

MINUTES OF THE ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING OF JANUARY 29 2004

The Anchorage School Board met in Special Session on Thursday, January 29, 2004 at 5:10 p.m. in the Board Room, at the Anchorage School District Administration Building. Vice President, Tim Steele, opened the meeting. Jake Metcalfe, President, presided upon arrival at 5:15.

Board Members Present: Mary Marks, Crystal Kennedy, Jeff Friedman, Macon Roberts, John Steiner, Tim Steele, Jake Metcalfe.

Others Present: Jan Christensen, Enid Hunter, Mike Henry, Patricia McRae, Gail Opalinski, Jerry Sjolander, Jeff Wood, Debbie Bogart, Stan Syta, Todd Arndt, Steve Kalmes, Larry Petersen, Pam Chenier, Brent Rock, Rick Barrier, George Vakalis, Marie Laule, Janet Stokesbary, Eric Tollefsen, Larry Wiget, Julie Ginder, Todd Hess, Mark Mew, Mike Klawitter, Margo Bellamy, Robin Siegfried, the Press, and other interested people.

A. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, FLAG SALUTE, Jake Metcalfe Presiding

B. SCHOOL BOARD COMMENTS

Tim Steele reported that at the First Reading, the Legislative Committee was asked to investigate the value of lifting the tax cap in the effort of the funding of education. The committee met and believed that lifting the tax cap would provide little or no help. There is the local tax cap, which limits the local contribution, and there is also a state cap that limits the amount we can contribute locally. Given current assumptions, we are likely to reach the state cap in a year or two. Moving the state towards adequate long term funding and removing the local cap is not a viable option. The committee's recommendation is to concentrate efforts at the state level.

C. PERSONS TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

D. CONSENT AGENDA

1. ASD MEMORANDUM #188 - FY 2004-2005 PROPOSED
FINANICAL PLAN (SECOND READING)

ACTION:

Moved by Jeff Friedman
seconded by Mary Marks

to approve ASD Memorandum
#188 (Second Reading)

Speaker, Paula Bryner, Chair of the Rabbit Creek Community Preschool, spoke on the value of the preschool in the Rabbit Creek area. Community Schools has sponsored it since 1978. They continue to get calls from people wanting to get into the program. The parents become very involved in the school at an early age because of the program. It gives them a place to learn, grow and get involved. The speaker asked the Board to identify some bridge funding so they can become self-sustained.

Katrinka Dobbs has a first grader and kindergartener, and is concerned with the elimination of kindergarten TAs in the schools. The speaker feels parent involvement should be required in the schools. Ms. Dobbs suggested a standardized book fee.

Carol Comeau replied to the speaker that the District had the book fee in the budget a few years ago and was sued. The State Constitution states that we are to provide a free education. On the preschool issue - Ms. Comeau stated she has asked them to submit a proposal to her office to look at all issues, liability, licensing, and supervising, and she is open to pursuing it separate from the Community Schools program. Ms. Comeau asked for this information no later than the end of April because she would like to take the recommendation to the Board.

Mr. Metcalfe recognized the arrival of Ann Spohnholz from the School Budget Advisory Commission.

Rebecca Reichlin, member of the Four Valleys Community School in Girdwood, asked the Board for continued support and any end of year monies that could go to the community schools for some bridge building funds so they can become self-sufficient.

Jenny Morris spoke regarding community schools. Her husband is an art instructor for Community Schools. Ms. Morris stated that these classes give people tools they can use in their lives. The speaker asked the Board to give the public an opportunity to say that they want it or not.

Suzanne Metcalfe, the librarian at Mears Middle School stated that she appreciates the difficult task that the Board has to face. The speaker respects the Board's decision to keep cuts out of the classroom as much as possible. However, she feels student achievement will be compromised with the elimination of library assistants. The role of the librarian has become more complex with the internet. The library assistants collaborate with teachers on

research skills, internet searching techniques, and computer skills. The speaker feels the success of the students is being compromised.

Guy Okada, principal at Dimond High School and acting president of the APA stated that he knows the thoroughness of each budget item and how difficult it was to make these cuts. Mr. Okada stated that the APA feels supported, involved, and respected. APA's concerns involve the proposed cuts to assistant principal positions. The assistant principals share the responsibility of providing the best education in a safe environment. The job has become more challenging. When class sizes increase, discipline problems increase. Safety in the schools is the first and foremost concern. Reducing the assistant principal positions jeopardizes safety in the schools. Mr. Okada is concerned with the additional work level on the sole principal in the school. Mr. Okada added that APA stands together with the Board and Administration in seeking additional funds and they have doubled their legislative budget to support additional funding.

Tim Steele commented that he is happy to hear the APA is going to raise its budget for legislative support.

Bob Durts spoke to the Board regarding the funding of Community Schools. The speaker commented on the benefits the Community School program has had on the Creekside Park Elementary School and community.

Susan Opalka, retired teacher, stated that all three of her children have been involved in community school classes. These activities directly support the core curriculum. The speaker urged the Board's support of the Community School program.

Blythe Campbell stated that the Anchorage Community Education Association met and voted on a proposal, which she handed out to the Board and Superintendent. The Association hopes to work with the Administration and come back with something bigger in a month or two.

Carol Comeau appreciated the outline and stated that her staff can spend the next two months looking at it. If the District is successful in getting more funds in June, we can take a look at it.

Lori Wade spoke to the Board as an advocate for Community Schools. Ms. Wade, the Director of the Rabbit Creek before and after school program, SAAC, described the many functions they

perform at the preschool. It is self-sustaining with salaries paid through the community schools. The speaker encouraged the Board to not cut Community Schools completely and hopes that perhaps some programs could be kept in the budget.

Alex Pastorino, a counselor from Goldenview Middle School, stated that the number of suspensions have decreased dramatically since the onset of the middle school model. The speaker urged the Board to keep the model in place, but if they must cut, please reconsider if funds become available.

Brenda Avery supports the middle school model and requested consideration to reinstate if funds become available. The speaker is concerned the schools won't be able to continue the ASSETS Building program without the current middle school model.

Mary Showers spoke to the Board regarding the middle school model. With decline and movement of many of the families the middle school model is the next closest thing some students have to a family. The speaker asked the Board to please consider saving the middle school model first if additional funds are available.

Jody Karcz has three children in the District and expressed her frustration at hearing about budget cuts and the elimination of the Community Schools program. The speaker stated that Community Schools programs give opportunities to use the schools beyond the traditional school day. The speaker added that now is the time that the community leaders need to draw a line in the sand and support taxes. Ms. Karcz urged support of partial funding for Community Schools.

Macon Roberts commented to the speakers that the Board needs the community to help. Their voice will be heard much louder if it comes from more than just the seven Board members.

Jake Metcalfe stated that he has received many e-mails and feels it is unacceptable that we have to make these cuts. It affects our children and economy. Jake Metcalfe agreed with Mr. Roberts and stated that people have to get angry and tell the Governor and legislators that we are not going to put up with it anymore.

Mary Marks agreed with Jake Metcalfe and Macon Roberts, stating that it starts here with the School Board digesting the facts, but the community also has the facts and the Board needs the community to help.

Tim Steele added that it is imperative for the public to contact the legislators. The public has much more credibility than the Board. The legislators know it is coming but they have said that we have to feel the pain.

Jeff Friedman commented that the legislators have told them that their constituents don't want them to provide more money. Therefore, the legislators need to hear from the community.

Jan Maki, principal at Bear Valley Elementary School, spoke to the Board regarding the importance of the Community Schools and school aged child care program. It was originally run by Camp Fire until they could no longer find employees to work at that location. With the help of the Community Schools and parents they put together the SAAC. It has been molded to their community. Ms. Maki is concerned about student safety for children before and after school.

Barbara Hayr, Bear Valley Community Schools coordinator, thanked the Board for all of their hard work and continued efforts to get full funding for education. Ms. Hayr spoke of her concern about the efforts they have made to put the program together. The speaker stated that she would like to see something worked out in order to keep the program going.

Tim Steele congratulated the Bear Valley Community for keeping their program going even after the funds were cut a few years ago and then restored. Unfortunately there are not a lot of other places to cut. Mr. Steele stated that we need to look for a broader model that will work for all and we have to draw other folks into this partnership to make it work.

