

Eau Claire School Board Agenda Monday, November 18, 2019

Generated by Meta Miske

Members present

Lori Bica, Aaron Harder, Laurie Klinkhammer, Eric D Torres, Tim Nordin

Members absent

Charles Vue

1. REGULAR MEETING - 5:30 p.m.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance led by Meadowview Elementary students Alivia J and Matthew J, President Eric Torres called the meeting to order at 5:32pm. Board Secretary Meta Miske confirmed that the meeting had been properly noticed and was in compliance with the Open Meeting Law.

2. PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public signed up for public comment.

3. BOARD/ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

3.1 Superintendent's Report

Dr. Hardebeck reviewed the upcoming calendar of events for the School Board. She recognized five students from Memorial High School who were selected for the Macy's Great American March Band and will march in the 93rd Annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Dr. Hardebeck acknowledged American Education Week and gave a recap of the November Family Advisory Council meeting.

3.2 Board President's Report

President Torres said the Board is making progress in the Superintendent Search and have a few meetings left to gather input. Last week he attended the International Association for Intercultural Education conference in Amsterdam. Dr. Torres said the event was held at a public school while in session and students helped as organizers and participated in sessions of the conference.

4. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Morgan Priem from Memorial gave an update on sports, the MHS theatre program, Real Life Academy, a project to connect students with citizens who experienced the 1950's, the Veterans Day program, and a culinary arts event resulting in a student-created recipe being featured at ZA51 during the month of December as a fundraiser.

Johnny Xiong from North High School was absent.

5. OTHER REPORTS

5.1 School Board Committee Reports

Learning Environments and Partnerships Committee met last Tuesday. They are waiting on new membership and discussed how to educate staff on the LEAP policy and rule. They will meet again in January.

Budget Development Committee met and will be discussed during the work session portion of the meeting.

Demographic Trends & Facility Planning Committee revisited the idea of addressing southside expansion and is awaiting direction from the Board.

Policy & Governance met that morning and is working through drafting changes to policies regarding Board committees and charter schools. They hope to have drafts for the Board at upcoming meetings.

5.2 Legislative Update

No update to share.

6. CONSENT RESOLUTION AGENDA

Motion by Laurie Klinkhammer, second by Aaron Harder, to approve the following Consent Resolution items:

- Minutes of November 4, 2019
- Minutes of Closed Session - November 4, 2019
- Financial Report - October 2019
- Gifts in the amount of \$12,476.16 for the period of October 1, 2019 through October 31, 2019
- Payment of all bills in the amount of \$5,444,792.46 and net payroll in the amount of \$3,722,758.28 for the period of October 1, 2019 through October 31, 2019.
- Human Resources – Employment Report

Final Resolution: Motion carried

Yes: Lori Bica, Aaron Harder, Laurie Klinkhammer, Eric D Torres, Tim Nordin

7. ADJOURN TO WORK SESSION

8. WORK SESSION

President Torres shared that topics A, B, and C of the Work Session Agenda are intertwined and the discussion may move fluidly between those topics.

8.1 A. Budget

Commissioner Harder reviewed the discussion from Budget Development Committee (BDC). He presented his ideas on budget actions the Board might

take including possible referendum, spending cuts, staff restructure, new programs to improve open enrollment in/out ratios, and lobbying Madison for more money. He discussed his view of BDC's work and its role in relation to the School Board.

Commissioner Harder noted a few key issues that BDC has been looking at this year which include OPEB, Glitch Group, Budget Planning, Referendum, and others. OPEB leads to the question of how much is an appropriate amount of financial burden to "shift" from the District budget to staff who are currently working under the pre-2008 OPEB plan. He would like the District to do a macro study of key budget questions in the coming year to provide a better context. He said the 2008/2009 Glitch Group needs a decision and shared an idea of how the Board might break down the issue and approach a solution in a staggered manner.

Commissioner Harder said budget planning is an opportunity to "show our work" to the community, staff, and ourselves. His goal for the coming year is for all Board members to feel comfortable with the budget and how the 2019-20 surplus was achieved. He would like to have a 5- or 10-year budget look back including budgeted, actuals, and breakdowns of a few key areas. He shared a calendar of how that work might be achieved.

Commissioner Harder said the question with a referendum is, "will we or won't we, and if so, when?" Dr. Hardebeck will lead a conversation on a possible referendum timeline later in the meeting. He asked if the Board is satisfied with his framing of the suggestions and if not, how can he adjust?

President Torres welcomed discussion.

