



MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Washington County School District
121 West Tabernacle, St. George, Utah
March 18, 2024
2:00 p.m.

Present: Board President Becky Dunn, Board Member Craig Seegmiller, Board Vice President David Stirland, Board Member LaRene Cox, Board Member Terry Hutchinson, Board Member Burke Staheli, Board Member Nannette Simmons, Superintendent Richard Holmes, Business Administrator Brent Bills, Assistant Superintendent Nate Esplin, Assistant Superintendent Cheri Stevenson, Executive HR Director Darin Thomas, Executive Director Amy Mitchell, Executive Director Steve Gregoire, Executive Director Craig Hammer, Executive Director Wade Jensen, and Communications Director Steven Dunham.

Minutes: Executive Secretary Kajsia Boyer

Reverence by Member Simmons.

WORK SESSION

Sharp Survey – Superintendent Richard Holmes

Superintendent Richard Holmes said we need to know if the Board would still like to move forward with the survey. He mentioned that Jon Butler suggested having parents sign the opt in signature form at the beginning of the year, so it is part of the registration packet. The survey is given in the 6th, 8th, and 10th grades. Becky Dunn and other Board members feel it is better to have parents sign at the time of the survey.

Enrollment/Program Updates and Plans – Cheri Stevenson and Nate Esplin

Superintendent Richard Holmes said this item will be covered in different pieces with the Pine View boundary for Fall 2024–2025, Dual Immersion numbers, and the Online student enrollment. Cheri Stevenson shared proposed numbers for shifting students from Crimson Cliffs to Pine View. She said if all of the Horizon Elementary boundary was moved to the Pine View cone-site it would include 174 intermediate students, 174 middle school students, and 206 high school students. If only the students who live north of Washington Dam Road were moved it would include 64 intermediate students, 64 middle students, and 93 high school students. That natural boundary line includes more mature families who don't have the smaller kids. If the students who live north of East Stable Way were included it would be 112 intermediate school, 128 middle school and 193 high school students. That area has more new homes and may include more younger kids. She said another interesting part of all of this is with Dual Immersion. She shared the number of Dual Immersion students. Travis Wilstead said half of the Dual Immersion students are already in the Pine View boundary. She also shared the projected numbers. About 37% of the DLI students in the program at Horizon are coming from out the boundary. Crimson Cliffs is closed for enrollment, so the Chinese DLI program at Horizon is the only way students from out of the boundary can get into Crimson Cliffs. Washington Fields Intermediate has told students in DLI that if they leave the Chinese program, they will go back to their boundary school. Students have to be committed to the program to remain there. Burke Staheli asked about out of boundary students in first grade who attend Horizon. Travis Wilstead said some of them may be siblings of students in the program. If the Horizon boundary is changed, about 37% of the students would continue in the Crimson Cliffs cone-site. Burke Staheli asked about having Portuguese at Crimson Cliffs and Chinese at Pine View, so we only have one language per cone-site. Superintendent Richard Holmes said we are already

seeing a decrease in the Chinese program enrollment not only here but across the nation. Cheri Stevenson mentioned that they also looked at moving the Leeds students, but there would only be seven or eight students per grade level, and they have already been shuffled enough. It would not be a significant number of students to move them. Cheri Stevenson said moving the Horizon boundary would definitely impact Crimson Cliffs initially, but there are other areas of growth that would help bring students. Looking at some of the other suggested areas would be a good medium. There is about a 250-student difference between Crimson Cliffs and Pine View. Cheri Stevenson said the Fossil Ridge saw growth last year with an increase of about 41 students, but Pine View Middle had a decrease of about 23 students. Last year, Pine View High lost about 26 students. David Stirland said he would like to help the Pine View demographics if we make a change. Craig Seegmiller said the last conversation included having one language per cone-site. Superintendent Richard Holmes said eventually that would be the ideal. He felt we would need to move the whole elementary school rather than move the language program. We would not be able to move the program until Fall 2025. Travis Wilstead said he could ask parents in the Chinese program at Three Falls about transferring to the Spanish program. He mentioned that other school districts in the state have combined schools, but it did not increase the program enough. He said other schools are transitioning up to support students in the program as they cut the programs. The schools announced the cut and did not allow enrollment in the next year. Travis Wilstead mentioned that this year we improved on the AP test, but we are still below the state average. He said that Mike Hassler has been working with the University on a bridge program and cyber security issues. Travis Wilstead said that he is being very clear with parents that students are not in the program to pass the AP test. The Board talked about eliminating the Chinese program in Hurricane. Cheri Stevenson said there are not enough students participating in the upper grades to staff an FTE. Travis Wilstead said they do have a waiting list for Spanish at Hurricane Elementary. Becky Dunn asked about staffing teachers for Spanish. Travis Wilstead said the state has expanded and would provide support. David Stirland suggested surveying parents to see if they would be interested in changing to the Spanish program or just eliminating the Dual Immersion at Three Falls. The Chinese program would continue as the program is phased out. Travis Wilstead suggested that the only way to keep the program would be to have an A/B schedule for the teacher to work at intermediate, middle, and high school. The Board also talked about having only one language feed to Dixie (Spanish) and Snow Canyon (Chinese).

