



West Ada

SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

December 15, 2015

Date, Place & Time	A special meeting of the Board of Trustees, West Ada School District, convened at 6:15 p.m. on Thursday, December 15, 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	Eric Exline, Troy Stephens, Joe Yochum, Jackie Thomason
Guests	Kim Zeydel, Morgan Boydston, Brenda Miller, Alicia Bullock, RaDawn Smythe, Jessica Gallas, Dave Lanz, Randal Wagner, Eric Studebaker, Bethani Studebaker, Dan Bofenkamp, Chris Stokes

CALL TO ORDER Chairman Dean

Discussion/Action

Agreement for Conditions of Annexation of the Star Middle School Property into the Star Water and Sewer District Approved Joe Yochum, interim superintendent, introduced Ross Erickson, of Erickson Civil Engineering Mr. Erickson and trustees discussed the estimated costs of constructing the water and sewer lines including offsite construction in the roadway, contingency funds built into the project, and whether they had done their due diligence on additional costs such as roadways or relocation of stream beds.

Following the discussion, Trustee Joki made a motion to approve the agreement for conditions of annexation of the Star Middle School Property into the Star Water and Sewer District. Trustee Sayles seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous to approve.

Solicitation of Bidders for Pre-qualification for Star Middle School Project Approved

Mr. Yochum continued with a recommendation to advertise in the paper and on the district web site over the next two weeks for the solicitation of bidders who may be interested in being pre-qualified for the first bid package at Star Middle School. The first bid package is for gravity irrigation, which will need to be completed while the canal is empty. Prospective bidders will be directed to ESI and the bid opening is scheduled for January 7, 2016. Trustee Vuittonet made a motion to approve the bid process. The motion was seconded by Trustee Madsen and the vote was unanimous to approve.

Public Forum with Mary Ann Ranells, Ph.D., Superintendent Candidate

Vaughn Heinrich introduced Dr. Mary Ann Ranells, a candidate to be the next superintendent in the West Ada School District. Dr. Ranells has had a storied, diverse and amazing career in public education. She has been

a teacher, a principal, curriculum director and an assistant superintendent and superintendent.

Chairman Dean shared a summary of the search process the board had undertaken. The first step in the search and hiring process was media notification of the position. The position was originally posted at the Idaho School Board Association convention, and was posted on various job posting boards. The board collected data from patron and staff surveys, as well as listening sessions held in Eagle, Meridian and Star. The consultant developed initial screening questions and checked references. The candidate toured the district and was part of three question and answer sessions with staff and community members. Trustees, district administration and the consultant shadowed the candidate through the tour and the Q&A sessions and Chairman Dean called associates of the candidate that were not listed as references. The board will conduct an in-person interview in executive session following the public forum.

Dr. Ranells made a brief statement expressing the fun she had touring the district, and stated it was with great pride that she continued with the process to work with this family.

Chairman Dean opened the floor for public comment

Kim Zeydel – a teacher at Meridian Academy. The district has three alternative high schools and two alternative middle schools, what are her views on alternative education and how does she see it implemented in this district? **Dr. Ranells** responded she was hired in 1978 at the Nampa School District to work with children who weren't given much of a chance to succeed. She fell in love with alternative education at that point because of the kids. Not everyone learns in the same way or at the same rate, sometimes a different venue gives our students an opportunity to succeed, thrive and shine that the traditional path doesn't always provide. She felt the same way about professional technical education, she has seen so many good things happen in terms of how children sometimes need a little different schedule, a little different relationship opportunity with the adults around them and a different way of learning. Dr. Ranells expressed her appreciation for Ms. Zeydel, the district teacher of the year, and stated she was so proud of her and would be proud to support her efforts.

Brenda Miller – North West Professional Educators – thanked Dr. Ranells for her dedication to equal access and teacher choice in professional organizations when she was superintendent of Lakeland School District. Her hope is that she will bring the same commitment to the free marketplace of ideas to West Ada. Like her, Northwest Professional Educators promotes collaboration, and academic excellence. They provide a positive voice for educators, focused on students as their highest priority. Their members look forward to working with Dr. Ranells should she become West Ada's next superintendent.

Nancy Viano – a grandparent of students in the district. She had the opportunity this fall to go door to door helping a person with the mayoral race and to encourage patrons to vote for the levy. During that time it became evident from her conversations that people don't have much communication with the school district. They pay their taxes but if they don't have children in school, they don't know a lot about what is going on. Ms. Viano asked what Dr. Ranells plans would be to have a little more interaction with the residents of West Ada. **Dr. Ranells** referred to a book written by Jamie Vollmer titled "Schools Cannot Do It Alone", which addresses ways a district can reach out to make sure people who don't have kids in school have many opportunities to be involved and know what is happening in the schools.

Randal Wagner – questioned Dr. Ranells regarding student performance and passing grades. What are her measures of student performance and how well we are doing? There are many tests that students take and the test scores indicate our students are not doing as well as they should be. There is a very high rate of students receiving diplomas, but is there a discrepancy between students who can't do math but still pass and get their diplomas. How does she plan to reconcile that? **Dr. Ranells** asked if he was looking at this year's data and if he was looking at an overall score or particular grade level? **Mr. Wagner** replied he is looking at data from grade five to ten and the scores are between 45 and 50%. **Dr. Ranells** replied there are a number of issues in his statement. During her time in education she has seen many things come and go at both the federal and state level. What are they learning in terms of assessment? The first question they need to ask is what the purpose of the assessment is. The state needs to do a check to see if students are performing overall and if they are fairly proficient with the curriculum. This data reflects the first year of the assessment on the new standards. When they look at the standardized assessments, they measure cumulative knowledge. For example, the test given in the fifth grade measures knowledge from kindergarten through fifth grade. The core standards have only been in place a couple of years, so they haven't had the system in place long enough to deliver to the expectations of that assessment. This question was debated at the classroom level in terms of how they could best prepare the children to meet these higher standards. It is good for to talk with teachers, students, and parents to ask what is the purpose of the assessment, and how do we use that data to best inform our practice to make sure all of the children are reaching those high levels. **Mr. Wagner** commented there is a lot of pressure on teachers to pass students that aren't supposed to pass because of pressures from district administration. The teachers spend 90% of their time on 30% percent of the students who don't want to be in school. Teachers have to coddle them which is beyond the scope of what teachers should do. Teachers don't have the authority or power to make a student learn.

Alisha Bullock asked what Dr. Ranell's ideas were on ensuring principal accountability without over testing our children? **Dr. Ranell's** asked what Ms. Bullock meant by accountability? **Ms. Bullock** replied the common core standards teachers have to meet along with teacher

evaluations, and Danielson framework. All things that a teacher or principal are responsible for. They are accountable for teaching our students but she also realized there is a lot of progress monitoring, MAP testing, STAR testing along with ISAT testing, to make sure teachers are doing their job and asked what some her ideas would be. **Dr. Ranells** explained what she loves most is when kids come home happy, if they aren't, we usually hear about it. When we are doing our very best work, parents will come to parent teacher conference and say their children are thriving, feel safe in this environment, and love coming to class. Even beyond test scores, that is what she likes to hear as much and even maybe a little more. The West Ada District has been doing more with satisfaction surveys to find out a little more in terms of where we are strong and where there are some areas we might be weak. In terms of accountability, people in education have always been held accountable. It is not the state test, ISAT or the STAR test, it is what teachers create in terms of common assessments in their own classroom. Do good classroom teachers rely on the IRI or a state test to tell them? No, they know long before any of those assessments are administered whether or not the children are where they need to be or if they need a little extra help. What she saw at Meridian Elementary was a great example of how those teachers are making sure that all children are achieving at those levels and it is not the state test, it is what they are doing in their own classroom.

Eric Studebaker asked in a district this size, what are the few key indicators in how she will assess the overall district health. **Dr. Ranells** replied the key indicators she looks for are in terms of results. We ask, what we will accept in terms of evidence to convict ourselves of academic excellence. Academic excellence is not just academics, it is those skills we know that our children need to be lifelong learners, to be resilient, to have grit, to know how to fail and stand up and try again, to be passionate, all of those kinds of things. So some of the standards they can look at are graduation rate, assessment data, but more importantly she likes to look at the data at the grade levels and from talking to teachers to find out how we are doing, where are we strong, where we are weak, and where we need to provide more time and resources. Then get input from parents in some kind of a survey. That would be the big helicopter view of the district and then we can drill down in terms of the data and monitor our performance as we go along.

Morgan Boydston, reporter and former student of the district, asked Dr. Ranells why she would come to one of the biggest, most challenging school districts in the state of Idaho. **Dr. Ranells** replied, why wouldn't she come here, this is the best place in the world. She knows this area well, her family isn't too far away, and she has some great friends who work in this district and it would be such an honor and so much fun to get to work with them. More importantly, she has met the most phenomenal students and she can't wait to see what they can do to be even better. **Ms. Boydston** continued by asking, with the challenges of the last couple months and with Dr. Clark resigning, how does she plan to address that. **Dr. Ranells** replied, the very most important thing that

we do is what West Ada does best and that is to focus on kids and we are going to do that.

Bill Buchanan, a senior at Centennial High School, asked about future plans for senior project. **Dr. Ranells** replied she worked with senior projects before they were required and thought they were a great idea. She asked if there was a problem with the senior project. **Mr. Buchanan** replied he had heard a rumor the district plans on abolishing senior projects and he also knows some teachers at his school that are dissatisfied with how the project works, that it doesn't accurately measure standards. **Dr. Ranells** asked if she could visit with him some more and that she would be happy to research it.

RaDawn Smythe, a teacher and parent in the district, asked about teacher retention. She has watched some amazing teachers leave the district for one reason or another, she wondered what Dr. Ranells views or thoughts were on teacher retention. **Dr. Ranells** replied by asking, what makes teachers in a district want to stay. First of all compensation, the trustees are curious about this and want to take a further look. She has been told by staff members that more important is the feeling they are valued, appreciated, and have opportunities to spread their wings and try new things. She believes this district does that very well. She would be interested in doing things that make people feel they have a voice, an opportunity to help shape the district, and to know in their hearts how valued they are.

Chairman Dean asked Dr. Ranells to share anything she has learned about our district over the last two days or any prior beliefs that have been reaffirmed. **Dr. Ranells** shared the following: #1, this is the most amazing staff from food service, to bus drivers, grounds, and administrators; they are so good at what they do; #2, how everyone has kept up with the growth in this district; #3, the support of this community for the school system. You can talk to anyone on the street and they are proud of this school system; #4, the uncanny desire to continue to get better. There is a reluctance to tolerate mediocrity in this district. One of the challenges will continue to be funding. That is something all school districts face.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Trustee Sayles made a motion into move into executive session pursuant to Idaho Code sections 74-206 (1) (a) to consider hiring a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent, wherein the respective qualities of individuals are to be evaluated in order to fill a particular vacancy or need. This paragraph does not apply to filling a vacancy in an elective office or deliberations about staffing needs in general. The motion was seconded by Trustee Madsen. A roll call of the board followed: Trustee Joki voted yes, Trustee Sayles voted yes, Trustee Madsen voted yes, Trustee Vuittonet voted yes and Chairman Dean voted yes. The board recessed at 7:07 p.m. into executive session.

In attendance: Chairman Tina Dean, Dr. Russell Joki, Dr. Julie Madsen, Carol Sayles and Mike Vuittonet.

An in-person interview as held with Dr. Mary Ann Ranells pursuant to Idaho Code section 74-206 (1) (a) to consider her qualifications for the superintendent position.

The board recessed from executive session and reconvened in regular session at 9:10 p.m.

Chairman Dean

Temporary Clerk

Chairman Dean declared the board in open session.

Dr. Mary Ann Ranells
Approved as
Superintendent

Trustee Vuittonet made a motion to offer a contract as superintendent to Dr. Mary Ann Ranells with the details for compensation approved by the board and acceptable to Dr. Ranells. Trustee Madsen seconded the motion and Chairman Dean called for the vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Dean stated the board did receive numerous resumes and job applicants from many states and as far away as Dubai. There were many applicants who had masters and doctorates, many had experience as assistant superintendents and superintendents in other districts. The board was not interested in comparing candidates with each other, but with comparing candidates with the needs for the district. They recognize Dr. Ranells experience and qualifications and the respect she has across the state and nation. They were mindfully watchful of her interactions with students, staff, parents and patrons. Dr. Ranells always kept kids top of mind. It was very evident there would be no better candidate so they did not see any need to delay their decision. Her experience, demeanor, knowledge, and ability are perfectly suited to the current needs of West Ada School District. Chairman Dean expressed her excitement that Dr. Ranells was joining the district.

ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Vuittonet moved, Trustee Joki seconded and the vote was unanimous to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 p.m.

Chairman

Clerk