
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

Board of Education Meeting Minutes

February 16, 2004 – 7:30 p.m.
Regular Meeting

Borough Administration Building
148 N. Binkley, Soldotna, Alaska

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS: Ms. Deborah Germano, President
Mrs. Sammy Crawford, Vice President
Dr. Nels Anderson, Clerk
Mrs. Margaret Gilman, Treasurer
Mrs. Debra Mullins
Ms. Sandra Wassilie
Ms. Debbie Holle
Mr. Marty Anderson
Mrs. Sunni Hilts
Mr. Patrick Tilbury, Student Representative

STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Donna Peterson, Superintendent of Schools
Mrs. Melody Douglas, Chief Financial Officer
Dr. Gary Whiteley, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Sam Stewart, Assistant Superintendent

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mrs. Debbie Stewart	Mr. Bob VanDerWege
Mrs. Laurie Olson	Mrs. Jenni Hammond
Mrs. Chris Koski	Mrs. Paula Christensen
Mr. Jim Heim	Mrs. Lori Manion
Mr. Mark Norgren	Miss Jenni Dillon
Mrs. Sharon Mook	Mr. Mike Wetherbee
Mr. Tim Peterson	Mr. Dan Leman
Mr. Todd Syverson	Mrs. Laura Pillifant
Mrs. Kathy Gensel	Mr. Glenn Haupt
Miss Sara Youngren	Mrs. Patti Youngren
Mr. Jon Lillevik	Mrs. Robin Coursen
Mr. Dave Larson	Mrs. Mary Dougherty
Mrs. Gail Moore	Mrs. LaDawn Druce
Ms. Cathy Carrow	Ms. Jamie Moore

Others present not identified.

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Germano called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
(7:30:38 PM)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Ms. Germano invited the Nikiski Elementary students to lead those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.
(7:30:52 PM)

ROLL CALL:

(7:31:26 PM)

Mrs. Sammy Crawford	Present
Ms. Deborah Germano	Present
Mrs. Margaret Gilman	Present
Mrs. Debra Mullins	Absent/Excused
Dr. Nels Anderson	Present
Ms. Sandra Wassilie	Present
Ms. Debbie Holle	Present
Mr. Marty Anderson	Absent/Excused
Mrs. Sunni Hilts	Present
Mr. Patrick Tilbury	Present

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

(7:31:52 PM)

The agenda was approved as written. A revised version of Item 10d. Resolution Number 03-04-4 was submitted.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

(7:32:12 PM)

The School Board Minutes of February 2, 2004, were approved as printed.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS:

(7:32:25 PM)

The Board presented Golden Apple awards to Dan Leman, community member, and Jamie Moore, accounting specialist for their service to the District.

SCHOOL REPORT:

(7:38:23 PM)

Mr. Mark Norgren, Nikiski Elementary principal, presented appreciation gifts to the Board members in honor of School Board Appreciation month and thanked them for their service. He gave a PowerPoint presentation highlighting students, academic programs, the proposed school name and mascot, and various aspects of the consolidation with North Star Elementary. Mrs. Kendall, teacher, introduced Miss Alina Eldredge who read from a social studies project. Mr. Norgren invited those present to attend the closing celebration for Nikiski Elementary on May 1. Miss Heidi Vann introduced students, Mr. Jared Parnell and Mr. Matthew Bumbaugh, who shared a Valentine's Day poem.

Dr. Anderson congratulated Mr. Norgren on uniting the community in the consolidation of the two Nikiski area elementary schools.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:

(7:59:44 PM)

Mrs. Kathy Gensel, Wells Fargo Bank vice president and store manager, presented the District with a check for \$3,150 as part of a program called, "Team Up for Schools" in which a donation is made to the District for every new account opened at any of the four branches on the Peninsula.

Ms. Germano noted that Well Fargo Bank also collected school supplies which they donated to students and schools.

Ms. Nitza Hollinger, Connections Program parent, gave several reasons why she home schools her children and asked the Board to keep the Program a competitive, viable option for educating students.

Ms. Gail Moore, Quest teacher, stated that she would hate to see the Quest Program reduced from 13.5 FTE teachers to 4 FTE teachers and asked the Board to give special consideration to the needs of gifted children.

Mr. Don Johnson requested that Borough money not be used to address grievances generated out of the Alaska Board of Fisheries process or the Department of Fish and Game implementation of those findings.

Mr. Kelly Perkins, Connections Program parent, stated that he is pleased with the Connections Program staff and asked the Board to continue supporting the program.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:

(continued)

Ms. Kim VanAntwerp, Soldotna Middle School parent, Site Coordinator for Aspirations Advocates and Parent Volunteer, spoke in support of school counselors and noted that for some students, counselors are the only adults in their lives who show faith and hope for their futures and asked the Board not to cut school counselors.