David Stirland mentioned his concern with the loss of students in brick-and-mortar schools vs. online schools. Laura Belnap said principals have told her that rigor is not the problem. She said that the courses are mastery based with the exception of math, which is proctor tested. The other courses are project based. Burke Staheli discussed how the program has changed the brick-and-mortar schools. Laura Belnap said they are really trying to focus on getting teachers from other areas and not taking them from our schools unless they are looking for a change. She said the beauty of online in our District is it allows students to take online courses and still participate in their boundary school. She said she has talked with principals on ideas to blend the online school with the boundary school. She said in those conversations, principals said students say it is easier because they can move at their own pace. She has been working with principals on ways to blend the program in the schools. She said that they do take the GVCs and use them in their school. LaRene Cox said there are some students that do not want to participate in a brick-and-mortar school. She is grateful that Utah Online is part of us. They lose money for every student in our District that takes a course online. They are the number one online school in the state. Laura Belnap said she has worked with the schools to revamp that they are doing with the courses to fit their needs. Nannette Simmons said many of the youth are seeking jobs to work at home. That is the world we live in. The younger generation looks to see what they can do at home. She feels that we can't think the same way as in the past because parents are not thinking that way. Many parents don't even think about public education. They want their kids at home and be in charge of their children to protect them. Craig Seegmiller said he appreciates that Utah Online is part of the District and that we can have these conversations to mesh with the schools. Laura Belnap shared that Davis SD has the same percentage of students doing online school as we do. They do not have the school counselor involved. We do coordinate with our school counselors in our District. She said she has been trying to work on solutions to help. She would like to be of value to the schools. Laura Belnap said struggling students are required to come to an academic online class three times a week. Other students can request time with

teachers as needed. She said students also have adult mentors and school counselors that work with the students. Laura Belnap said students can have two online credits to remain a student in the boundary school. Superintendent Richard Holmes said Laura Belnap has the best online program in the state. She has made a huge difference. He suggested that the Board communicate with Laura Belnap when they have questions or concerns. We do have a different generation of students that are used to technology. Brent Bills mentioned that he and Laura Belnap were together through the legislation to keep the decision with the local school districts. Laura Belnap said the number of full-time students in our District is staying steady, but out-of-state is growing exponentially. There are 32 additional teachers and counselors being hired this year. It was mentioned that Utah Online would like to apply for the voucher program.

Legislative Update – Superintendent Richard Holmes and Brent Bills

Superintendent Richard Holmes said the administration is still wading through the bills. Some of the big bills are SB 173 and SB 137 on teacher evaluations and the safety bills which passed. It allows teachers to bring a firearm to school. We will be able to use the funds to help with safety glass and cameras. Another bill deals with student discipline and allows a teacher to remove a student from the class. He said we are working on HB 267 and must have a long-term plan. The bill goes into law on May 1st. We are in pretty good shape. Most of the schools have a bathroom they can go to. The problem could be showers at the school. Brent Bills said with the safety bill said the cameras must be monitored during school hours. We are waiting for the safety czar to tell us what it means. LaRene Cox asked about safety glass. She suggested changing the window size. Brent Bills said it is only for the first floor of the buildings. Laura Belnap asked about the liability of employees who bring a gun and are not trained. Superintendent Richard Holmes said he understands that protection was written in the bill. Richard Holmes reported on the JLC decision to move forward with conditional support for SJR 10. They have said that individual Boards can oppose it, but JLC will not take a stance. Brent Bills said if SJR 10 passes it immediately adds a 2% increase to the WPU. We can't budget for the money in this next year but will be hard to tie into the salaries.