Ms. Comeau agreed with Mr. Steele and stated that it is critical that, when working through this, we need to look at alternative models. It would be very troublesome if only wealthy communities could do this. Ms. Comeau encouraged the speakers to look at additional models.

Mary Beth Holleman, a member of the Goldenview PTSA, asked to make reinstating funds for middle schools the top priority if more funds become available. The effect of taking out eight teachers in each school would be felt in the whole school. It is important for teachers to have the time to talk about their shared students.

Sam Daniels spoke on behalf of Community Schools and understands that middle schools and assistant principal position cuts will have a big effect on the District. Mr. Daniels served in Community Schools a long time and was involved in the site elimination committee a few years ago. The speaker believes in the program and agrees that it needs to become more independent. Mr. Daniels believes it is possible with the support from the Board in the form of some bridge monies for the continuity in staff. The speaker stated that they need some monies for this year for someone in a paid position to help be a catalyst for this new model.

Tim Steele reminded the speakers that the term is adequate funding, not full funding. Mr. Steele thanked Mr. Daniels and added that we have a quality program and have to find out what will work for everyone.

John Steiner suggested that every Community School should consider doing a free educational night on how to contact their legislators.

The Board recessed at 7:05 p.m. and reconvened at 7:20 p.m.

Tim Steele announced that there are legislative flyers in the back of the room with the phone numbers of the legislators for the public.

Terry Lamberson, board member of the Rabbit Creek Community School stated that her hope is to find some bridge funding and keep the community school program alive.

Ann Rappaport, a parent at Bear Valley, stated she is a strong supporter of the Community Schools program. It provides useful, fun, and important classes, as well as the Bear Valley school age program. The school age program is self-supporting but needs the umbrella of Community Schools. The speaker urged the Board to provide an exemption. The speaker also requested the Board to retain the middle school model. Ms. Rappaport stated that we need to accept the need to come up with a solution. We may need to pay some sales tax or income tax. The speaker also suggested that the District should provide a fund for people to help support the schools.

Carol Comeau told the speaker that she will ask her staff to research the possibility of setting up a community foundation. There was some preliminary research in the late 1980's.

William Johnson, a member of the MECC, spoke as the father of three children, and expressed his concerns on how his children and classmates will make it without some support services they are accustomed to using. Mr. Johnson stated that we need a backup plan and look for a community based program to fill the void. William Johnson appreciated hearing Jake Metcalfe say that he's angry. There are a lot of people on his side and it will take a lot of people to feel that way before we get some action.

Mary Marks commented to the speaker that she hopes that he will bring a charge to the MECC members to send letters to the legislators.

Aurora Hovland is a teacher for middle schools. The teams can plan and mentor new teachers and communicate with the parents. The speaker urged the Board to reinstate the middle school model.

Carol Bonney, a kindergarten teacher at Eagle River Elementary School requested the Board to reinstate the time that the teacher assistants are in the schools. They directly impact students by increasing instructional times and opportunities for learning. The teacher assistants help ensure student safety. Many students are often overwhelmed by their first encounter with the educational environment. TAs support the ability for teachers to provide adequate education for everyone.

Tim Steele stated that the kindergarten TA positions are one of the items with high priority on his list to try to put back in the budget when funds are available.

Laura Wrenn is a parent of two high school daughters and a math teacher at Gruening Middle School. Ms. Wrenn stated that library media aides are important to middle school. Middle school is a bridge that supports kids in a trouble time. When money comes back the speaker requested the Board to reinstate the TA positions for library and kindergarten aides.

Lynn McNamara, from Polaris K-12 School, stressed importance of library media aides, and urged the Board to reinstate the positions.

Mary Mead teaches at Goldenview Middle School, with three children of her own. The speaker stated she is passionate about the ASSET Development model. Middle School is perhaps the most crucial part of their lives excluding the very early elementary years.

The speaker is concerned that the assets that the teachers worked so hard to develop in the children will be eroded.

Carol Comeau thanked everyone that has come forward and weighted in on this difficult decision, as well as her staff. Ms. Comeau stated that it is very important that the Board and community recognize that this is devastating. The energy is rising, which is exactly what needs to happen. Ms. Comeau added that she is hoping the Board will defer any decision on cuts and reinstatements until June, when we will have the full financial picture before us. Because of the projected \$20 to \$22 million deficits next year, we need to make thoughtful recommendations. If we do it now and something happens in June, we will have to go back and change it. If we can convince the Governor to increase funding, we can start counting on it instead.

Jake Metcalfe thanked the Administration, bargaining unit people, and community for their work in helping with the budget.

AMENDMENT:

Moved by John Steiner

Seconded by Jeff Friedman

To add the following language at the end of the memorandum: "In addition, the Board directs the Superintendent to work with community groups that may provide alternate funding or sponsorship that would allow continuation of Community Schools in support of the District's mission and Board goals, "C" team activities, the reduced music teachers, and consider any other community support offers for other reduced or eliminated programs or services. "

John Steiner stated that he agrees with Ms. Comeau that although there are many things that would be wonderful to add back, we don't know if we are going to be able to do any of them right now. Mr. Steiner feels the Superintendent did a very good job under very difficult circumstances. Mr. Steiner added that he wants the community to know that the Board supports these programs.

Tim Steele thanked Mr. Steiner for the amendment. It does not list priorities but directs the Superintendent to work with outside groups. There are a number of activities that can benefit from

booster clubs, foundation funds, etc. Mr. Steele stated that we need to work with anyone that wants to work with us to find a way to provide these critical services.

Ms. Comeau stated that she is appreciative of this amendment. It sends the message that the Board heard all the people who communicated.

Jake Metcalfe stated that he supports it and feels it's a good message to send to Juneau. Mr. Metcalfe added that Ms. Comeau can take it to Fairbanks when she goes as a delegate. Mr. Metcalfe stated that he is concerned we do something right away. If we do not have a financial plan in place we are not going to get the money to fund the programs and we will feel the effect for two years.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT:

Ayes: Marks, Kennedy, Steele,
Metcalfe, Friedman,
Steiner, Roberts

Nays: None

AMENDMENT PASSED

Jeff Friedman commented that he would like to add some money back to a lot of programs. Mr. Friedman commented that although the Board did not make any changes tonight, he appreciated every phone call, e-mail, and parking lot conversation.

Lorett Nabong commented that the students had a chance to speak with Jake Metcalfe and Carol Comeau and voice their opinions on budget cuts. Mr. Nabong hopes another option will be found as soon as possible. Mr. Nabong added that when you put in mind the demand of the HSGQE and NCLB, the requirements to receive an education increased a whole lot more and the students feel they need to receive as many resources as they can.

Macon Roberts stated that he will support the budget and hopes something can happen between now and June so it doesn't have to go into affect.

Crystal Kennedy thanked everyone for their e-mail and calls, and also thanked the Administration for trying to spread the cuts throughout the District. Ms. Kennedy added that she is in awe of the principals and teachers they are already thinking of ways to still come up with a quality program. Ms. Kennedy will support this

budget as is and is looking at it as a document living and breathing and feeling better soon.

Mary Marks commented that it disturbs her that summer school for elementary and middle school is being reduced. Ms. Marks added that she will support the budget as it stands and will be optimistic that some monies will come back. The Board will keep lobbying in Juneau. Ms. Marks appreciates the communication from the public and stressed that the Board still needs support and letters to the legislature.

Jake Metcalfe commented that he is not happy with the budget. When he was first on the Board he was concerned about cutting aides and having larger class sizes, but sees there is no way to prevent it from happening. Mr. Metcalfe stated that the Board will go to Juneau again and repeat the message and tell them they have to have the courage to do things some of their constituents don't want them to do. Mr. Metcalfe added that the Board has an obligation to tell them what we hear from people every day, and hopefully we will get money in the end. We should not be stepping back, but forward.

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION:

Ayes: Marks, Kennedy, Steele,
Metcalfe, Friedman,
Steiner, Roberts

Nays: None

MAIN MOTION PASSED

E. EXECUTIVE SESSION-
(PERSONNEL/FINANCE/NEGOTIATIONS/LITIGATION)

F. ADJOURNMENT

The Special Meeting of January 29, 2004, was adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:45 p.m.

Jake Metcalfe, President

Mary Marks, Clerk

Robin Siegfried, Recording Secretary

Date Minutes Approved