Commissioner Klinkhammer asked if a Staff Budget Committee is in place now. Commissioner Harder said no, just the OPEB Ad Hoc Committee which BDC found helpful and would like to extend to include the budget. Commissioner Klinkhammer said there are staff whose job it is to work on the budget and asked if this is an extension to bring in teachers, or how is a Staff Budget Committee different than the staff whose job it is to work on the budget? Commissioner Harder said to work under the assumption that the Board and the Administration Building staff can develop what the budget should look like and what items can be adjusted. He sees benefit to gathering other staff input on budget items, especially from staff most impacted by potential budget changes. Commissioner Klinkhammer clarified that a Staff Budget Committee would target specific questions and not the overall budget. Commissioner Harder confirmed that was accurate; BDC would gather input from staff on key items from the Board's list of priorities.

President Torres asked if the OPEB Ad Hoc Committee could be the group to review staff restructuring. He asked if the Board is comfortable allowing BDC to move forward with gathering staff opinions. He asked who would identify the staff for committees.

Commissioner Bica said gathering staff input could fit into Coherent Governance by connecting to the "owners of the business" through staff. She believes staff committees are the right approach.

President Torres asked again how to identify staff for such a committee and asked if it is a BDC responsibility? Commissioner Harder said BDC can select a staff committee and would start with the members of the OPEB Ad Hoc Committee and expand to fill gaps utilizing an application process.

Commissioner Harder reiterated that a budget lookback would be very helpful for the groundwork for future budget planning. President Torres said BDC must work with Ms. Johnson to gather the data and asked if it's difficult to create the lookback. Ms. Johnson said the 5-year is doable; a 10-year would not be helpful because the reporting mechanism changed and comparisons would not be helpful. President Torres asked for a timeline. Mrs. Johnson said she would need to know what Commissioner Harder is looking for before she could estimate how long it would take to get the information together. Commissioner Harder said he will have a timeline after the next BDC meeting.

Commissioner Bica said the vision is to have a macro look and not a micro look. It's about looking toward a day when the Board isn't deciding about iPads and stuck in the weeds. Commissioner Harder agreed that is his vision for the Board to review the budget at a macro level.

8.2 B. Fund Balance Policy

Ms. Johnson said the Board received a packet about the fund balance policy. Policy & Governance Committee (P&G) and BDC each discussed the Fund Balance policy and if changes should be made to the Fund Balance policy. The question is if there should be a threshold percentage the fund balance cannot go below, and if the District falls below what does that look like, or should the policy say the District must present a balanced budget? If there's a threshold set, there should be a process to implement should the threshold be crossed.

President Torres asked if the Board wants to set a threshold.

Commissioner Harder said he believes the fund balance problem drives the

budget conversation. President Torres asked Commissioner Harder if he favors setting a threshold. Commissioner Harder said he likes it but understands the concerns. President Torres asked if Commissioner Harder would favor a fixed number or a bracket. Commissioner Harder said a bracket would be preferable.

Commissioner Klinkhammer said she appreciates the thought of setting a threshold and how it answers questions but said if there's no consequence, there's no point because it locks the District in and prevents adaptation. There is always a target bracket even if it's not written in the policy. The auditors make recommendations which the District works toward.

President Torres said Ms. Johnson told the Board many times what number they do not want to reach, which is a practice even if it's not a policy. He asked if the Board members prefer to continue with practice as is? Commissioners Nordin, Bica, Harder and Klinkhammer all said yes.

President Torres said the Board did not decide if or how to earmark the proceedings from the sale of Little Red. He asked if the Board would like to discuss that tonight. In the context of the sale, Little Red was a good opportunity to turn into cash the value of a property with the idea that the cash could be applied to growth. He asked the Board if they would like to earmark the funds for growth, physical growth, or growth in certain areas?

Commissioner Nordin asked if the money is still available. He thought it was part of what gave us a surplus. Ms. Johnson said it is part of the surplus from the 2019-20 year. It's in the budget as revenue but at any time the Board could restrict the funds using a Board motion.

Commissioner Bica would not prefer to earmark so as to avoid adding more restrictions. She said growth can take many forms and would like to leave it open to those in the future to decide what to do with it.

Commissioner Nordin asked what the projected surplus is. Ms. Johnson said \$110,000. Commissioner Nordin asked if the Board designates the Little Red proceeds, does that put the District in the red? Ms. Johnson said the bottom line is the same, but the fund balance may look different based on the category the Board puts the proceeds from the sale in.

President Torres asked if having those funds designated or available would put the District in a better position. Ms. Johnson said in the big picture it's the same, the difference is the classification. The Board can decide if the funds should be designated for future growth or placed in the general fund.

President Torres said having funds designated for southside growth may help

a request to the community for funding because the District could say it has already set aside funds toward the project. Commissioner Nordin said the \$600,000 from Little Red will help, but to address southside capacity is estimated at \$20M, plus deferred maintenance at Roosevelt and South. He was not sure \$600,000 would be a big selling point and doesn't think the Board needs to restrict itself.

