



MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Washington County School District
121 West Tabernacle, St. George, Utah
September 18, 2023
5:15 p.m.

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

Minutes: Executive Secretary Kajsia Boyer

Reverence by Board Member Stirland

WORK SESSION

UHSAA Update – Craig Hammer

Craig Hammer reported on meeting with principals on Lacrosse. The Lacrosse group has been respectful, and they are trying to do this right. Craig Hammer asked principals if they could make it work at their schools. He has been working to pull all the information together. He mentioned that other districts are charging a lot more for sports. He feels that the schools could make it work. The season would take 16 games. He looked at space, transportation, scheduling, etc. Thursdays seem to be the best day as the only thing on Thursday is Tennis. He was able to find 15 Thursdays and one Wednesday available. Some of the practice events would need to be moved to other schools to allow space. He mentioned one obstacle is the difference in the boys and girls playing fields. He also checked with the principal at Cedar High to include them which would give an eight-team region. The Lacrosse group is only asking for varsity at this point. It could be re-evaluated in a couple of years. Lacrosse would not start until Spring 2025. Boys and girls would play on the same day, at the same time, and ride the same bus. The games last about 60-70 minutes. He said that he is still not sure on the cost. He shared some of the costs from other districts to participate in sports ranging up to \$840 per student. Some are even charging a fee for officials. He said all the schools that have Lacrosse do both boys and girls. Most of the 4A school participate in Lacrosse. He is not sure where schools will get the funding to pay for Lacrosse and how they will get supervision for the games. Our vice principals do get a little on top of their salary to attend and supervise the current sports. Brent Bills explained how the pay was built into the principals' salary. It helps their pay fall in line with other districts. David Stirland asked if by adding more sports we are adding more to their salary. Craig Hammer said principals told him they have staff that would be willing to supervise and suggested adding .5 FTE to cover the cost. The teams would also need coaches for the teams. They would also need additional supervision on the bus when not traveling together. Craig Hammer reported on some of the start-up costs of districts. Some gave the schools funds to purchase the equipment needed while others made the students purchase their own equipment. Brent Bills said students can be required to purchase items they would already need such as shoes as long as they are not specific. Additional equipment would be fee waivable. Craig Hammer said he feels that the District is going to have to charge more for sports. We currently charge the same amount for every sport. He feels that we need a minimum of four schools participating to start Lacrosse. Brent Bills suggested a moratorium that would not allow teams to play out of the District more than twice. Craig Hammer said the financial part is what still needs to be determined.

Brent Bills said the one-time costs could be covered, but the District would need to look at on-going costs. Becky Dunn suggested paying a stipend rather than giving the .5 FTE. Craig Hammer suggested that the Board determine whether they plan to approve add it or not to let the principals know. He said there are no other sports waiting to be sanctioned except esports. The springtime sports are full. He mentioned one other issue would be that state championships for Lacrosse would be the same week as graduation. Many of the districts are changing schedules and so they are done by Memorial Day as well, so that could change. Craig Hammer mentioned that the region principals determine the ticket price to watch the games. Schools are not making money from sporting events. Becky Dunn suggested having the finance committee look at the spend plans over the next couple of months to see if we want to increase some of the fees. Superintendent Richard Holmes said we have been conservative for the community. Brent Bills said that we cannot charge students for the cost of employees, and we will need funding to cover the cost of fee waivers.

ALP in Intermediate Schools – Wade Jensen

Wade Jensen said Diamond Valley Elementary and Riverside Elementary have ALP programs. He said the District already has things in motion to make sure there are pathways for those students. He said they are working to have common language, common resources, one location for information, clear communication for parents by November 1st. James Sparks is working with Shauna Williams to find more resources. We have the resources in the schools, some parents just don't understand the terminology. We are confident we can provide the programs for students. Counselors from the intermediate schools will meet with elementary parents.

Dress Code Update – Craig Hammer

Craig Hammer said he met with assistant principals at the beginning of the month. They said they are struggling to get more than 90% attendance and do not want to send any student home. They want the students to be there in school. He reminded the Board of the comments from students at the last meeting as they discussed dress code. He said that the assistant principals are concerned about dealing with some of the issues. The schools have dealt with issues over the years that are now gone. Hats are currently an issue. Assistant principals said they can still identify students by what they are wearing. Teachers said it occasionally becomes a distraction, but the assistant principals deal with the issues and they see a difference. It has been addressed with the principals and they are dealing with it but are trying to keep the kids there at school rather than send them home. They are trying to get attendance back up to 94%. Craig Seegmiller stressed again to make sure they know that the Board has their back. Becky Dunn said when the student at the last meeting mentioned teachers being uncomfortable, that was telling. We need to help them. David Stirland mentioned we still need more consistency throughout the District. Craig Hammer said the schools are more consistent than realized and asked the Board to trust that vice principals are doing what is needed. There is an awareness of dress code in the schools. Darin Thomas mentioned that many times when he met with students, they knew why the administration was talking to them and they already had a shirt in their backpack. The administrators are addressing issues. The schools also have shirts available when needed.

Enrollment Update – Nate Esplin, Wade Jensen, and Craig Hammer

Nate Esplin said some of the elementary schools are growing. Desert Canyons has grown 100 students. Horizon has also grown to 577. Hurricane grew to 730 and Three Falls is about the same. He said however that enrollment is dropping on the west side of the District. Paradise Canyon and Red Mountain have both dropped. He said that Coral Cliffs has about 120 students, with 56 in boundary and the balance from other areas. The partnership with Utah Tech has worked really well. He suggested possibly moving the program to Paradise Canyon where there is space and moving other programs such as Post High to the Professional Learning Center. He said we could also run the professional development program at another school. He shared some of the enrollment numbers for the other elementary schools. David Stirland asked about moving the Toquerville students to LaVerkin Elementary. Superintendent Richard Holmes said Post High has as many students as they have ever had. They have had to go to Dixie Middle School to eat school lunch. They have about 87 students and could use more room. He mentioned that Technology could use the additional space of the Post High building. Laura Belnap said it would allow UOS and PLC to spread and expand their space. Jeremy Cox said that Post High also does not have enough buffer from the street

for the “runners.” The PLC building does have a fenced in area that would help. Nate Esplin said they will need to look more into moving the Coral Cliffs students to determine the best option. Superintendent Richard Holmes suggested Nate Esplin could bring numbers back in October and then start parent meetings in November. Superintendent Richard Holmes said another consideration would be to tweak the Pine View boundary. Crimson Cliffs enrollment is getting so large. Burke Staheli suggested looking at the Horizon south boundary. He mentioned he has been talking with those in the area to help get the word out. They suggested moving the Chinese Dual Immersion program to Pine View cone-site.

Utah Online High School Review – Laura Belnap

Laura Belnap shared a quick overview of Utah Online School. The school started in 2003 but wasn’t a school until 2004. She shared that 9897 students are served. About 2100 part-time students are from Washington County. She shared the organization chart with full and part-time, original and recovery credit. There are 2852 students in transition, summer school, etc. There are 6133 recovery courses. Schools are charged \$9000 for all of the credit recovery. Students pay \$50 per quarter credit. Superintendent said it has been a big game changer for our students. Our graduation rate is 94% and that is why. Laura Belnap said they call it content recovery and students have to complete the course for mastery. She mentioned that there are 48 super senior course completions. Utah Online does recovery for all of the District schools.

Laura Belnap said they have added an integrity statement to every one of the courses. She shared that two students used AI and the teacher has now given it back to the student to determine what to do. They are trying to incorporate and use technology that the kids will live with. They have included essential standards. Students have the freedom to self-pace. They monitor and evaluate the courses every year. Learning is the constant and time is their variable. Utah Online is NCCA approved and goes through 22 parts for accreditation. Courses run through the counselors of the school. The cost for the schools is \$120 for .5 credit. The cost to use the online portal would be over \$400. Utah Online loses money from every student in Washington County, but they make it up from other students outside of the district. She would love for the Board to come and see what they do or don’t do. Teachers are all working from home throughout the state. Students attend activities with those in their area. They are one of the premier online schools in the state. They are frugal as they teach kids and run their budget in the black. They do advertise to throughout the state. The cost for testing is a bit higher. Laura Belnap said they follow the state and district standards for rigor. Students do projects along the way but not given assessments to make sure they understand the content. Students feel it is easier because they do it when they have time. David Stirland asked about increasing ACT scores and administrators saying they are not being taught the same. Becky Dunn said the Utah Online AP Chinese scores were some of the best. Laura Belnap said students are encouraged to take the ACT. They are competency mastery based as they move through the courses. They know it before they test out of it. They are at their own pace. Students are not at the same place in the book at the same time and some students can go through it faster. David Stirland also asked about taking most of their courses from UOS but then receiving their diploma from the boundary school. Laura Belnap said it is statutory in legislation. Students can also choose to get the diploma from UOS. Laura Belnap mentioned that they can see how much time students are working online. David Stirland said schools feel that the counselors are doing all the work. Laura Belnap said they have counselors in the UOS program. Brent Bills said the high school counselor at the boundary school is required to be the gatekeeper by law. Laura Belnap also said that students complain to UOS all summer long that they cannot reach their school counselor. David Stirland feels that schools and UOS need to be working more together. He suggested finding a way. Laura Belnap said she would love to address issues. Brent Bills said many times there is a misunderstanding. That comes from the state legislation and the state portal. By having a program in the District schools would have lost a lot more funding. Superintendent Richard Holmes said it really is a paradigm shift. It is part of us and will never go away. He encourages principals to roll the carpet out to students that want to participate in both brick and mortar and online. We need to listen to the concerns, evaluate, and address the needs. It is better to have them take our options rather than going to other programs. Laura Belnap said the math program is proctored online. She said it is her responsible to make sure the rigor and the essential standards are there. David Stirland mentioned that some also feel there is cheating with the testing. Laura Belnap said most of the testing is done through projects except for math. LaRene Cox said our District has something for and a way to teach all students. Laura Belnap said she has also offered to help schools create their own online classes; however, it does cost more. Laura Belnap

mentioned that they are now piloting a paraprofessional program. She said that all her staff and teachers are at-will. They have kept it that way so the District does not have a responsibility to find jobs for teachers working all over the state if something happened to the program. Teachers do not have sick days, but they help to cover for the other teachers. They must have clearance from Laura for a teacher to cover the days. Teachers can work while they are vacation and many of them do work, but they are required to report on their location. There have had no complaints from students not being able to reach their teacher.

ACTION ITEMS

Post High 2023-2024 School LAND Trust Plan

Board Member Stirland presented a motion to approve the 2023-2024 School LAND Trust Plan for Post High School. Board Member Cox seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Board Member Staheli presented a motion to go into a closed session at 7:25 p.m. Board Member Simmons seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Present: Board President Becky Dunn, Board Member Craig Seegmiller, Board Member David Stirland, Board Member LaRene Cox, Board Member Burke Staheli, Board Member Terry Hutchinson, Board Member Nannette Simmons, Superintendent Richard Holmes, Business Administrator Brent Bills, Assistant Superintendent Nate Esplin, and Executive HR Director Darin Thomas.

CLOSED SESSION

Property and Personnel Items

Personnel and Legal

Board Member Seegmiller presented a motion to go out of the closed session at 8:24 p.m. Board Member Stirland seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Board Member Staheli presented a motion to adjourn at 8:24 p.m. Board Member Simmons seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT