

JAY/WESTFIELD JOINT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Tuesday, August 11, 2015 at 6:00 P.M.
AT THE JAY/WESTFIELD SCHOOL

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

Administration/School Personnel in attendance: Kristy Ellis, Principal; Tara Morse, Bookkeeper; Rebecca Velazquez, Recording Secretary; Alayna Morin, Green Mountain Farm-to-School Coordinator

I. At 6:08 pm the J/W School Board meeting was brought to order by Sally Rivard.

II. Chad Prue moved to approve the Minutes of June 17 and July 16, 2015. Myra Alix seconded the motion, and the vote carried.

III. Public Comments, Communication with Parents/Staff/Citizens

A. Green Mountain Farm-to-School End of Year Report

Information:

Alayna Morin presented to the Board, passing around photos and a newsletter and speaking about her year as Farm-to-School coordinator in the Jay/Westfield School. Alayna thanked the Board and Principal for their support, praised school lunch coordinator Helen Before and said that she grew as an educator having worked alongside such a wonderful teaching staff. Specifics of her work included cooking workshops with kindergarteners, a look at the life cycles of seeds with grades 1&2 and exploring VT agricultural history with grades 3&4.

Alayna invited all to help themselves to vegetables in the school garden- which is thriving. She suggested that finding good compost for the garden should be a goal for next year.

Kristy Ellis commended Alayna for all her work and said that she had been the Farm-to-School coordinator best able to integrate with the school, mixing advocacy and understanding.

The Board thanked Alayna.

IV. Financial Reports:

Action:

Jeff Morse moved to approve both the Warrants and the Financial Statement of July 2015. Kevin Amyot seconded and the motion carries.

Information:

Bookkeeper's Report:

- a. Tara Morse noted that the Report is mostly complete but that she is still waiting on a few reimbursements, including those for the Hot Lunch Program. Nonetheless, the Report shows a surplus of \$40,000.

V. Principal's Report:

A. Facilities

Information:

Kristy would like to articulate a procedure for getting the best price on heating

oil. Recently, the Board and Principal worked to secure the lowest rate, watching the market, shopping around and securing their rate during an oil price slump. Central Office had some concerns over this process. Kristy noted that a purchase of \$5000 does have to go out to bid.

Discussion:

The Board was very happy with the price secured and would not like to change their purchase time to the Spring, when rates are historically higher. Loren Petzoldt proposed authorizing Kristy as the shopper & buyer in next June's Board meeting. That way, she would be able to make a purchase in August/September when she sees fit.

Kevin Amyot asked how much the new furnace saved the school on oil. All agreed that would be a great number to report to the taxpayers. The exact number was not known, but the fact that more oil was not necessary to get through this winter – a particularly tough winter – is an excellent sign. Oil has been purchased mid-winter in many years passed.

B. Enrollment:

Information:

Kristy reported that the student numbers are looking up. There are five new students enrolled for the upcoming school year, bringing the total to around 75 without counting incoming pre-schoolers.

C. Pre-School:

Information:

Kristy expressed gratitude for the pre-school teaching team of Julie St-Marie and Alana Whittier who worked through most of the summer.

VI. Superintendent's Report:

John Castle was unable to attend, so Kristy Ellis addressed the following:

A. Act 153:

Information:

Act 153 calls for the centralization of Transportation and Special Education. While the NCSU has been working toward a waiver, compliance is now mandatory. The SU will comply while maintaining the integrity of current efficiencies.

1. Transportation will remain unchanged, as the Super Intendant sees no savings or benefit from stepping into the middle of local transportation systems. To meet compliance, contracts may just need to go through Central Office.
2. The line item "Special Education" will no longer appear on the Jay/Westfield school budget. An assessment from the SU will take its place.
3. Only the licensed special educators will be centralized, not the paraprofessionals. The placement of those educators will now be in the SU's hands.
4. The changes will go into effect in the 2017/2018 school year.

Discussion:

Loren Petzoldt expressed concern about placement, a lack of consistency for students and the potential for talent to be moved from a small school to a larger one. Sally Rivard worried that the team teaching in effect will be broken up. More broadly, she wondered if teachers' commute time would be taken into consideration during placement. Lastly, she questioned if the cost will be the same.

Kristy Ellis expressed trust in the current administration, saying that she doesn't see much shifting happening just for the sake of change. As to Sally's question about cost, Kristy said that "in theory" the educators would cost the same coming through the SU as they do being directly contracted. However, it may wind up being a pooled cost amongst the SU and that could be divided according to a number of factors. The SU is currently looking at various models. Kristy urged attendance at the upcoming Executive and Full Board meetings. Representation during this decision making process is important.

B. Act 46:

Information:

Act 46 calls for the consolidation of school districts. This will impact Jay/Westfield greatly, especially fiscally.

1. In order to urge consolidation, certain subsidies that are currently being provided to small schools and schools with declining enrollment are being pulled back. This includes a re-structuring of the hold-harmless provision. The small schools grant is still in effect, but Kristy sees that going away in the future. Jay/Westfield currently gets around \$40,000 through that grant.
2. There are provisions around geographically isolated schools.
3. There are governance structure issues, which John Castle will speak to the Board about at a later meeting.

Discussion:

The Board asked if local school boards will be dissolved, but there was no clear answer without John in attendance. All agreed that state-wide laws are created with counties like Chittenden in mind, which work very differently than the Northeast Kingdom. There was concern about how realistic it will be for the schools in the NEK to comply with new laws and how much it will actually benefit anyone.

Kristy Ellis explained how the original funding act came from a lawsuit which cited the marginalizing of students living in poverty. She can see a similar legal battle resulting from these new laws. Unfortunately, harm must be done before a lawsuit can result. She expressed optimism gained from her recent trip to Montpelier. She saw that the NEK does have strong voices in the legislature, including Bobby Starr and other senior legislators. She stressed the importance of reaching out to local representatives.