8.3 C. Long Range Planning

President Torres asked the Board to think about ECASD in the next 10 years. Technology is unknown, and the Board must imagine what the life of a school will be. He asked the Board to consider how ECASD will respond to a new unknown context, what kind of educational services will be needed for a new situation, what kind of infrastructure will be needed, and how will the Board make it happen? He thinks the conversation will need to involve as many members of the community as possible when talking about the future of education. Within the conversation, one piece is the referendum, which is not the project, but is the instrument to execute the project.

Commissioner Harder said not only will educational technology change, but technology will change society and workplaces in ways that will be hard to predict but very consequential as AI replaces simple tasks. It will change what it means to master a subject. He has a long-standing concern about engagement opportunities ECASD provides for students and asks if teachers are making them as optimal as they can be. He asked if ECASD has reached the peak or is doing enough to reach the peak of student engagement. He is worried that the important pursuit of higher achievement and closing achievement gaps may narrow students into those topics instead of broadening out.

Commissioner Bica said that as she's conducted listening sessions, a recurring theme is the identity of the District and asking "who are we?" The Board must create a vision and appreciate that the referendum is one instrument to making a vision happen.

President Torres said he has ideas about the questions of who we are. He said the Board must re-envision the work of the LEAP committee and worry about the big picture and the world beyond us, not about purchasing a few iPads. He was impressed with the maturity of the students participating in the conference in Amsterdam. While there, he learned about the school shooting in California. It reminded him that we must continue pressing for common sense legislation in controlling access to guns. He said in Amsterdam there was no secure entrance, no guards, no cameras, and it was very different than our modern life here. He said the District must continue working with strategic alliances such as CVTC and UWEC and think

about education as a whole rather than segments. When thinking about the larger context of Wisconsin and the Midwest. He questioned if Common Core curriculum enough of a challenge to students, or can the District look at other scenarios or projects such as the International Baccalaureate program. He wondered the future of 4K Education and if the Board wants to initiate a full-day program before required to do so. He said closing the achievement gap is not a choice, it must be done. He asked how the District will move toward an intellectual growth model rather than just measuring academic achievement? He said these are the items he has thought about in terms of educational services the District could be offering in 10 years. He asked Dr. Hardebeck to talk about possible timelines for Referendum.

Dr. Hardebeck said there's been a lot of discussion about a referendum. There's a possibility one could be mounted in the 350 days before the next general election. There have been many discussions about the needs of Roosevelt and South. Previous School Boards gave assurances to those communities that as soon as the debt dropped off, the District would look at addressing those needs. The District has done a great deal of preliminary work through Demo and Trends and Buildings and Grounds. There is however a need to review cost estimates as it's been about four years since the initial estimates were completed. She said a Fall 2020 Referendum might be in the range \$25-30M focused only on the longstanding needs of Roosevelt and South.

A second timeline was shared with an April 2021 election which could include a broader scope based on the discussions this evening. A referendum like this would include additional listening sessions in the community to learn about other needs. Construction work wouldn't begin until Summer 2022, whereas the shorter timeline may allow the construction to begin 2021.

The third timeline is for the Fall 2021 election which is not a general election and would result in additional fees. Construction may begin Summer 2022.

Commissioner Klinkhammer confirmed that the shortest timeline would only address South and Roosevelt because there isn't time to include other issues including capacity at southside elementary schools. Dr. Hardebeck said that was accurate. Having a focused referendum for improvements to Roosevelt and South would not solve the capacity problem for the southern elementary schools. It would allow time to plan another referendum, look at the biennial budget, technology needs etc. Commissioner Klinkhammer said the downside is going to referendum twice in 2-3 years and questioned if one big referendum harder to sell than two smaller referendums.

Commissioner Harder asked if the District has flexibility in the length of the

debt. Ms. Johnson said yes, the District would be strategic when setting up payments and there are experts who can help plan to keep a consistent tax levy and be able to cover immediate needs. They discussed timing of one or two referendums to keep the tax levy flat and avoid a debt drop off.

Commissioner Nordin was unsure how taxpayers would feel about two referendums in a close time period versus the 5-year gap since the 2016 referendum. He expressed the urgency of southside capacity issues and said two separate referendums would delay a solution to that problem. He would like to see one referendum to address the big needs in Spring 2021. He asked the Board to give the Demographic Trends & Facility Planning Committee approval to begin addressing the southside capacity issues.

Commissioner Harder agreed with the points made and expressed concern with consistency of the tax levy. He said it's helpful to keep the tax levy even but wants to focus on a successful referendum.

