

SPRUCE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The 13th Regular Meeting of the Spruce Mountain School District Board of Directors
For 2015-16 will be held

Thursday, March 10, 2016 6:00 pm Spruce Mountain Middle School Cafeteria

~MINUTES~

Present: Doug DiPasquale, Tammy Frost, Mark Holt, Jackie Knight, Amy McDaniel, Michael Morrell, Joel Pike, Shari Ouellette, Holly Richards, Denise Rodzen, Michael Schaedler arrived at 6:45 pm and Cindy Young.

Absent: Trevor Doiron, Student Representative.

Absent: Laurie Sanborn

CALL TO ORDER Denise Rodzen, Board Chair called the meeting to order at 5:57 pm.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.

Denise Rodzen stated that she first wanted to address the rumors that we are cutting band and there would be no sports, those rumors are erroneous. We are not voting on reconfiguration, we are receiving information only. When there are large issues to be brought to the Board it is not fair to the Board to be pressed into a vote at that meeting. It would be unfortunate to give all information to the Board and then have them feel forced into making an immediate decision. Also, I read something that was posted on my personal Facebook, Facebook is good to get ahold of family and friends, this is my personal page and I do not appreciate messages of this nature on my Facebook page. If you want to contact me directly my email address is denise@rodzen.com. I would like to read to you an article about a meeting held on May 15, 1941, at that meeting there was discussion about closing schools in the outlying areas and have those students come to the town schools. In that article it spoke of not having any married teachers at the schools. I hope we have come a long way since then.

2. ATTENDANCE

**12 Present (Michael Schaedler arrived at 6:45 pm)
1 (Laurie Sanborn) Absent
Absent Trevor Doiron Student Representative**

3. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA - None

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

February 25, 2016 – Board Meeting minutes

Motion by Michael Morrell and seconded by Shari Ouellette to approve the minutes of the February 25, 2016 regular Board Meeting minutes.

Vote: 11 Yes 0 No 0 Abstain

5. COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE - None

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6. PUBLIC COMMENTS –

Rhonda Bean spoke of change, change is either good or bad. If you look at it with informed eyes it looks good, if you have not had input it is bad. I was a part of a huge change taking kindergarten from ½ day to full day. Research was conducted and it was a cooperative process. With this reconfiguration teachers have had no input, it should be a collaborative process. There has been zero input from those who have the greatest at stake. This action seems very threatening and punitive. Too bad we were not included in this planning. I don't have the same optimism I had when we made the kindergarten change.

7. BOARD COMMENTS - None

8. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

As of March 4 there are 1489 children in the district, LES has 423, JES 338, SMMS 323 and SMHS 405. Since our last regular Board meeting we have hired Michelle Hutchins as a school bus monitor and Norma Jackman as a 30 hour bus driver.

I am now asking Michele Coates to provide you with the most recent overview of the budget.

Michele Coates said that coming to the school system has been an eye opener and very interesting.

When I was in college in my negotiations class we were taught that the person that negotiates from the farthest away wins. I have to say that Ken has done above and beyond during this budget process, cutting wherever possible. He made cuts where I didn't think were possible. Heating oil has been addressed and \$110,000 has been cut from the budget. With that cut we are coming in \$35,000 over last year's budget after taking out the elevator and bleachers. 81% of the total budget is payroll and benefits. We are not filling 5 positions districtwide that result from retirements. Our carry over is almost \$800,000. We also chose to use some of our unallocated funds (1/3 of the total amount) of \$324,000. As the budget stands all three towns will see a decrease because of carry over and unallocated funds. I have given you all a handout that points out some things that I thought were not apparent at our last meeting. I have also handed out the most recent revenue page

Tammy Frost asked if the Revenue page could be dated. Cindy Young said did you say you were going to use all of the \$800,000. Michele responded that that is the amount left after the end of the year. \$964,000 is in undesignated funds and we have 3 years to use it.

Joel Pike asked where the undesignated funds were and Michele responded that it is in the cash balance. He also asked if the lower cost of diesel was changed. Michele said she will double check that for him.

Mark Holt addressed Ken Healey with the question if the \$109,000 reduction for heating oil, diesel and propane is the total savings. Mark said that as he looks at it it looks like a savings of \$160,000. Ken Healey asked Ken Vining to look into that.