C. NCUJHS Membership

Information:

Westfield is not currently a member, Jay is. Since Newport Town is voting to gain membership, it seems like a good time for Westfield to look at their own status. Membership would require voting on both sides. Westfield voters would have to vote to join and all other member towns would have to vote to offer Westfield membership. Ideally, these would be simultaneous votes on Town Meeting Day.

Discussion:

The reasons for Westfield's decision not to join at the time Jay/Westfield consolidated were discussed. At the time, there was the potential for a Westside Junior High, which would have been significantly closer to Westfield than NCUJHS. Loren Petzoldt explained that non-membership allows Westfield students to choose their junior high and the decision had been made at a time when there were at least two students who lived much closer to the Montgomery Elementary School. Alpine Haven is mostly in Westfield, making access to Montgomery Elementary a valuable

resource. In the years since that decision, there have been a few students who chose schools other than NCUJHS.

Tuition per student is actually lower as a non-member and there is no added transportation fee because Westfield students are able to ride the bus that picks up Jay students. The Westfield General Store currently acts as bus stop for Westfield students.

All agreed that the NCUJHS could use the bump to their enrollment numbers. The Westfield Board members agreed to continue discussion and weigh options.

D. Laraway School's Micro-Residential Program in Westfield

Information:

It has come to Kristy Ellis' attention that the Laraway School has purchased a house in Westfield which will house up to 4 residential students. Normally, state-placed students come in with an IEP, which includes 100% reimbursement from the state. However students can have a 504, which could come with no state reimbursement. This means that the local school district is responsible for the student's education fees. In these extreme cases, the state usually agrees to cover all costs. It is important for appropriate communication to occur. Central Office will now assign someone from the special education department to serve as the LEA for Westfield middle school students as one does not currently exist.

VII. Unfinished/New Business:

A. UV System Update

Information:

Kevin Amyot updated the Board on his research into the UV filtration system. The system itself, and its installation, would cost around \$5000 – an amount already accounted for in the school budget. However, it necessitates the hiring of an engineer, which adds around \$5,000 more to the cost. In comparison, a new chlorinator would cost around \$500 and not require an engineer, because it would be considered an update to an existing system. Kevin wanted the Board to decide if they should further pursue the UV with this new information.

Discussion:

Jeff Morse expressed frustration that there is no clear theory on what exactly is wrong with the current system. Therefore, there's the possibility that a UV system would not solve the problem. There was a long discussion about the past problems and where the hits were coming from. It is unclear if the contamination is happening in the storage tank or in the building itself. The UV filtration would occur after the storage tank, but if the contaminants are in the building, there would still be problems.

Jeff Morse and Loren Petzoldt agreed that no matter what, they would still prefer not to continue chlorinating the water. Cost of constant chlorination and bottled water should be taken into consideration. Loren suggested using the oil savings toward the engineering fee. Sally Rivard was firmly on the side of UV, but agreed that it may be worth trying a new chlorinator first.

Kevin suggested holding a meeting with Simon Operation Services, who maintain the current water system, and Sam Ruggiano, of Ruggiano Engineering. Kristy recommended Nate Fredericks, on the SOS side. If Ruggiano had time to look at the existing system in the next few weeks, this meeting could occur at the next Board Meeting. That way, a separate meeting would not need to be warned.

B. SLP Blended Rate Cost Consideration

Information

Assessments already come from Central Office, but now the cost will be pooled across the SU, resulting in an average hourly wage for services received across the SU. The new blended rate results in a \$5000 savings for Jay/Westfield.

C. Food Service Community Eligibility

Information:

The SU did not attempt to merge school numbers in pursuit of Free and Reduced Lunches for all students. The status quo will be kept for now. In the meantime, the Jay/Westfield Hot Lunch rate is set to increase ten cents, part of an incremental hike set in place by the state.

Discussion:

The Board asked if they could just vote to give Kristy Ellis authority to make adjustments to the Hot Lunch rate as needed. Kristy Ellis confirmed that this was acceptable.

Action:

Loren Petzoldt motioned to give Kristy Ellis authority to raise the Hot Lunch fee at the lowest rate possible to meet requirements of the state. Kevin Amyot seconded and the vote carried.

VII. Other Business:

Actions:

A. Jeff Morse moved to rescind the following:

F.23 Policy on Prevention of Harassment of Students

F.39 Hazing

F.49 Anti-Bullying

Kevin Amyot seconded and the vote carried.

B. Jeff Morse moved to adopt the VT AOE required:

NCSU F.23 Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students

NCSU F.23P Procedures on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students.

Kevin Amyot seconded and the vote carried.

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

The Board confirmed Tuesday, September 8, 2015 as the date of their next Board Meeting.

The Board will further discuss the UV system, possibly with Sam Ruggiano and Nate Fredericks present.

Kristy Ellis would like to discuss Pre-K enrollment numbers and requests she has received for a full-day program for 3 year olds.

X. Adjourn: Jeff Morse motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:27. Kevin Amyot seconded the motion. Vote carried.

Meetings:

NCSU Policy Committee

NCSU Executive Committee

Jay/Westfield Board

Day

Thursday

Thursday

Tuesday

Date

August 20

August 20

September 8

Time

5:30 p.m.

6:30 p.m.

6:00 p.m.

Location

NCSU A209

NCSU A209

Jay/Westfield School

NCSU Policy Committee
NCSU Executive Committee

Thursday September 17 5:30 p.m.
Thursday September 17 6:30 p.m.

NCCC 316
NCCC 380

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Velazquez
Recording Secretary