MINUTES
Wednesday, January 26, 2022

School Improvement Plan – 5:00 p.m.
Regular Board Meeting – 6:00 p.m.

The regular board meeting was held in the Cheney High School auditorium as well as electronically via Zoom Webinar and was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by President Swenson.

ROLL CALL AND WELCOMING OF GUESTS

In attendance: Directors, Nicol, Zorrozaa, Browne, Scott and Swenson
Also present: Superintendent Rob Roettger,
Assistant Superintendent Tom Arlt, and
Finance Director Jamie Weingart

The pledge of allegiance was led by Director Zorrozaa.

President Swenson expressed the Board’s appreciation to those in attendance.

CORRESPONDENCE AND ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Superintendent Roettger shared that January is School Board Appreciation Month and shared Governor Inslee’s Proclamation. The Cheney School Board of Directors are appreciated for their service.

PACE Character Trait of the Month – Fairness: treating people and ideas with justice and impartiality.

PARTICIPATION BY PUBLIC

Mr. Ivan Khala requested to address the school board in person. He came to inquire what happened with the $9 million of ESSER funding the district received. He claimed that in order to collect the money we had to sell out our students. He shared that he has spent many hours reading up on the mask mandate and while he couldn’t find much research from the State of Washington or anywhere in the United States, he found information from a study done in Germany on 25,000 students. The results showed that children had physical, physiological and behavioral issues from wearing masks. About 53% of children claimed an increase in headaches and 50% of children had a harder time concentrating. There was also information on children experiencing shortness of breath, sleeping dis-
orders, and other issues. Mr. Khala then shared that since School Board Directors are voted in by the people, the people should have a say in mask wearing. He would like the school district to poll parents and kids to see what they want. Mr. Khala shared that since we are not following the constitution in other areas we shouldn’t have to follow the mask guidance. He wondered why they don’t have the right to decide for themselves whether they wear a mask when other people have rights such as transgender boys using a girls bathroom. He also shared that at a restaurant you can take your mask off as soon as you sit down at your table. Mr. Khala then inquired why students at Westwood Middle School do not have a table to eat their lunch at.

Lidia P. shared the following comments via email to be read aloud to the Board:
Thank you for taking my comments. Unfortunately, I could not be there in person today but would like to address the school board. At the beginning of the year I had come to a school board meeting and expressed my concerns over enrolling my child in Cheney School District. My concern was not with COVID but rather the mask mandates that Cheney School District had in place. I have emailed Rob the superintendent this week expressing my concerns. I did receive an email response back which I appreciate. I did want to make sure that this issue keeps being addressed until we have a solution. We have seen the Omicron variant all around the Spokane area and I do believe that we are about to peek in cases if not already have peaked. I have been trying to find any sort of study or experiment done on the effectiveness of masks and I have yet to find a single one. I believe that if these mask mandates are going to continue, the parents need to see a study to show that wearing masks actually makes a difference. It is not our responsibility as parents to prove why we shouldn’t be mandating masks. It’s the responsibility of the school board and the state to show us WHY these mask mandates are in place. I know I’m beating a dead horse but I do want this conversation to be at the frontline. My second concern, and I know this is coming if it’s not already going to be a topic of conversation at the school board meeting today, I do not and will not consent to my child having a COVID-19 vaccine. I believe it is completely irresponsible of our government and school boards to even be having this conversation since we have no long term studies and how this will affect our children in the future. In the short time that we have been able to look at side effects it is already alarming the possibilities of our children being exposed to heart conditions, neurological issues and potentially reproductive issues. It’s no secret that especially in boys after vaccination their chances of developing myocarditis and pericarditis is much higher. Our children should not be experiments. We have been very happy so far with our son’s teacher and the staff that we have met at his elementary school. I believe that a smaller school district like Cheney School District will put their fear aside and do what’s best for our children and that is take the masks off their little precious faces and under no circumstances even consider a COVID-19 vaccination requirement.

SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES APPROVAL

Director Nicol moved that the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of December 15, 2021, and Work Sessions of January 3 and 12, 2022 be approved as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Zorroza and passed unanimously.
GENERAL CONSENT

Under the general consent agenda, the following items were approved on a motion by Director Browne, seconded by Director Scott, and passed unanimously.

A. Personnel - Resolution No. 13-21-22, covering the Personnel Status Report for the month of January 2022, including Leaves and Resignations, and Out-of-Endorsements

B. Auditing of Bills and Signing of Vouchers

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C. Instructional Materials

REPORTS

A. Enrollment and Financial Report

Finance Director Jamie Weingart first shared information on the January student full-time enrollment (FTE) numbers. As of January 3rd, the district had an FTE of 5,000. This number indicates a growth of 255 FTE from January of 2021.

Ms. Weingart then shared district fund balance projections reporting that there is currently a dip in the fund balance. Grant reimbursements are running one month behind. We estimate seeing a peak in April when collections are made.

Next, the finance director shared information on substitutes. The district is funded for four (4) sick days per staff member in the prototypical school model while each staff member is allocated twelve (12) sick days and three (3) personal days per year. Since the prototypical school model does not fund a large number of existing staff, we often are paying double to support the absence of a staff member and provide a substitute. Another challenge is that our current substitute pay is
$130.00 per day for certificated subs and $15.00 per hour or more for classified substitutes. President Swenson asked how the district funds the difference and Ms. Weingart responded that the difference comes from the general fund which is part of the reason many districts are requesting that the prototypical school model is updated. Also, the district will be looking at increasing our substitute pay rates to be more competitive in the county as some school districts have increased their sub pay rate again. Director Browne asked if the hours reported for substitutes has been increased this year. Ms. Weingart responded that there have been many different reasons for staff absences and we have seen an increase in staff absence, sickness, childcare, doctors’ appointments, etc.

Lastly, Ms. Weingart shared information on redistricting. A population census took place in 2020 which requires school districts to look at whether the Board of Director districts are still balanced in population. NEWESD 101 contracted the work out to Sammamish Data Systems to see if any action was needed. It was determined that Cheney Public Schools is not balanced between director districts. The ideal population distribution would be 8,633 individuals in each district. District four (4) and five (5) are very close to that balance while districts one (1), two (2) and three (3) are less than ideal with district one (1) being the furthest from balanced. Sammamish Data Systems is recommending that we move on to stage two of the process. Ms. Weingart shared that she would forward the full report to each board member and bring this topic back to the next meeting for consideration.

B. Legislative Report

Director Nicol shared an update on the following:

HB 1732 - delaying the implementation of the long-term care services program by eighteen (18) months.

HB 1664 - concerning prototypical school formulas for physical, social, and emotional support in schools, has been referred to Appropriations.

HB 1699 – permitting individuals retired from the public education system additional opportunities to work for a school district for up to 1,040 hours per school year while in receipt of pension benefits until July 1, 2025 to assist with the substitute shortage, was in the House Committee on Appropriations.

HB 1226 – concerning school district bond elections, had a public hearing in the House Committee on Education.

C. Superintendent Report

Superintendent Rob Roettger reminded everyone to stay centered in the mission statement and shared the four PLC questions. He shared that he had attended collaboration time at Snowdon and Cheney Middle School the previous week. When at Snowdon he saw data on assessments and heard discussions related to next steps and interventions. Also, he saw the 6th grade ELA team at CMS doing focused PLC work. Data is part of the conversation every single time. School Directors were invited to attend collaboration time if available.
Ms. Weingart shared that the district would be engaging staff and the community in a ThoughtExchange on the staggered school schedule starting the following week. The thoughts and input received will help to determine if an adjustment to the current schedule is needed in the upcoming years.

Assistant Superintendent Tom Arlt shared that there have been significant steps taken in January in regards to guidance changes from the Department of Health for K-12 that allows the district, as long as students, families, and staff are willing to test to stay or test to return, to bring staff and students back to school quicker or allow them to stay in school under test to stay protocols. COVID positive staff or students that are recovering may test to return on day 6. The district is currently consuming approximately 2500 rapid tests per week to keep students and staff safe and in school and to keep athletics running.

Mr. Arlt also shared the plans and efforts in place to help support buildings with daily staffing challenges. The entire district office staff have been assigned to connect with a specific building principal or department each morning and each afternoon to help address and problem solve around staffing needs for that day and the following day. The proactive approach has assisted in keeping our schools open and departments running. The central office staff have stepped in at transportation, as principals, helped with COVID testing, recess duty, food prep, or wherever needed at any time. Keeping schools open has truly been a district wide collaborative effort. Director Zorroza shared that if the district has had any classroom closures. Mr. Arlt replied that there has been one closure for a classroom where some students are unable to wear masks; also, one bus closure for lack of a driver.

Superintendent Roettger shared that the Board of Health put out a survey to families in Washington State in regards to mandating a COVID-19 vaccine for children in order to attend school. He shared that the district would like to use this information along with a survey of our own to obtain input that can then be shared with the state. He shared a draft questionnaire for families of Cheney Public Schools. The responses collected would be district specific and would be sent to the Board of Health to be considered in addition to the responses received in their state-wide survey. Director Scott mentioned this could be an outstanding opportunity for Cheney parents to have a voice through the school board body and inquired about a section for parent comments. Director Zorroza mentioned that he appreciated the more direct language the district used in the proposed survey as opposed to some of the language in the states survey. Director Scott shared that, if possible, he would like the district survey sent to families prior to the close of the Board of Health survey.

Superintendent Roettger recognized T & L Assistant Director Kim Lefler for her outstanding service to the district. She is an excellent example of “All Means All.” The last 18 - 20 months have required teachers to cover other classrooms during their prep time; building administrators to teach classes; central office staff to fill in for principals; secretaries to help serve food and support COVID testing.
NEW BUSINESS

A. Consideration of Resolution No. 14-21-22, Repayment of Interfund Loan

Finance Director Jamie Weingart shared that this resolution is in order to repay the loan that was taken out in December.

Director Nicol made a motion to approve Resolution No. 14-21-22 as presented. Director Zorroza seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

B. First reading to consider revisions to School Board Policy No. 1400, Meeting Conduct, Order of Business and Quorum

Assistant Superintendent Tom Arlt shared that this policy sets the agenda for board meetings and the required order of each agenda item. The suggested revisions would no longer lock the public comment time to just the beginning of the meetings and would allow the agenda to be adjusted to hold the public comment period closer to agenda items that comments may pertain to. A sample agenda was shown.

No action was taken on this first reading.

C. First reading to consider revisions to School Board Policy No. 3510, Associated Student Bodies

Assistant Superintendent Tom Arlt shared this policy has not been updated since 1993. Proposed changes include minor formatting and vocabulary revisions mostly around fundraising and appointment of advisors. New language was introduced in regards to how fundraising monies and donations for scholarships, student exchanges and charities are designated and must be used for their intended and advertised purposes. Lastly, language that allows the district to waive fees for eligible students, student family members, or other non-students aged 65 or older that qualify as low-income.

No action was taken on this first reading.

ITEMS FROM THE BOARD

Director Browne thanked Superintendent Roettger, the central office staff, and all other staff for going above and beyond to keep schools open and children in school. As a parent he is very thankful.

President Swenson expressed his thanks as well. He also appreciated the well put together and informative School Improvement Plan from the Betz team prior to the Board meeting.
ITEMS FROM THE STUDENT ADVISORS

Sophia Watkins shared that CHS was hosting regional solo ensembles during the upcoming weekend. CHS students are able to volunteer in between their solos to help the event move along smoothly. There are fourteen (14) CHS choir students that earned a spot at State which is being held in Yakima. She also shared that the Chocolate fundraiser is taking place.

Jenae Potter shared a middle school and high school basketball report. The spirit game is being held the following week with a Welcome to the Jungle theme. Students are currently in finals with the end of the semester on that Friday. The new semester will bring all new classes. Lastly, the National Honor Society will be organizing a clothing drive.

Jackson Redder shared that the spirit game had been rescheduled for Wednesday, February 2nd at EWU's Reese Court. Their community service project where they had adopted a room at the Ronald McDonald House has raised $2,000 of the $5,000 so far. There is a link on the CHS website for anyone wanting to donate. There are eleven (11) DECA finalists for state conference. The FBLA Winter Conference is on February 3rd. Mr. Redder then shared the sports beat: the boys swim meet went well the prior Saturday and they would be competing next at EWU with no spectators the upcoming weekend. District and State competitions are coming up soon. The gymnastics team would be competing at Mead the following day at 6:00 p.m. Lastly, Mr. Brad Barsness, a huge community supporter, passed away from a heart attack the previous day. Jackson recognized Mr. Barsness for his generosity, kindness, and involvement and asked the community to keep the Barsness family in their thoughts and prayers.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Director Nicol to move into an executive session to last approximately thirty (30) minutes, preceded by a twenty (20) minute recess, with no action anticipated at its conclusion, for the purpose of evaluating a public employee. Director Browne seconded the motion and it was approved. The executive session began at 7:45 p.m.

RECONVENE

At 8:15 p.m. Director Nicol made a motion to reconvene the regular Board meeting. Director Browne seconded the motion. The regular meeting reconvened.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Director Browne and seconded by Director Nicol to adjourn the school board meeting at 8:16 p.m. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.
School Board Meeting
January 26, 2022
Page Eight

Mitch Swenson, Board President

Robert W. Roettger, Board Secretary/Supt.