Doug DiPasquale asked if the total should be \$170,000.

Denise Rodzen said that she made a statement at the last board meeting and I would again ask you to ask your questions in a manner so that you are still respecting all individuals involved in this budget process, if you are disappointed in the budget do not say you are disappointed in that individual.

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Ken Healey continued that the Board had asked for him to tell them what we get for over EPS. Some have interpreted that to mean we are cutting anything over EPS, which is not true. I am reporting what is above EPS. EPS is what the State of Maine is giving us, it is the minimum requirements. Ken Healey reviewed what is over EPS.

9. BOARD CHAIR'S REPORT - None

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS – None

11. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORTS

12.1 Elementary Schools – Kevin Harrington and Chris Hollingsworth

Chris Hollingsworth and Kevin Harrington handed out to the Board a reconfiguration packet. Chris Hollingsworth stated that when we realign it will show some cost savings in making class sizes smaller. If we stayed the same Kevin would have to add a teacher. The financial impact is not what we want to focus on. I remember on more than one occasion this school board directed JES and LES to get on the same page, you wanted us to work together. Although we have put a lot of effort into being on the same page as far as curriculum is concerned, the fact remains that this is very difficult being two different schools, it is very difficult if not possible to be completely aligned. By realigning we would become a district wide Pre-K to 2 primary school and a 3-5 elementary school. The reconfiguration will fulfill what we think we have been directed to do from Board, it will allow us to work with curriculum at each grade level, have the same education experience and opportunity, put to rest the notion of the half's and half not's and have consistent class sizes and all will become Spruce Mountain students.

Mike Schaedler arrived at 6:45pm.

Kevin Harrington said that he and Chris Hollingsworth met with pre-K – 2 staff yesterday and 3-5 staff today.

Denise Rodzen asked when had you talked to staff before this meeting? Kevin Harrington replied that we spoke to them a couple of weeks ago. This idea is not new, it has been looked at in the past. We did our homework. Kevin Harrington spoke of current classroom sizes versus reconfiguration class size.

Audience member Jean Tardiff said that this seems to like it is being shoved through the back door, I have concerns on cost savings, when we consolidated we were told there was going to be a huge savings because of the consolidation and we didn't see any savings. What are the costs with moving, name changes? I am asking that we take our time on this, take one more year, it seems very rushed and the right people have not been involved

Tammy Frost replied that we have had been talking about this for years, There are differences between the schools, there may not be any cost savings but it will make us a better school. Step away from cost savings for 10 minutes and look at curriculum and what is best for students. When we looked at this the last time it was the teachers who wanted the discussion to stop. We could drag this on for 10 more years. We need to bring all the students together, our budgets have decreased over the last four years, and we need to look at what is best for the students not what is best for everyone else.

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Chris Hollingsworth agreed with Tammy Frost, we have been talking about this for many years. It is unfair to say that no teachers have been involved, the superintendent has gone to teacher leader meetings and staff meetings and when he asked the teachers about reconfiguration they said "it was about time". We did not have a meeting with every staff member.

Denise Rodzen said that the rumors come from the same rumor mills, I believe that there are a few who do not want this to happen and are trying to scare the parents in the community.

Chris Hollingsworth went on to explain what the numbers could possibly look like in the next 3 to 4 years and what the schools would look like. There will have to be teachers shifted if we stay separate. We are using this year's numbers. With reconfiguration it does allow us to keep class sizes stable.

At JES for grades 3-5 everyone fits in nicely and actually allows for 1 extra free room. We also looked at putting Pre-K – 2 at JES but we ran out of room.

Denise Rodzen said that in the past it was believed that younger students could not be on the second floor of a building.

Kevin Harrington said that he has met with the State Fire Marshalls. In a Pre-K – 2 school it is not a problem to have younger children on the second floor. Chris Hollingsworth said he also checked and found that to be true, in fact, the Mallot School in Farmington is a Pre-K – 2 school with two floors. This would not be the case if it was a Pre-K – 3 school.

Kevin Harrington presented the floor plan for LES PreK-2, I would like to thank Jacob Foss a student at SMHS for doing the CAD drawing for us. Everyone fits. We did include in the packet information on busing.

Denise Rodzen asked if there was going to be a change to the time that students would be accepted at JES to 7:25 am with LES accepting students at 7:40 am. Chris Hollingsworth said that this came about because of the busing and having one bus run, there is no logical way to have both schools start at the same time. We are already staggered. All Livermore and Livermore Falls grade 3 – 5 would have a 10 minute less bus ride than they currently have. Technically we have kids here early and we really have been opening the doors at 7:25 am.

Joel Pike asked when did you put these maps together with the room assignments? Chris Hollingsworth replied that they have been working on it for about a week, a rough plan was done a while ago, did a room count earlier and that was when we had our first indication that Pre-K – 2 could not fit at JES.

Joel Pike said that I have asked for specifics for each bus route, how much you factored extra time for bus drivers with construction.

Ken Vining replied that as far as the actual time of bus runs it seems so simple. It is only going to affect Pre-K – 2 which is roughly 175 students coming from Jay. As far construction they will generally let a group of buses out at one time. In the morning the LES students will have a shorter bus ride.

Joel Pike said that what I am looking for is specifics by route, there might be savings.

Ken Vining replied that there will be nothing changing, drivers times can be adjusted somewhere else.

Mark Holt said that we had a meeting today with the construction company and it should be wrapped up before school starts, construction will be a shorter season than this past fall.

Mark Given who drives bus in our district said that if you take the Hyde Road it might be a minute longer.

Tammy Frost asked if we are keeping the Pre-K run a separate run?

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Kevin Harrington replied yes, Pre-K is a separate run.

An audience member said they lived in North Jay, does the morning bus time change?

Ken Vining replied that they would stay the same. We stop at LES and drop students off at 7:10 am. School starts at 7:40 am, that would not change. Those early students go into the cafeteria where they are supervised by staff.

Joel Pike said that in his personal opinion this plan is being put together too quickly. I have questions, I am an engineer and I need details, logistics. These things need to be worked through. My concern is that this is budget time and we have just spent all this time on reconfiguration and we are forgetting about the budget. I appreciate all the information that was supplied in our packet but I didn't have time to read it but I would like details and things worked out.

The last page of information in the packet relates to information that we received from Food Service. By reconfiguring the schools the Free and Reduced Lunch count would go from currently at LES the rate is 62% and JES the rate is 54%, with the reconfiguration it would be LES 60% and JES 57%.

Denise Rodzen said that tonight is just to review information and I can guarantee it has to be done before the budget is approved.

This is about curriculum coming together, we have to have a common curriculum.

An audience member asked if these issues were going to be figured out before? There is not a lot of time to get our teachers together.

Ken Healey said that at least the grade level teachers will all be in one building.

Chris Hollingsworth said that we met 3 years ago. At late arrival times we can work on curriculum.

Language Arts is a big issue and will take some time for us to work out, there are differences between the buildings.

Amanda Hersey said that she is here and ready to work hard, we will get through this. Kevin Harrington and Chris Hollingsworth have a good understanding and we need to do what is right for the kids.

Holly Richards asked Scott Albert if he sees a difference in the students and he said that his teachers report seeing a definite difference.

Shari Ouellete said she is most excited about the fact that from an elementary age all the children will all be together as Spruce Mountain, not just at middle school and high school.

Middle school is an awkward age and if they have been together earlier this will make it a good thing.

Denise Rodzen said that to put all grade level teachers together some of these really strong teachers can be mentors to other teachers and be able to do what is best for the student.

An audience member spoke of her experience, I don't feel that I had any different education coming from separate schools. As much as I appreciate that it seems nice to reconfigure, I am not convinced that not reconfiguring leads to student deficits. I know things have been done in the past and they were rushed.

A teacher in the audience said that if curriculum is not defined before, I can't see how if we have 6 second grades how can we get together all the time and do planning.

Denise Rodzen said that I understand that the curriculum is not the same. I appreciate your concerns, but what I am not hearing from all of you is the child, the teachers are having a hard time.

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Michele Coates spoke as a parent of children at the middle school. My children went to LES and since they have joined the middle school I hear weekly how behind they are. Just yesterday they had an exam on the state capitals and both of my children did not do well, my daughter said that they were not taught the capitals and their friend Connor Beaulieu who went to JES has qualified to be a part of the State Geography Bee. There is a difference.

Doug DiPasquale asked what the thought process was to bring this forward during the budget season, what is the rush?

Ken Healey stated that the thought process was that it does have an impact on the budget. In my observation staff have known more than several months, this has been discussed over the last 3 or 4 years. Bringing this forward during the budget process is the most practical time. All financial decisions are made at this time. We could wait another 5 years or 10 years. It is about the opportunity of all our students, honestly we need to have socialization of our teachers in order to bring the initiative forward. In regards to curriculum, what are we using right now? We have not had a curriculum coordinator until now, she will work over the summer to coordinate this effort. For me it is not a rush, you are going to tell me you need to cut some money, I spoke at an RA meeting and what I heard from everyone was "it is about time". If it is good for kids today you need to come forward, the easier path would be to do nothing. But that's not what you me for.

Michelle Brann said that this is not about whether or not there are gaps, you can look at standardized data and see areas of weakness between the two campuses'.

Judy Diaz asked since consolidated who has been responsible for curriculum? She said the ball got dropped hard, it has been five years.

Ken Healey replied that this is why we finally hired a curriculum coordinator. We have talked for years, what does the middle school need from 5th grade students, what does the high school need from 8th grade students. There were so many hot items at consolidation, we now have a curriculum coordinator and we need to move forward.

Carrie Mitchell said that kids are always in my best interest, I don't want it to be selfish but I need to know if I am moving so I can start packing. We want answers. I heard about this the Thursday before vacation. We are anxious for answers, we don't want to go in blind. The middle school and the high school had work days over the summer.

Denise Rodzen said that until we have a budget settled we won't know if we have money for that.

It is not the teachers being selfish I will teach anywhere.

Sue St. Pierre said that the middle school went through this first. We said on paper that the schools were consolidated but it never happened until we all came together. It needs to happen. It was not easy but we got through it for the best interest of the children.

Julie Taylor said that having done this with middle school the one thing that will really help I would say is do it quickly. These teachers will need time, planning is essential, it does not necessarily need to be summer days. Some release time would be good, use Amanda she know best practices and will help you. We had some anxiety also but we came through it.

Denise Rodzen said that I appreciate your thoughts and concerns.

Jean Tardiff it bothers me that curriculum is not the same in both buildings, it concerns me about rushing into this.

Denise Rodzen said thank you all for your input, there is a lot for us to process, this is not the last time we will discuss this. The next budget meeting is on the 17th at SMHS in cafeteria.

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12.2 Spruce Mountain Middle School – Scott Albert

I will be very brief, congratulations to the February students of the month, they are: Grade 6 Jenna Badeau and Madelyn Castonguay, Grade 7 Hanni Johnson and Madeline Labonte and Grade 8 Colby Rollins and Abby Thurston. Our Geography Bee winner Connor Ceaulieu has taken his exam and has qualified to take part in the State Geography Bee on April 1st at UMF. I believe that you all received a phone call from me reminding you of the Price is Right on March 19th...the doors open at 4:30 pm. SMMS drama production of Into the Woods evening performances will be on Thursday March 24 and Friday March 25 at 7 pm.

12.3 Spruce Mountain High School – TJ Plourde

TJ Plourde discussed surveys that students, parents and staff are taking for NEASC preparation. Will be sending out the Endicott survey right now to parents, it only takes about 20 minutes to complete. Phoenix Olympics is this week, thank you Michelle Brann for all you have done. Pilot performance based education is underway. When we start a semester there are higher numbers of students in each class and then we have an add drop period. I have 16 classes with below 10 students in each class. These are Honors classes, AP and directed courses. We do have around 60 electives at the present time and I believe we provide an outstanding education for our students.

Denise Rodzen said that in AP classes you do not want a large class.

TJ Plourde replied that in most AP classes you do not want to have above 12 or 13 students, there is a lot of material to cover. We have 130 exams being given out for AP students at no cost to the students for those tests and I want to continue that. It is very important.

