



West Ada

SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

November 30, 2015

Date, Place & Time	A special meeting of the Board of Trustees, West Ada School District, convened at 5:34 p.m. on Monday, November 30, 2015 at the District Service Center, 1303 E. Central Drive, Meridian, Idaho.
Trustees in Attendance	Chairman Tina Dean, Dr. Russell Joki, Dr. Julie Madsen, Carol Sayles, Mike Vuittonet
Staff in Attendance	Joe Yochum, Eric Exline, Trish Duncan, Denise Shumway, Jackie Thomason, Ramona Lee, Karel Olsen
Guests	Elaine Eberharter-Maki, Philip Neuhoff, Brenda Miller, Jade Millington, Miki Kurosawa Wilmonen, Lloyd Knight, Vaughn Heinrich, Sharon Blair, Valerie LaVigne, Jeni Carlson, Carmi Scheller, Val Tidwell, Marla Gothard

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Dean

Listening Session

Chairman Dean introduced Vaughn Heinrich, interim consultant to the board and superintendent. Mr. Heinrich reviewed the next steps in the superintendent search. The position has been posted in Idaho, Washington and Montana. Applications will be sent to the chairman and following an initial paper screening, the board will interview candidates and public meetings will be scheduled at various locations.

Eric Exline provided the board and attendees with the results of the community survey that was sent out November 11th to 26,709 patrons of the district. Survey questions, completed by 1,371 patrons, were:

- Which of the following educational levels do you think are important? Multiple answers were possible and the three highest percentages were graduate degree in education; graduate degree in business, and an earned doctorate.
- Which of the following experiences do you think are important? The highest percentage of answers were classroom teaching experience; principal experience, business experience, district office experience, and superintendent experience.
- Which of the following leadership skills do you think are important? The highest percentage of answers were teacher improvement, school finance, student achievement, curriculum planning, community relations, and principal improvement.
- Which of the following leadership values do you think are important? The highest percentage of answers were honesty, a communicator, teacher involvement, love of children, a listener, and community involvement.

The staff survey was sent to 4,200 staff members and 533 responses were received. The survey questions and results follow:

- What do you feel is the most appropriate educational background for candidates for superintendent? Masters, experience and doctorate were the answers most often mentioned.
- What are the most essential prior work experiences for a superintendent? Experience, classroom, teacher, district and superintendent.
- What are the most important skills a superintendent should have? Ability, communication, district, teachers.
- What is the optimal attitude/disposition that a superintendent should have? Teachers, students, district, positive attitude.

Chairman Dean opened the floor to public comment.

Phillip Neuhoff, 5095 North Sundown Drive, Eagle. Mr. Neuhoff thanked the board for giving them this opportunity to share their thoughts. Mr. Neuhoff asked the board to look for a candidate with ability and leadership to develop more rigorous governance than they have seen in the past. He didn't feel the relationship between the superintendent and teachers union was constructive and feels the process of teacher discipline and due process is a cause of low morale in the district. **Chairman Dean** asked what governance and procedural data would look like in terms of experience or education. Mr. Neuhoff replied someone who is already a superintendent and who knows there is a need for a more rigorous governance structure.

Brenda Miller, representing the Northwest Professional Educators association, read a letter written by two teachers in the district (see Attachment A). The teachers state in part "the new superintendent should be knowledgeable and supportive of Idaho's Right to Work law. The teachers union can be a fit for educators, others prefer an alternative that best meets with their budgets and beliefs. The new superintendent should support teacher choice and the right of educators to both join or to refrain from joining a labor union". Ms. Miller continued they would like to see her group invited to back to school events, allowed to exhibit and be allowed to speak at new teacher orientations. They provide continuing education both locally and nationwide and offer scholarships to pay for those.

Jade Millington appreciated the opportunity to address and share ideas. She felt they need someone to focus and drive student achievement and to look at alternate ways of teaching. Ms. Millington would like to see someone who will address cost overruns earlier in the process and to manage, understand, focus on and hold people responsible. They need someone who is willing to make smart hiring decisions and to make sure there are appropriate people in legal and finance.

Miki Wilmonen, a parent in the district, is looking for someone more engaging with teachers and parents. She would like the new superintendent to attend more big events, visit schools more often, engage more with the school community, parents, students and

teachers, and hold discussion sessions with teachers. **Trustee Madsen** stated her surprise that parents had an expectation of the superintendent being at many events in a district this size and asked if the attendance at some events could be delegated to the assistant superintendent, members of the leadership team or board members. Ms. Wilmonen replied it would depend on the event, she understood the challenge but would like to see the effort.

Lloyd Knight dovetailed on what he had just heard. He would like to see a presence and communication from the district office. This is a big district with a lot going on, communication is the key and that is what builds trust.

Valerie Levine, a parent with four students in the district, offered a different perspective, not as an educator, but someone with a business background. Her opinions mirror those of the survey, she is looking for someone who will be a CEO with a business background, financial and hiring procedures. She did not feel the candidate is necessarily in the state of Idaho and that they need a candidate external to this environment. She expressed her surprise that the posting was not a national search. Ms. Levine assumed the board would want someone who has political knowledge to be able to work with the Board of Education, the discrepancy with state funding and political savvy. A good CEO knows how to set the culture and set the perfect balance between business and empathy with parents and students. **Chairman Dean** stated that in this instance they did not have the usual transition period when a superintendent leaves. The district has historically hired from the region, but there is no end date on accepting resumes and if they don't find the right person, the search will be broadened. **Trustee Vuittonet** stated his appreciation of Ms. Levine's comments. He agreed they would need to open the search if they didn't find a suitable candidate and they will need to be carefully vetted and ready to come in to take on this project. **Ms. Levine** stated her fear of the situation that could be created if the board was not unanimous in its decision. **Chairman Dean** agreed and hoped the board would find someone who is so ideal it would be difficult for them to pass up.

