

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Millburn School District 24

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING  
March 1, 2010

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Robert Buehler  
Diane Campbell  
Kenneth Dewitt  
Shawn Lahr  
Robert Reding  
Lisa Scanio

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT

Dr. Ellen Mauer, Superintendent  
Elizabeth Keefe, Special Services Director  
Dr. Cheryl Kucera, Curriculum Director  
Joanne Rathunde, Technology Director  
Jake Jorgenson, Principal

BUSINESS MANAGER

Mary Taylor

VISITORS

Meghan Konicki  
Suzanne Dekorsi  
Melissa Watters  
Jane Gattone  
Kim Dodd  
Laura Brown  
Chandra Solberg  
Chris Guss  
Liz Carr  
Felix Moran

BOARD CLERK

Dorothy Pazanin

The Committee of the Whole of the Board of Education of Millburn School District 24, Lake County, Illinois, held at Millburn West School, was called to order at 7 p.m. by President Shawn Lahr. Roll call was taken, with the following Board Members in attendance: Robert Buehler, Diane Campbell, Shawn Lahr, Robert Reding and Lisa Scanio. Kenneth Dewitt entered the meeting at 7:05 p.m. Chris Stream was absent.

SECRETARY PRO-TEM -- Because Board Secretary Chris Stream was absent, it was decided to name a Secretary Pro Tem. A motion was made by Diane Campbell and seconded by Lisa Scanio to appoint Robert Reding as Secretary Pro Tem. On a voice vote, all Board Members voted Aye. Nays: none. Absent: Kenneth Dewitt and Chris Stream. The motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT -- There was none at this time.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

BUDGET -- Dr. Ellen Mauer opened the discussion on two ideas that were presented to her about ways to reconfigure the schools to cut costs. The first was to include the Forrest Trails subdivision, or other subdivisions, into the Millburn West boundaries. She said the Forrest Trails subdivision was too small to make a significant difference in the enrollment at West. If all the subdivisions that send students to Lakes High School were switched to the West boundaries, then West would be overcrowded. A second idea was to close Millburn West and have all students attend Central. This would put Central over capacity and there would be several other negative ramifications.

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Board Members discussed several points, including:

- \* The cost of trying to equalize homeroom class sizes when the total school enrollments are so disproportionate.

- \* How to address the “duplication of services” cost if both buildings remain as K-8 schools.

- \* The definite need for a second building.

- \* The possibility of having a Building Fund referendum to raise revenue for interfund borrowing throughout the school year.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE -- Kenneth Dewitt said it was important to have a historical perspective of the district’s finances to help understand the present circumstances. He explained that in the past 15 years district enrollment has grown from about 350 to more than 1,600. Over that time, the district has experienced periods of borrowing and two referendums. Before the building additions, there were years with classes being conducted in the hallways, “art on a cart” and no cafeteria.

To build Millburn West, the district asked for the largest tax increase that it thought the taxpayers would approve. Also, the community supported the plan to build another K-8 school. Projections at that time indicated that another Education Fund referendum would be needed around the year 2010. After Millburn West opened, new subdivisions were still being planned within the district. The Board was discussing boundary reconfigurations to accommodate the continued growth and the possibility of a third school. However, the recent banking crisis made borrowing money more difficult, and the decline in the housing market stalled the growth. By last year, the district was only able to borrow enough operating funds if it agreed to balance the budget by cutting expenditures.

Board Members said that some lessons can be learned from the past, such as staying on a balanced budget and taking corrective actions sooner. Dr. Mauer asked the Board Members if they were committed to a balanced budget and not borrowing more than the current \$3.7 million. They agreed that she should continue to plan along those parameters.

It was determined that the viable options left to consider are passing a referendum, reconfiguring the boundaries for each school, or changing the schools to one elementary and one middle school. Dr. Mauer is preparing a survey to solicit views from the community. She said the Board must decide by August if they want to have a referendum question on the November ballot.

ANNUAL AUDIT -- Mary Taylor said she has requested bids from eight accounting firms to conduct the district’s annual audit. Dr. Ellen Mauer said it has been several years since the district has changed auditors and she is interested in receiving proposals from other firms. The current auditor, Milburn Cain & Co., is expected to submit a bid. The bids will be presented at the Board’s Regular Meeting on March 15.

REVIEW OF 2010-11 CALENDAR -- Dr. Ellen Mauer explained that High School District 117 asked if Millburn would consider changing its school calendar for next year to use the same dates for winter break as Lakes High School. Dr. Mauer explained that the Millburn calendar was designed to have as many 5-day weeks as possible to preserve optimum instructional blocks of time. The high school calendar begins and ends its winter break mid-week. The Board did not express an interest in changing Millburn’s calendar.

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BOARD MEETING DATES FOR 2010-11 -- The proposed schedule for Board of Education meeting dates for next school year was reviewed. It was agreed to continue meeting on the first and third Mondays at 7 p.m., with a few exceptions for holidays and a superintendent conference. Dr. Mauer said the Board Meeting calendar will be on the consent agenda at the next Regular Meeting.

STAFF RECOGNITION AWARDS -- Dr. Ellen Mauer said she surveyed the staff regarding the annual Red Apple and Blue Pen recognition awards. Basically, about 60 percent of the survey respondents like some sort of recognition but do not want to continue with the way it has been done in the past. Board Members said staff comments offered some interesting alternatives. Dr. Mauer said she will prepare a plan for recognizing staff members that incorporates some of the proposed ideas.

FIRST READING OF BOARD POLICIES -- Dr. Ellen Mauer presented the following Board Policies for First Reading:

Instruction -- 6:60 Curriculum Content  
Instruction -- 6:290 Homework  
School Board -- 2:200 Types of School Board Meetings  
Students -- 7:180 Preventing Bullying, Intimidation and Harassment

A second reading and approval of these policies will be on the consent agenda at the next Regular Meeting.

STAFF UPDATE -- Dr. Ellen Mauer said a decision must be made at the March Board Meeting regarding non-renewal of several teachers' contracts. Four staff members who are currently on a Leave of Absence have said they will be returning to work next school year. Also, kindergarten enrollment projections for next year are lower than this year's class sizes. The decision for non-renewal of contracts must be made in March so that teachers receive a minimum of 60 days notice, as required by law. Some teachers may be invited back if the kindergarten enrollment projections increase. Dr. Mauer said it is important to note that no teachers were being released for cause.

PUBLIC COMMENT -- Chandra Solberg stated that she would be willing to pay higher taxes to keep small class sizes. She also asked if there was any way to tap into the Forest Preserve resources.

Laura Brown said smaller class sizes are more important to her than retaining the K-8 model.

Jane Gattone said she was glad to hear the serious financial discussion taking place. She said she is open to all types of options before raising taxes. She supports options that would bring more students to Millburn West because she foresees West enrollment as stabilizing or decreasing. She is a member of the Lindenhurst Plan Commission and said she is not aware of any new major commercial business being planned within the district boundaries.

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Chris Guss asked about the decision to build Millburn West as a K-8 school. Board members explained that there were several community forums. A majority of citizens supported the K-8 concept, knowing that it would be the more expensive option. Families liked the idea of sending all their children to the same school and creating more opportunities for children to participate in various activities.

Liz Carr said she moved into the Millburn School District about three years ago. She researched several school districts and chose Millburn because of the small class sizes and high test scores.

Felix Moran said he was a part of the referendum process six years ago to build Millburn West and that the community showed that it strongly values education. However, the economic environment has changed. He is concerned now that he may not be able to afford higher taxes.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Kenneth Dewitt and seconded by Lisa Scanio to adjourn the meeting. On a voice vote, all Board Members voted Aye. Nays: none. Absent: Chris Stream. The motion passed and the Committee Meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

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Shawn Lahr, President  
Board of Education  
Millburn School District 24

ATTEST:

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Robert A. Reding, Secretary Pro Tem  
Board of Education  
Millburn School District 24

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Date