Denise Rodzen asked how many students do you have in study halls? TJ Plourde answered that that is an issue, when you start cutting positions that pushes kids into study halls. We have 50-60 students in study halls.

Rob Taylor said that I believe that we started this evening stating that the state is suppose to fund 55% essential programs and they never have funded 55%. The EPS model is essential programs. I am teaching one of the classes that is above EPS, I see both of my programs on the above EPS list, I look at Alternative Education, Industrial Arts, and those things don't show up in EPS but are very important. As I look at the budgets around us consolidation has saved us big time. I look at this budget I really think Mr. Healey has does a tremendous job, we are in tough economic times, where we are is where we need to be.

Tammy Frost said that when we asked for what was over EPS we were looking for information. No one had ever broken it down for us as Board members. I never knew what EPS was, as a parent I don't want to cut but now I know where to cut when the mill closes. I want to thank Mr. Healey for breaking out the numbers for us. I do not want to cut it to the bare bones, I want to be able to say that over EPS is sports, AP, etc., we want to be more educated.

Denise Rodzen said that the entire EPS formula was flawed from day one. A lot of those classes are for students who may not be going further. What we are looking at is the classes that we offer are what our kids need. We need to make sure we are preparing them, they are not coming out prepared some of our business leaders are saying.

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Mark Holt said that he was reading that Rob Taylor has been named educator of the year by soil and conversation.

Pam Harnden said that since I have been covering the district I have gotten to know Rob a little and all of the fantastic programs he offers and I nominated Rob for this award.

TJ Plourde said that we do have another thing, our students have been putting together a video cast and it is phenomenal, unbelievable.

13. POLICY - None

14. OLD BUSINESS - None

15. NEW BUSINESS

15.1 Late Start Wednesday's and Teacher Evaluation update – Nathan Harnden

Nathan Harnden, Julie Taylor and Michelle Brann made presentation. Nathan said that they were charged as a group with implementing the plan. We needed to train the teachers. At our late start Wednesday's we are having 95% or better attendance from staff.

Denise Rodzen asked if you have a process to catch up those staff who missed a training?

Nathan Harnden said that the staff come to see us to get the training materials. When we have new teachers come into the district we need to have something in place for them. One thing that came up was lack of common curriculum and assessments. We had Amanda Hersey join us this week. Having a common curriculum and assessments is essential.

Denise Rodzen said I knew it was a work in process, I knew you would find a way to make it work. Thank you.

Nathan Harnden said the Board should consider new teacher training. Keeping within the timeline has been challenging. We want a workable, doable plan for the State. By mid-April we want to be able to submit to the State.

Tammy Frost asked when you said new teacher training did you mean new teacher orientation? I don't believe that is the role of the board.

Amy McDaniel asked if we are looking at mentor program evaluation program? Nathan Harnden said yes.

Denise Rodzen said that parents have asked me that at the elementary schools a grant was available that was being used to have coverage for students who were dropped off at school on late arrival Wednesday's early. Some parents are saying that this is not happening. Can we correct this?

Kevin Harrington said that we have at least 3 or 4 staff members who are supervising students.

Denise Rodzen asked if something could be sent home to let parents know this. Kevin Harrington said yes.

16. APPOINTMENTS - None

17. OTHER BUSINESS

17.1 Consideration of funding formula change.

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18. CALENDAR/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Special Board Meeting on:

March 17, 2016 – 6:00 PM at Spruce Mountain High School in the Cafeteria

The next regular meeting will be on:

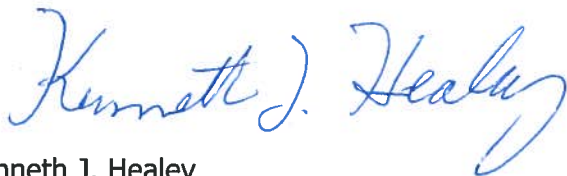
March 24, 2016 – Regular Board Meeting – 6:00 PM Cedar Street Conference Room (tentative)

19. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Shari Ouellette and seconded by Jackie Knight to adjourn at 9:17 pm.

Vote: 12 Yes 0 No 0 Abstain

Respectfully submitted:



Kenneth J. Healey
Superintendent of Schools