

LINCOLN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Directors- Work Session
Tuesday, December 14, 2010- 6:30 p.m.
Newport High School
Newport, Oregon

Minutes

PRESIDING: Ron Beck, Chairman

Present: Ron Beck, Chairman; Jean Turner, Vice-Chairman; Brenda Brown, Liz Martin, Directors

Also Present: Tom Rinearson, Superintendent; Rich Belloni, Director of Support Services; Laurie Urquhart, Secretary; approx. 20 members of the staff and community

Call to Order- Establishment of a Quorum

Chairman Ron Beck called the session to order and convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. with a quorum of four board members present. Director Bondley was excused from the meeting.

Discussion on Polling Results

Chairman Beck noted Director Bondley shared her opinion via email about a possible bond, saying she is 100% in favor of the bond measure and supports all of the proposed projects, including upgrading the athletic fields. Two opinion polls were done to gauge perception and public support for a possible \$63 million bond measure for school building construction and renovation. One poll was conducted of voters in the community; the other was an online survey employees were invited to complete. Both polls asked the same questions of respondents.

The Board discussed the Executive Summary of the Nelson Report, the market research company that conducted the telephone poll of voters. Chairman Beck noted education of voters will be necessary, as opinions changed when more information was shared by the survey company.

Director Turner said the surveys provide direction and salient points with which to begin a campaign, if the Board chooses to do so. She said it was surprising to her to learn people were not aware of the poor physical shape of Waldport High. The Superintendent said he has received several phone calls asking about the condition of Waldport High.

Director Brown noted that renovations and efficiencies resonated with voters much higher than moving Waldport High from the tsunami zone. Director Belloni said a facilities study of Waldport High would be done (as it was at other schools) to determine needs of the existing building.

Director Turner noted the high priority and favorable impression for using local contractors as much as possible. Director Brown reported her “take away” from the executive summary is that using local contractors is important, as is the need for upgrades and efficiencies at school buildings. The results relating to “no increase in property taxes” did not surprise her, nor did the relatively low rating of athletic fields and facilities. She added the idea of moving Waldport High out of the tsunami zone rated lower than she expected. Director turned responded that cost is likely a factor (regarding moving Waldport High).

Superintendent Rinearson agreed moving this high school was rated lower than other projects, but was still a favorable rating. He said he was surprised at the amount of support across the board and said in other districts, a rating of 40% was enough to proceed with a bond; ours was much higher. Director Brown said 60% is the number pollsters look for.

The Superintendent reported Waldport High’s small school funding may be affected by moving the school. The law is site driven; the District is seeking a waiver to continue the funding should a new school become a reality. The school gleans approximately \$400,000 per year from this funding provision, which purchases about 4.5 teachers. If this revenue vanished, maintaining a high school in Waldport would be difficult. Mr. Rinearson said LCSD has asked for a response from ODE on the issue as soon as possible. Director Brown asked for additional information on this topic.

Mr. Rinearson said early word from the new governor’s office indicates a funding level for K-12 education for the coming biennium at \$5.4 billion (the current budget is based on a figure of \$5.7 billion state level funding). He added that not enough information is available yet from the governor’s office.

Director Brown noted the clear consistency between the two surveys regarding what polled well and what did not. She said if the Board chooses to move forward, voters must be educated on all aspects of the proposed projects.

Board members noted that artificial turf fields ranked lowest in both surveys. Gym additions also ranked somewhat lower than other projects, though it was noted physical education and other educational activities occur in them. Director Martin noted the topic of “athletics” has two sides; “if you do not have an athlete, it is not a priority for you,” said Martin. She raised the idea of learning more about the efficiencies of turf fields. Chairman Beck said the topic could be an equity issue, if artificial turf were added in one area and not another. Director Brown said the artificial turf fields were the most negative part of both surveys.

Chairman Beck surmised if more information was shared about the fields including their benefits, voters may feel differently. Director Brown said removing the fields from the projects would lower the negativity, and said keeping them in would add another piece “you would have to push against, uphill.” Director Turner noted no benefits were described with regard to the artificial turf fields, and said she does not have knowledge about them and suspects others do not either.

Director Martin offered that feelings about artificial turf fields could depend upon where one lives; “in Newport, I feel a new field would be important,” said Martin.

Rich Belloni noted the architects had shared their opinion that educating the public would likely change opinions for the gyms at Sam Case and Oceanlake (i.e., students are currently eating lunch in their rooms; childhood obesity is on the rise, etc.).

Director Brown noted the Board and administrators need to be aware of the overall perception of the district and should be realistic. She said artificial turf fields may be perceived as “frivolous, and the bond issue is about instructional space.”

Liz Martin reported her brother took the telephone survey, and said he felt the questions could have been asked in a more positive way. In particular, he said respondents should have been told at the beginning of the survey that their property taxes would not increase as a result of a new bond issue.

Brenda Brown called the group’s attention to one comment on the employee poll, “who needs new gym floors when roofs leak and ruin expensive electronics.” She said she felt this comment summarized the feelings of many in the community.

Jean Turner noted the Board needs to recognize that athletics are a “big deal in Lincoln County. Lots of people come out; it is our support and our community. If we take out all of that, I think it will be a big hole.” Mr. Rinearson said the hospital is considering a bond next year focusing on childhood obesity and the availability of athletic fields and facilities. He said the facilities projects will provide a statement on “how we want to follow through on things. If we leave something half done, it shows we do not care about quality.”

Board members asked Director Belloni to research information on costs of artificial turf fields versus traditional grass ones. He will provide this information at the next regular session.

Superintendent Rinearson noted it appears the Board is ready to make a decision on a bond issue, save for a few items: artificial turf, gyms, and the Waldport High small school money. “The schedule is to present you with a draft ballot resolution next week so you can vote in January to move forward or not.” He suggested board members ask their communities about the polling results when they are out and about.

Mr. Rinearson also said the Board will need to talk about how they as a board will set up a campaign, and said it would make sense to discuss this item when discussing a ballot resolution.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Chairman

Superintendent