Mrs. Jenni Hammond thanked the North Star Elementary staff for including her son in classroom activities and for making him feel welcome. She asked the Board to keep Special Education sacred and not reduce funding in that area. She urged those present to go to the Kenai LIO office at 11:00 a.m. and ask the legislature for additional educational funding. She stated that she would like to see a special education task force be established to find out why the District is not getting the appropriate amount of funding from the federal government.

Mrs. Penny Vadla, Ninilchik Elementary/High School teacher and parent, stated that gifted students need to be challenged and asked the Board not reduce the Quest Program to 4 teachers or provide a magnet school.

Ms. Holle asked Mrs. Vadla if students' needs are met in the regular classroom. Mrs. Vadla responded that the Quest Program goes one step further than the classroom and provides gifted students with different challenges. She added that because the District is cutting advanced placement classes, the only option for a senior is to take courses at the Kenai Peninsula College and this is not an option for ninth grade students and younger. She added that the Quest Program provides a different type of challenge for students that goes above and beyond the classroom.

Dr. Anderson congratulated Mrs. Vadla for her daughter's Junior Miss award. Mrs. Vadla credited the Quest Program for preparing her daughter for the many problem-solving activities involved with the Junior Miss competition.

Mrs. Crawford congratulated Mrs. Vadla on her daughter's Junior Miss title. She clarified that the advanced placement classes are not part of the Quest Program. Mrs. Vadla noted that her daughter designed a web design class as part of a Quest class project and now designs web sites as a business. She reported that her daughter also designed an art class and a creative writing class through the Quest Program.

Mrs. Mary Dougherty, Soldotna Middle School counselor, stated that counselors act as daily advocates for students and noted that in a large school, one counselor cannot meet the needs of all students.

Mr. John Parson, Soldotna parent, asked the Board to reconsider the issue of weighted grades. Ms. Germano asked Mr. Parson whether the site council at Soldotna High School has considered the issue. He responded that the Council had considered the issue and added that he has also spoken to several administrators and reported that some were in favor of weighted grades or were neutral and wanted to see community and Board support for the idea.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:

(continued)

Dr. Anderson suggested that the Board reconsider the weighted grades issue after the FY05 budget is approved. Mr. Parson noted that the new student grading software makes it possible to use weighted grades. Ms. Germano stated that schools have been asked to set criteria for valedictorian selection. Mr. Parson reported that the Anchorage School District has a weighted grade system based on advanced placement courses. He stated that District students cannot compete because the National Merit Scholarship and other recognition programs are based on rank in class and grade point averages. Ms. Germano noted that the District has several Merit Scholars.

Mrs. Patti Youngren, parent, stated that the Quest Program offers students an opportunity to go beyond what they could normally accomplish in a regular classroom and asked the Board not to reduce the Program to 4 teachers.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS:

(8:35:31 PM)

Dr. Peterson noted that several items related to the budget have been emailed to Board members or are provided in the general information packet. She noted that the City of Homer sent a letter of support for Proposition 1.

Ms. Germano reported that she has a copy of the agenda for the State Board of Education meeting on March 15.

**Advisory Committee, Site Council
and/or P.T.A., K.P.A.A., K.P.E.A., K.
P.E.S.A, Borough Assembly:**

(8:36:47 PM)

Mrs. Cathy Carrow, KPESA president, thanked the Board for their time and service to the School District. She reported that KPEA supports Proposition 1 and urged the Board to also publicly speak in support of the Proposition. She thanked the Board for a school calendar that provides time for parent-teacher conferences. She invited the Board to participate in the seventh annual celebration of Read Across America week beginning on March 2.

Ms. Terri Woodward, KPESA president, thanked the Board for their service to students. She noted that all District secretaries work very hard and work long hours. She expressed concern that if the Board moves to one meeting each month that the work will just pile up.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

(8:43:14 PM)

Dr. Peterson summarized a list of student activities from the past week (basketball, hockey, cross country skiing) and noted that the state hockey teams alone rented 60 hotel rooms in the local area. She noted that she recently spoke at the Kenai Rotary Club, Nikiski Chamber and will speak to the Soldotna Chamber of Commerce meeting on February 17. She noted that February 17 starts the week of Terra Nova testing and the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam and noted that the District is hoping for a 95% participation rate. She thanked teachers for conducting parent-teacher conferences.

Financial Report:

(8:45:45 PM)

Mrs. Douglas presented the District financial report for the period ending January 31, 2004.

BOARD REPORTS:

(8:46:06 PM)

Mrs. Crawford thanked Ms. Germano for appointing her to be a guest on KSRM Radio's Sound Off Program and noted that she will participate in Project Grad on Wednesday, February 18.

Ms. Wassilie reported that she submitted a written report to the Seward Site Council on the actions of the Board.

