

Education Foundation to benefit local school district

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Emphasizing the significant benefit of Re-1J Foundation, Inc., Holyoke School Board gained a clearer picture of the relationship between the district and the Foundation at the Dec. 1 school board meeting.

Board member Kim Killin explained the Foundation is a separate and distinct entity, operating independently of the school district.

The school has to have project priorities, while the Foundation can consider community members' requests for raising money for other reasons that may not be on the current board priority list.

Killin pointed out it's important for Supt. Bret Miles to be involved to a certain degree, in order to stay informed about Foundation project discussion. Board members agreed and approved having Miles stay in communication with the Foundation.

Board president Dan Kafka noted this does take a lot of pressure off the board, yet keeps them aware of the Foundation focus. Rather than endorsing the Foundation work step by step, the school board becomes involved when a project is presented as a total piece, added Supt. Miles.

When something is presented as a gift, the school board evaluates its responsibility with regard to maintenance and upkeep. Killin noted she would hate to see anyone put a lot of time and effort into a project that ultimately is turned down.

In further clarification, Killin pointed out it's not the Foundation board's role to write grants. The people approaching them would run grants through the Foundation in order to utilize the tax-free status.

Killin noted Miles will need to give consideration where he wants staff to go with this in terms of writing grade level or individual classroom grants.

It's the Foundation's goal to work with the community without all the difficulties of bureaucracy, said Killin. "And further, it makes it deductible," she added.

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Re-1J Foundation, Inc. is for Holyoke School District, not Phillips County, said Killin.

There's some potential for requesting funds that Heginbotham Trust needs to spend by the end of the year. Killin noted that's what brought the track project to the forefront at the Nov. 17 board meeting.

There will be some discussion with the Trust to see if there's a way to earmark some funds to go through the Foundation, she added.

Mill levy set at 31.27

A total 2009 mill levy of 31.27 mills was approved for certification at last week's meeting. This includes 27 mills with an abatement levy of .020 in the general fund and bond redemption fund at 4.250 mills.

Supt. Miles noted the district has no control over the general fund mill levy, as it's set by the state. This year's abatement levy was up .017 mills, as the only change from the 2008 levy.

The new mill levies, for property tax year 2009, were based on a total assessed valuation of \$55,824,460, which is an increase of \$10.2 million or 22.4 percent.

In other financial discussion, the Re-1J board approved the 2008-09 audit as presented in a work session prior to the meeting by Scott Szabo.

The audit confirmed the General Fund expenditures exceeded revenues by \$53,128, leaving a fund balance at year-end of \$1,688,262. Based on average monthly expenditures, the district has approximately four months' expenditures in reserves.

Principal evaluation tool being revised

A revised tool for evaluating Holyoke principals was reviewed by Supt. Miles at last week's board meeting. Further discussion of the tool will be scheduled Dec. 15, with first reading of the revised evaluation returning in January.

The tool for evaluation addresses criteria in six domains: instructional leadership; management; communication; change; student, parent and community relationships; and mandates.

Kreider presents maintenance update

Maintenance director Stan Kreider told the board the new heating system at the JR/SR high is working well. "We're heating a lot more square footage, more comfortably," said Kreider.

He noted the Alternative School move to the northeast corner of the HS building from Denver Street was completed, for the most part, by Nov. 30. Kreider commended the students for their assistance in the move.

Kreider is also working on a long-term information plan in terms of maintenance. Asked to identify the most pressing needs, Kreider cited the elementary school boiler system and kitchen equipment.

Killin asked for cost benefit information on the new HVAC system at the JR/SR High in order to better prioritize projects.

Finance director Sharon Thompson said costs were down about \$1,000 per month last year. Kreider added the boilers are incredible.

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Other business

In other business at the Dec. 1 meeting, the Re-1J board:

—discussed canceling the Jan. 5 board meeting and holding a board retreat Saturday, Jan. 9 from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. in Holyoke.

—accepted the resignations of JR/SR high custodian Pyong Lee and elementary teacher aide Miriam Bencomo, effective Nov. 30.

—hired Brenda Daniel as JR/SR high custodian and Sarah Dille as long-term sub for 2009-10 to cover the maternity leave of Andrea Kammer.

—hired a third boys' basketball coach, Aaron Sprague, based on 30 team members.

—approved volunteer wrestling coaches Jack Garrison, Jeremy Dirks and Levi Garrett.

—made the following board committee appointments: Jeff Tharp, vo-ag and family and consumer sciences; Laura Krogmeier, vocational business; Tharp and Kris Camblin, budget and facilities; Jon King, N.E. BOCES, with Dan Kafka as alternate; and Linda Jelden, delegate/legislative rep, with Kim Killin as alternate.