Val Tidwell, parent of a student in the district, feels the new superintendent needs to understand large business, understand the rules, issues with hiring and firing, issues with parents and things the teachers want. Having a superintendent background is important and political savvy is huge. Ms. Tidwell is looking for someone with Dr. Clark's insight with choice schools and cooperation with all different levels of government. **Chairman Dean** replied that it is difficult to find someone with the business and education background. **Ms. Tidwell** stated they need to find someone who has had those experiences and could learn the skills as Dr. Clark had to make this a great district. **Trustee Vuittonet** stated there are superintendents out there who are very capable. They are looking for someone who is well rounded and can understand the business side and work on something as critical as curriculum.

Sharon Blair, a patron of the district for 46 years, stated the most important thing in the district are the students and then the teachers. She feels the superintendent should have come through the classroom, been a principal or vice principal, and served in an administrative role. The superintendent also needs to be someone who teachers and patrons can come to and express their concerns or needs. She wants somebody down to earth and who has been through the trenches with compassion, love and a desire to see that every child's needs are met. **Trustee Madsen** stated her appreciation of Ms. Blair's comments, they mirror everything she has known. Ms. Blair represents the heart of education and that is a huge priority as they move forward.

Carter Moore, a parent with six children in the district, would like to see a superintendent that shows their love for kids and for their job. Experience is important and it is difficult when someone interviews well and tells them what they want to hear. He has had experience with hiring and suggested they ask the candidates to describe what they have done to improve things at their current job. **Chairman Dean** asked if Mr. Moore was actively involved in hiring at Micron and wondered if he had seen a difference between asking the candidate what they have done and asking their references what they have done. Mr. Moore replied it was different, it is an art and difficult. He stated there were ways to interview that do a lot more effective job of understanding the candidate. **Trustee Vuittonet** stated there is a nuance to finding out what is behind the curtain and thanked Mr. Moore for his insight. **Trustee Madsen** wondered if Mr. Moore had encountered a perspective employee who can't disclose to their employer they are seeking another job. **Mr. Moore** suggested they talk to them when they are not at work so they can communicate freely.

Carma Scheller, a teacher and parent in the district, was able to participate in the survey and felt a business background was critical as well as experience in operating a district this size. She has heard comments the superintendent has not been visible at school events, but felt it would be too much for one person. Ms. Scheller would like to know the board had asked the candidates what their presence was in their previous school and how they handled the good and the bad. She was happy the board was going through this process and impressed there was a process.

Jill Wrem liked what she had heard during the meeting. She asked to add an aspect that most employees of the district are not teachers, they are classified employees. She would like to see a superintendent that doesn't just look at teachers, it takes a village to keep the district going. That is especially true in special education, nutrition and custodians. She would also like to see a person who would have a town hall listening session where employees can say what they are seeing and invite students, who also have a lot to say. **Chairman Dean** explained that when they talk about teachers, they are really talking about everyone who spends time with students. **Ms. Wrem** replied that classified employees might not want to talk because they have been told they are easily replaced. **Trustee Vuittonet** stated the district is a community and it can't succeed without everyone. The legislature separates

certified and classified employee and funds them separately, that shouldn't be happening.

Sarah Moore, a senior at Mountain View High School, would like to see someone who cares about the students and worries about their education. Ms. Moore talked about testing and her desire to see teachers that are able to teach and are on a personal level with the students. There needs to be more of a focus on learning, not memorizing on all the types of tests that are given. **Trustee Madsen** asked if the overcrowding at school has affected her education. **Ms. Moore** replied that it has affected the learning environment, there are not enough seats in the classrooms and some students have been sitting on the floor.

Bob Neugebauer, the publisher of the Gem State Patriot shared feedback from his readers in a written statement (Attachment B). He thanked the board for their work to bring transparency and accountability to the district. **Trustee Joki** thanked Mr. Neugebauer for attending and stated the new superintendent needs to come in and make things right and the board needs to be part of the equation. Groups need to embrace the new superintendent, the drama that continues in the district needs to be reduced. The superintendent needs to focus on kids and teachers, we are a learning organization and that is where their interests lie. The continued drama is a drain and will be on the new superintendent. We need to make this an opportunity for the community and they need to prepare the way.

Ethan Redshaw, a senior at Centennial High School, stated funding is out the superintendent's control. He has struggled with the educational philosophy that one size fits all, which hurts academic achievement. He attends three different schools to get the classes he wants to take. What hurts is low expectations in schools, which is a cultural problem. He understands there is a lot of teacher turnover in the schools and if they talked to the students, they could tell who the good and bad teachers are. Students want to learn and will tell them who helps and who hinders the process. **Chairman Dean** asked what schools he attends. **Mr. Redshaw** replied he attends Centennial High School, Treasure Valley Math & Science and Capital High School. If the classes were offered through closed circuit, he could stay at one school. It has been difficult socially and it would be helpful to have the opportunity to take the higher level classes in one place. Trustee Madsen commented what Mr. Redshaw had done was exceptional and it would be great to be able to offer those opportunities in our district. **Trustee Vuittonet** stated the Treasure Valley Math and Science program was a joint venture between the West Ada and Boise School district's and commended Mr. Redshaw for the work he has done.

Chairman Dean thanked those in attendance, the feedback has been important and beneficial. The review of resumes and interviews will be an important part of the process as well as how the candidate interacts with students, parents and staff during the district tours.

ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Vuittonet moved, Trustee Madsen seconded and the vote was unanimous to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Chairman

Clerk