CONSENT AGENDA:

(8:47:36 PM)

Items presented on the Consent Agenda were Approval of Resignation, Staff Reduction Plan, School Name Change, and Budget Transfer.

Resignation:

Dr. Whiteley recommended the Board approve a resignation effective at the end of the 2003-2004 school year from Steven A. Wolfe, social studies, Homer High.

Staff Reduction Plan:

Dr. Whiteley recommended the Board approve a Reduction in Force Plan for the 2004-2005 school year.

School Name Change:

Mr. Stewart recommended the Board approve a recommendation to change the name of North Star Elementary to Nikiski North Star Elementary effective at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year.

Budget Transfer:

Mrs. Douglas recommended the Board approve budget transfer Number 161 in the amount of \$61,500 to fund Special Services bus costs in the Seward area for the FY04 school year.

MOTION

Mrs. Crawford moved the Board approve Consent Agenda Items Numbers 1 through 4. Ms. Wassilie seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

WORLD LANGUAGE CURRICULUM:
(8:48:36 PM)

Mr. Stewart recommended the Board approve the world language curriculum.

MOTION

Mrs. Crawford moved the Board approve the world language curriculum. Dr. Anderson seconded.

Mrs. Crawford commented that she would like the District to start world languages at an earlier age.

Motion carried unanimously.

MATH CURRICULUM:
(8:49:37 PM)

Mr. Stewart recommended the Board approve the math curriculum.

MOTION

Dr. Anderson moved the Board approve the math curriculum. Mrs. Crawford seconded.

Dr. Anderson stated that the Committee did a wonderful job aligning the curriculum. He stated that the Board needs to make sure that the curriculum translates into what the students actually learn.

Motion carried unanimously.

**Resolution Number
03-04-4:**
(8:50:45 PM)

Dr. Peterson presented Resolution Number 03-04-4, Support for School District Boundaries, at the request of the Board.

MOTION

Mrs. Gilman moved the Board approve Resolution Number 03-04-4, Support for School District Boundaries. Mrs. Crawford seconded.

Mrs. Gilman expressed support for the resolution and added that it is in the best interest of each school district in the state to be able to decide as a local community how to best educate the students in their own area within the guidelines of the state. She stated that Districts should not have to compete for students.

Ms. Holle asked if parents would be limited in their ability to access educational choices for their children outside of the Borough if Resolution Number 03-04-4 were to be enacted by the state. Dr. Peterson explained that the Board has had a long-standing philosophy that the District should be responsible for servicing only the students within the Kenai Peninsula Borough. She stated that currently, parents have the choice of educating their children with services outside of the Borough. She noted that the KPBSD does not offer educational services beyond the boundaries of the District. She noted that the resolution limits other Districts from serving students in the KPBSD.

Ms. Holle asked whether the District would serve a family that resided in another district and wanted to enroll in the Connections Program. Dr. Peterson stated that the District would not enroll the student.

Mrs. Gilman suggested the Board consider amending the resolution and change the second bulleted sentence to read "To provide foundational formula funding only to students receiving services within the boundary of their home district."

At 8:57 p.m., Ms. Germano called a recess.

At 9:02 p.m., the Board reconvened in regular session.

Mrs. Gilman moved the Board amend Resolution Number 03-04-4 and change the second bulleted sentence to read "To provide public educational funding only for students receiving services within the boundaries of their home district. Mrs. Crawford seconded.

Ms. Holle stated she will not support the amendment because it will not change the concept of the resolution that is attempting to remedy a very uncomfortable situation within the Borough. She stated that the amendment restricts a parent's choice to educate their children outside of the District. She stated that although she may not agree with families who choose to educate their children elsewhere, she will choose to protect the opportunity for families to do what they feel is in the best interest of their children.

Mrs. Crawford stated that the amendment clarifies that the Board wants students who are receiving services in the District to get the funding for the District.

Ms. Germano explained that the purpose of the resolution is to address the issue of statewide programs that operate home school programs.

Recess:

(8:57:10 PM)

REconvene AFTER RECESS:

(9:02:06 PM)

MOTION

Resolution Number

03-04-4:

(continued)

VOTE ON AMENDMENT:

Advisory: YES

NO - Holle

YES - Hilts, Gilman, Crawford, Wassilie, N. Anderson, Germano

Motion carried.

Dr. Anderson stated that he disagrees with the resolution because the Galena Program provided the competition that has forced the District to develop an outstanding Connections Program. He stated that he is not willing to vote against the opportunity for parents to select something other than what is offered in the KPBSD.

Ms. Holle stated that it is very important for the Board to protect the opportunity to serve the people and noted that the District must earn family participation in the District Connections Program rather than elsewhere. She stated that she would like to improve every program which may bring the majority of home school families back to the District. She stated that she will not support the resolution.

