bond Committee chairs for input.

Director Rohrer asked about the impact of postponing the bond. Superintendent Weight shared that to hold off would basically require a restart, including higher costs because of inflation. Chair Scott shared the only downside of running the bond again in April is the $35,000 cost. The alternative is to wait until next February, which would increase the costs of everything. Director Rohrer asked if the bond was placed on the ballot in April, would everyone be willing to do the work to ensure the bond does pass this time. Dr. Weight shared the district can do community presentations again, but shared the power to obtain yes votes really comes from the Bond Committee. The district cannot tell community members how to vote - more outreach from the Bond Committee is going to be the biggest influencer. Mr. Lewis shared the challenge of the district is the significant budget work that needs to be done at this time. It will be in the best interest if the district focuses on budget planning, and the Bond Committee focuses on the bond vote. Chair Scott shared he will create videos that are personable in the presentation to share the facts of the bond with the community, and encouraged others to do the same. Dr. Weight encouraged personalized phone calls, emails, etc. to encourage people who did not vote, to vote. Director Tinsley shared she did not see much about the bond on social media, and encouraged infographs and photos/fast information/graphics to be shared. Director Hogan shared about text messaging prior to the ballots being dropped. Chair Scott shared these are topics for the Bond Committee to address. Director Hogan also suggested getting the students involved in the process.

Director Tinsley inquired about the $35,000 cost. Mr. Lewis shared if the bond passes, we will pay off the existing loan on the elementary school property. If the bond passes, the interest and loan will be paid by the bond, and will save the district $100,000. He shared if the Board believes the bond will pass, it makes sense to consider the resolution. If the Board does not believe the bond can pass, they should not approve the resolution. Chair Scott shared they need to find the yes votes. Director Rohrer shared again that the margin is so close, and that the number that is needed to turn the election is small, and can be found to secure a successful passage.

The motion passed (5/0).

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Director McDonald made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 a.m., Director Tinsley seconded the motion, and the motion passed (5/0).

(Chair)

K Wright
(Secretary/Superintendent)

Regularly scheduled meetings of the Board of Directors of the Steilacoom Historical School District No. 1 are digitally recorded.