School Fees – Brent Bills

Brent Bills talked with teachers who said they are using all \$350 for travel each year. Their proposal was to have a line that allows an extra \$650 every three years. Pine View said the band plans to go to Disneyland every two years but does not charge the students more than \$350. One dance program is going out of state trips each year to Flagstaff and then Disneyland the third year. Choir uses the \$350 every year for their state trips. Dance also uses the \$350 every year. Brent Bills said all of the fees are "up to." If the school has students on fee waiver, they will need to pay the fees. He mentioned that fundraising is no longer part of the spend plans and is outside of school fees. Schools can still do fundraisers to help cover the cost of students who can't afford it. He suggested including a line under co-curricular for all programs to charge \$650 every three years. The amount was based on the cost of a school that just went at \$630. JROTC would like to change \$800 CIA fee to \$1000 and summer camp from \$250 to \$350. The new school fees bill taking out the fundraisers will help to equalize things. Craig Hammer said the two-day policy is being a problem. We have a school that now wants to go three days. He said we have held firm to our policy. The only exception as those that qualify for a national competition. In the past it has never been an issue. The Board would support adding the \$650 every three years for a program event.

Board Committee Reports

Craig Seegmiller said there has not been a lot happening with the finance committee at this time. Brent Bills said there was one audit hit on fund 21 school account. It will be corrected next year.

David Stirland mentioned the annual Kite Festival coming up on April 6th. Classroom grants are going smoothly and will be going out the next couple of weeks. Steven Dunham will send out dates of the grant presentations for the Board.

LaRene Cox said she will get assignments out for MBA. The program is being changed. Burke Staheli recommended a book study together.

Terry Hutchinson said the FCAOG will be meeting the legislators next month.

Burke Staheli said that Healthy Dixie is helping to put together a garden in Hurricane with Utah Tech University. The little bikes are at Washington Elementary and Red Mountain Elementary.

Nannette Simmons said Dixie Technical College is growing. Their numbers have doubled. They are hoping to expand and build a new building. Their graduation is scheduled for April 25th. They have met with the school counselors on the programs available for our students. Stories from some of their students who have graduated are available on their website.

Becky Dunn had nothing more from USBA with legislation already being discussed.

Brent Bills said mentioned LPGA event on May 3rdth next year. It is also when the Ironman event is scheduled. Ironman would like to move to May 10th. They would like to use our buses. There will be two big weeks in St. George that disrupt our community next year.

Board Member Simmons presented a motion to go into a closed session at 4:16 p.m. Board Member Staheli seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

CLOSED SESSION

Personnel Items

Present: Board President Becky Dunn, Board Member Craig Seegmiller, Board Vice President David Stirland, Board Member LaRene Cox, Board Member Terry Hutchinson, Board Member Burke Staheli, Board Member Nannette Simmons, Superintendent Richard Holmes, Business Administrator Brent Bills, Assistant Superintendent Nate Esplin, Assistant Superintendent Cheri Stevenson, Executive HR Director Darin Thomas, Executive Director Amy Mitchell, Executive Director Steve Gregoire, Executive Director Craig Hammer, Executive Director Wade Jensen, Communications Director Steven Dunham, and Executive Secretary Kajsia Boyer

Legal and Personnel

Board Member Stirland presented a motion to go out of the closed session at 5:26 p.m. Board Member Simmons seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON BOARD ACTION ITEMS

No public comments were given on Board Action Items.

BOARD ACTION ITEMS

Sandstone Elementary School LAND Trust Plan Change

Board Member Stirland presented a motion to approve the Sandstone Elementary School LAND Trust Plan Change. Board Member Cox seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Desert Hills High School LAND Trust Plan Change

Board Member Stirland presented a motion to approve the Desert Hills High School LAND Trust Plan Change. Board Member Cox seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Desert Hills High TSSA Plan Change

Board Member Stirland presented a motion to approve the Desert Hills High TSSA Plan Change. Board Member Cox seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Lava Ridge Intermediate School LAND Trust Plan Change

Board Member Stirland presented a motion to approve the Lava Ridge Intermediate School LAND Trust Plan Change. Board Member Cox seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Hurricane Elementary School LAND Trust Plan Change

Board Member Stirland presented a motion to approve the Hurricane Elementary School LAND Trust Plan Change. Board Member Cox seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Early Retirement HRA Incentive – Brent Bills

Board Member Staheli presented a motion to approve the Medicare Bridge Program. Board Member Hutchinson seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

The Board briefly discussed names for the Water Board which included Stan DeMille, David Stirland, and LaRene Cox.

Board Member Stirland presented a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:29 p.m. Board Member Hutchinson seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT