

School holds off pursuit of mill levy override

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Reconsidering the idea of a mill levy override election to increase property tax for school funding, the Re-1J school board indicated at its May 5 meeting it will not be putting a question on the 2009 ballot.

“We’re probably at least a year away,” said board member Jeff Tharp when he brought up the subject at last week’s board meeting.

After conversation with the public and superintendent candidates, Tharp suggested the board pull back a little bit. “We need to reassess, gather more data and bring the new superintendent into the fold,” he added.

Board president Kendon Olofson voiced agreement, and Laura Krog-meier added a mill levy override election this year would be an awful lot to put on anyone coming in as a new superintendent.

Miles named 2009-2010 Supt.

Bret Miles, who has served the past six years as superintendent of the Brush School District, was hired as superintendent in Holyoke for 2009-2010, starting July 1.

Details of his contract are still in negotiation and will be disclosed when they’re finalized.

Miles said he and his wife Nancy (Johnson) are proud to be returning to Holyoke, where they both graduated in 1990. He added it’s a special honor to be in a leadership position in this school.

Miles taught fourth grade in Holyoke from 1998-2000 before leaving the district to gain administrative experience. He served as principal in Cheyenne Wells for one year, then moved to Brush, where he was an elementary principal for one year before being named superintendent in 2003.

Additionally, Miles said their boys, Nathan and Dylan, who will be entering seventh and third grades next year, are thrilled about coming to Holyoke and are ready to make the move.

Sharing a quick story, Miles said Nathan’s baseball coach in Brush asked last week about who was interested in playing competitive ball in July. The coach told Bret his son said, “Coach, in July, I’ll be a Dragon.”

Miles said he shared an entry plan with the board at the time of his interview. He noted this isn’t a final plan, as it will be updated. It includes some steps about getting acclimated, and he plans to give regular reports on the plan’s progress.

Olofson said the superintendent selection process went smoothly. He noted appreciation for those who helped, including the focus groups who interviewed finalists, office staff, current Supt. Stephen Bohrer and board members.

Student expelled

Supt. Bohrer reported a hearing was held and a student was expelled recently, due to a violation of school policy on bringing a knife to school.

The district’s alternative school was offered for the student’s education, and that was in the process of being set up when the student moved from the state, said Bohrer.

Dr. Bohrer said the district is looking at its crisis management plan, with the newest issues being pandemic. Training dates will be set, and they’ll continue to meet and improve on reactions to situations, he added.

Cross-training will be handled, as well, so if the person who is usually in charge is gone, others can step in, Bohrer assured.

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Citizens concerned

Kim Killin and Bob Trumper both expressed specific concerns at last week's board meeting.

Killin said she appreciated the earlier presentation from Alternative School students, but is concerned that policies have evolved in the regular school that push kids away. "We need to get back to positive reinforcement."

She mentioned penalties for not bringing a lunch card to the cafeteria as ultimate negative reinforcement. She said she wishes the board would look at the school lunch program issue.

Killin reiterated her request from April 21 for assessment of the random drug testing policy and moving the sixth grade to the junior high, both of which were implemented this school year.

Trumper cited the board's core value "listening to understand," which is listed on the board agenda. He noted he hears negative comments about community members who have tried to offer their assistance. "That's totally unacceptable."

Additionally, Trumper said he considers it disturbing that the board hosted a supper at Ballyneal for superintendent candidates when the district is in a financial crisis. He requested a dollar figure for the cost of that meal.

He later received those figures, and reported total cost to the district was \$578.01. Total cost included 23 meals, of which reimbursement was received for nine (six board member spouses and three staff members).

Trumper's letter of explanation noted the board has approximately \$1,500 remaining in their budgeted allocation for travel that will cover the meal expense.

Other business

In other business May 5, the Re-1J board:

- accepted the resignation of kindergarten teacher and HS play/musical director Drew Peregoy, who has accepted a teaching position in Shoshoni, Wyo. for the 2009-10 school year.
- approved assistant cook Maria Solis' resignation, effective May 21.
- approved Lauer, Szabo & Associates to perform the district audit of 2008-09.
- held a 54-minute executive session early in the meeting, noting it was for personnel discussion for classified staff recommendations.