

JAY/WESTFIELD JOINT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Tuesday September 9, 2014 at 6:00 P.M.
AT THE JAY/WESTFIELD SCHOOL

Board Members in attendance: Sally Rivard, Myra Alix, Jeff Morse, Loren Petzoldt, Chad Prue, Kevin Amyot

Administration/School Personnel in attendance: Kristy Ellis, Principal; Tara Morse, Book-Keeper; John Castle, Superintendent; Chris Young, Troy School Principal

I. At 6:06 pm the J/W School Board meeting was brought to order by Sally Rivard.

II. Loren Petzoldt moved to appoint Rebecca Velazquez as recording secretary. Chad Prue seconded the motion, and the vote carried.

III. Committee Reports:

Kristy Ellis invited Chris Young to speak about preliminary research they had done, along with Pam Kennedy, about the growing need to expand the pre-school program. Transportation, along with the lack of full day programs at least 4 days per week, have been identified as the greatest factors in local families decisions not to enroll their children.

Inquiries were made with the current bus company and there would little added cost for additional miles to Troy School's leased bus' route. There would, however, be the cost of adding hours to the bus driver's schedule. She is currently at 4 1/2 – 5hrs and Chris foresees this moving up to 7 or 8, giving her full time status. The route could include Westfield, Troy, North Troy, Jay, Coventry and Newport Center, but Chris and Kristy had only explored expansion for Jay/Westfield Elementary School and Troy School.

Chris and Kristy would like to start a conversation about these costs, as well as those involved with extra staffing at the pre-school.

The facilities can accommodate 14+ children per session and is currently being utilized by roughly 6 children in each of the two daily sessions. The program would need at least one more staff member.

There was discussion about the Parental Choice legislature that allows money to travel – sometimes ending up in local childcare versus early childhood education programs. All agree that it is struggle to drop off and pick up a child mid-day that dissuades many parents. Bus routes, along with full day programs would help with this.

John Castle adds that the new law requires the school board to provide 10 hours of pre-school per week, but that parents need more than that. He recommends the collaboration between communities to get the current program, housed in Degree Action House, to capacity.

Chris Young will bring same discussion to the Troy School board meeting tomorrow.

The board recognizes the need and requests more details about potential enrollment so that staff needs and a cost structure can be assessed. We also need a better understanding of our current assessment for the Westfield site.

Kristy Ellis asks board for a Yes/No on continuing to investigate costs pertaining to expanded transportation.

Board requests more information.

Chris Young exited the meeting.

IV. Financial Reports

Action

The Principal and Bookkeeper recommend:

Loren Petzoldt moved to approve the August, 2014 Financial Statement. The motion was seconded by Chad Prue. The vote carried.

Information

A. Bookkeeper's Report: The Bookkeepers Report is presented sans budget. Tara Morse requests signatures on Jay school district orders as well as signatures allowing Gene A. Besaw & Associates to move forward with this year's book audits. With this, Tara can follow up about scheduling. There is some concern that the costs are not nailed down on the documents, with only maximum costs, as opposed to projected costs, outline. They are \$4,775 for Jay and \$5,300 for Westfield. It is unclear how close to these maximums the actual cost will be. Tara has been unhappy with the timeliness, or lack thereof, with which the books have been looked at. She expressed a desire to have reports finished by December and will be put pressure on them to do so. There was a quick discussion about possibly switching firms, putting audits out to bid, but general consensus seems to sway toward keeping Gene A. Besaw & Associates. The letters of engagement are signed.

V. Principal's Report,

Information:

In addition to the Principal's Report, which included demographics, Kristy Ellis has also provided a mandatory School Report.

Parents had rave reviews of the first day of school breakfast. Thanks were given to Kevin Amyot and his family for helping to prepare the facilities.

The school will be maintaining structured recesses for the time being with a plan to ease away from them. They may be employed again at 'high risk' times, like just before Thanksgiving break.

Chad Prue inquired about the Engage New York math program. Kristy Ellis explained that it is a free resource made by New York State and based on Common Core. This led to a broader discussion about the math programs used by the school. Kristy's hope is to utilize one program from kindergarten through 5th grade. John Castle added that there may be value to everyone sharing one program throughout the SU and Loren Petzoldt noted the benefits of a continuity over the years of their education. Kristy is supporting the SU in their search for new math programs, and feels that the current Trailblazers program is lacking. The focus in the primary grades should be on building strong number sense and using assessment to monitor student movement.

Action

The Principal recommends approval of:
Motion to approve Principal's Report to the Superintendent. Kevin Amyot moves to approve the Principals' Report. Chad Prue seconded the motion. Vote carried.

Discussion:

VI. Superintendent's Report

Information:

John Castle expressed happiness with his transition to NCSU Superintendent. His goal is apply Vermont's state motto of "Freedom and Unity" to the school boards, creating a model for the inclusion of both collaboration and autonomy. He stressed that he is not in support of consolidated governance and that he or another Central Office representative will not attend every Jay/Westfield school board meeting unless one is requested or a need is seen. That request can be made any time, though, and would be welcomed.

A. Changes to Open Meeting Law:

John Castle explained that the law changed in July and the following practices are now mandatory: Board Meeting agendas must be posted at least 48 hours prior to the meeting in 3 locations. Special Meeting agendas must be posted at least 24 hours prior in 3 locations. Draft Minutes from the meeting must be posted with 5 days (Central Office will handle this electronically).

John Castle recommends that these rules are clearly followed, so that no one has any excuse to give the board trouble.

Third location in Westfield is identified as the General Store. It is understood that someone will need to physically post the agenda.

John also encourages a move to fully digital communication with board and the use of their NCSU email accounts as opposed to personal accounts.

Several board members request further instructions on how to access their NCSU accounts. Loren Petzoldt inquired about an accessible portal in lieu of outbound communication.

VIII. Unfinished/New/Other Business:

Action

Intent to offer Early Retirement Incentive Program

Discussion: The exact number of eligible teachers was unclear to some board members. Three seemed to be the agreed upon number. All agree that they would like those teachers to stay and would therefore not be in favor of the programs.

Jeff Morse moved not to offer the Early Retirement Incentive Program. Chad Prue seconded the motion, and the vote carried.

IX. Future Agenda Items/Date for Next Board Meeting:

Sally Rivard brought the option of Monday, October 13 to the table and all agreed. Date is set.

Sally Rivard mentions that a second vote on the budget would be on the next agenda. Kristy Ellis explained that a second vote is no longer necessary if the cost does not exceed the per pupil threshold. The threshold comes with a dollar-for-dollar penalty. This led to a spirited discussion about school budgets and town tax rates. Tara shared her experiences at a meeting in South Burlington that went into

greater detail about the state budget changes. She has written to her local legislator via email and was told that the greatest way for a town to take a stand is to vote No on the school budget at town meeting. Jeff Morse reported that his own talks with representative Mark Higley netted out with a promise to keep pressing the issue, but an admittance that local government is not addressing school funding.

Loren Petzoldt and Tara Morse were both contacted by The Chronicle about the school budgets and the part it played in this year's tax hike in Westfield. Kevin Amyot and Chad Prue agreed that it has been an uncomfortable position to be in. General consensus is that greater education within the broader community would be helpful. Put plainly, the school budget is being blamed for the tax hike, but the school's budget has not grown in proportion to the increase.

John Castle brought his own experiences with merged school board into the discussion and understood the unique problems Jay/Westfield faces with its rising property value, as well as the allocation of funds between the two towns.

Sally Rivard proposed a congregation of thoughts, question and concerns be compiled through email to create a clearer, collective voice. She expressed interest in bringing the pre-school initiative to the state's attention to maybe garner more attention to the problems they face and the successes they've had.

X. Executive Session: Loren Petzoldt moved to enter executive session at 8:06 and invites Tara Morse, John Castle and Kristy Ellis to stay, asks Rebecca Velazquez to leave. Jeff Morse Kevin Amyot seconded the motion, and the vote carried.

Student residency issue discussed. No action was taken; purely informational with confidential student information discussed.

Chad Prue moved to exit executive session at 8:19. Jeff Morse seconded the motion. Vote carried.

Action:

Loren moves to offer position of Recording Secretary to applicant A at the rate of \$50/meeting. Myra Alix seconded the motion. Vote carried. Applicant accepts.

XI. Adjourn : Sally Rivard motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:24. Loren Petzoldt seconded the motion. Vote carried.

Meetings:

Group	Day	Date	Time	Location
Jay/Westfield School Board	Monday	Oct. 13	6:00 p.m.	School