President Torres said there are three options and he hears the Board say they would prefer the most efficient process. He feels the most efficient would be the one that targets the most needs. Discussion occurred about the debt drop and the difference between the timelines. President Torres asked if the Board considered Timeline 2 to be most preferable and asked how to be as efficient as possible. He asked if the Board would like to continue the conversation so a formal decision could be made as soon as possible.

Commissioner Bica said she wants to consider if two referendums could be most efficient based on voter behavior. It's known that most referendums in Wisconsin pass. She would like to know more about districts who've had back-to-back referendums to see if there may be efficiency there. She would like to continue the conversation and would want more time to consider. Dr. Hardebeck said the timelines are predicated on the Board deciding early this winter to set the scope of the referendum and that the timelines could be adjusted to fit the Board's decisions. President Torres said there is time to do voter behavior studies and it would be wise to discuss again in February after researching and be prepared to make a decision.

Commissioner Klinkhammer said it's premature to decide on a timeline. She is curious about voter behavior as well and thinks that most people will not be too concerned with a little property tax drop and then an increase - she thinks it needs to be about the broader conversation about how we are educating children. She would also like input from Demo & Trends for their recommendations on addressing southside capacity issues.

President Torres said the Board encourages Demo & Trends to begin the

work on the southside capacity issues.

Commissioner Harder said he's concerned about the tax drop off, and the timing of the Roosevelt and South needs and how long they've waited. He's okay with timelines 2 and 3 if the Board can justify the delay for those schools.

President Torres asked for a work session on February 3 to continue the conversation. Commissioner Harder asked if that would leave enough time for Timeline 1. Dr. Hardebeck said the Board won't make decisions at the work session; they should have reports at prior meetings and be prepared to address items as individually considered resolutions.

8.4 Discussion on Elements of Coherent Governance Model presented at the September 25, 2019 Work Session

President Torres welcomed ideas/suggestions on what the Board wants to do with the Coherent Governance Model. They were given a book to read. He asked if they see it as useful and want to continue the conversation?

Commissioner Harder said he views it as an appealing idea and as a continuum that nobody has yet reached. He questioned the grayness of the journey and wondered if the Board feels optimistic enough to commit to taking steps down the path? He sees it as committing to evolving toward the model and not "let's do coherent governance."

Commissioner Bica asked Dr. Hardebeck's opinions on the model from a Superintendent's perspective. She questioned the idea of the vision being the School Board's and the Superintendent carrying the vision. What would draw someone to want to be a Superintendent in a district that operates in this way and how does a superintendent's experience level impact this? How does this fit with how people are drawn to serve on school boards?

Dr. Hardebeck said in terms of the vision, it is a shared vision. ECASD's vision about postsecondary success is a shared vision that was drawn from many perspectives in the District prior to her becoming Superintendent. Many were involved in creating the vision. If the process is preserved and revisited, then there should be a continuation of the vision.

In terms of a new Superintendent, Dr. Hardebeck said she thinks it depends on how far along the Board is in their journey when the new Superintendent is hired. One appeal of Coherent Governance is role clarification – the Board is clear on its duties as is the Superintendent. She thinks the monthly reports on aspects of the Superintendent's evaluation is appealing because there is known evaluation criteria. The reports are results based and show

progress with data to show whether the District is making progress toward the goals set for it through the Board's work with the Superintendent rather than subjective measures or personal feelings of Board members. The expectations are clear and measurable.

As to the capabilities of a new Superintendent to have enough skill and experience to work effectively within the framework of Coherent Governance - that is an additional characteristic for the superintendent search. If the Board finds someone who meets the qualifications and is who the community, staff, and Board are looking for, those characteristics should fit with the governance structure, whichever structure the Board chooses to pursue. There is an interest in Wisconsin in the Coherent Governance model - there are more districts studying and some of the study has to do with Superintendent turnover and experience level of superintendents.

President Torres asked what the next step is for the Board and would they like more training? Would they like to meet with another Board who is utilizing the model? Dr. Hardebeck said it's a difficult model to get a handle on unless Board members have training and have a good understanding of what the model looks like when it is implemented effectively.

President Torres offered to reach out to other districts to find a time to meet and have a joint work session to better understand how they are utilizing the model. Agreement among the Board that President Torres will reach out to another district.

President Torres welcomed other discussion regarding the four items on the agenda. There was no other discussion. President Torres said the Board will continue the conversation on February 3 but must make decisions at that meeting and will need a committee report before breaking into work session.

9. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

No agenda items were requested.

10. ADJOURN

Motion by Tim Nordin, second by Aaron Harder to adjourn the meeting.

Final Resolution: Motion carried

Yes: Lori Bica, Aaron Harder, Laurie Klinkhammer, Eric D Torres, Tim Nordin

Meeting adjourned at 7:41.