Mrs. Crawford stated that it is in the District's best interest morally, ethically, and educationally to support District programs. She stated that the District has not participated in the "poaching" of students from other Districts and has set the standard.

Mrs. Hilts stated that she understands the need for competition. She stated that the District will be expected to uphold a high standard of education in the Connections Program and added if not, parents will find a way around the district boundary requirement. She stated that the resolution provides a jump-start on an inequity to the District.

Ms. Wassilie stated that she will support the resolution and added that the District is in competition statewide with student assessment performance and in competition with local private schools for student enrollment.

Ms. Germano agreed that there is competition between schools in the District for student enrollment. She stated that although families should have opportunities, closing school district boundaries can help bring communities together. She reported that there are families who have bad feelings regarding participation in student activities (mandates required by the Alaska School Activities Association) which would be cleaned up with closed boundaries. She stated that there are still lots of choices within the District.

Resolution Number

03-04-4:

(continued)

VOTE ON AMENDED MOTION:

Advisory Vote: YES

NO - N. Anderson, Holle

YES - Wassilie, Hiltz, Crawford, Gilman, Germano

Motion carried.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS/
COMMENTS:**

(9:12:11 PM)

Mrs. Jenni Hammond asked the parents who were present to go to Kenai LIO office on February 17 at 11:00 a.m. and testify to the legislature regarding the need for adequate educational funding. She asked Board members to host community meetings to keep the public informed.

Mrs. Gensel, Wells Fargo Bank vice president and store manager, announced a free online financial education program called "Hands-on Banking" which is a customized curriculum for four age groups (fourth grade through adult) that meets or exceeds state and national standards in math. She stated that she has given the information to Dr. Peterson to hopefully post on the District server so all will have access.

Mrs. Cathy Carrow, KPEA president, commented that she has seen several draft versions of the RIF Plan and asked about the criteria that will be used in determining when a reduction in force is necessary.

Mr. Darrel Kincaid provided a brief history of home schooling in the District and noted that if not for the IDEA Program, the District would not have the Connections Program. He complimented Mr. Hofseth on an outstanding job of improving the Connections Program. He told the Board that passing Resolution Number 03-04-4 was a mistake and asked the Board to embrace home school families.

BOARD COMMENTS:

(9:21:05 PM)

Mrs. Crawford reported that the Board has been involved in the most grueling budget cut decisions and complimented the Board on being very professional. She stated that she is proud to be a member of the Board and part of the budget discussion. She thanked Mr. Norgren and Mrs. Manion for the school report and complimented them on promoting the positive aspects of the school consolidation. She thanked Mrs. Gensel and Wells Fargo Bank for the donation. She reported that she visited the science lab at Sears Elementary. She thanked Mr. Parson for his comments on weighted grades and asked to meet with Mrs. Gilman, Mr. Stewart, and Dr. Whiteley to discuss the issue and report back to the Board.

Ms. Germano suggested the Board approve the FY05 budget before dealing with the issue of weighted grades.

BOARD COMMENTS:

(continued)

Ms. Wassilie thanked the public for speaking to the Board, and expressed appreciation for their understanding and wonderful attitude about the difficult decisions facing the Board. She stated that she feels part of a team as a Board member and within the community. She agreed with Mrs. Hammond's suggestion that a special education task force be established at the state level. She suggested that the District send a group of future problem solving students to Juneau to convince

legislators to provide adequate funding for education.

Mr. Tilbury stated that the Board held some good discussions throughout the day and are starting to get somewhere. He expressed appreciation for the presentations and the public comments.

Ms. Holle thanked Mr. Tilbury for his comments during the worksessions and meetings. She reported that the Board has had some sincere discussions during the worksessions which have been important and difficult. She expressed reservations about whether the Board provided clear direction to the administration about where to cut the budget but felt confident that each member has the best interests of students in mind. She recounted her past experiences on other boards and commissions and noted that being a School Board member is more difficult because their decisions directly affect children. She reported that the Board has heard some excellent testimony from parents asking them not to cut programs and added that balancing the budget is painful. She stated that hopefully the state will increase funding for education. She thanked the Board for the frank discussions and the public for their patience.

Mrs. Gilman thanked Mr. Norgren for the Nikiski Elementary School report and for bringing the students to assist with the report. She stated that having students at the Board meeting serves as a reminder to the members about why they are serving. She stated that one of the good things that has come from the difficult budget process is the amount of interest expressed by the community and noted that more people attend Board meetings than in the past. She thanked the public for their comments and especially thanked the home school parents. She stated that the Board needs to find a way to involve as many respected, well-trained adults in students' lives as possible. She thanked the Board members and administration for the intense but polite and courteous discussions held during the worksession. She suggested that the Board not put off discussions regarding weighted grades and added that she would also like to discuss a bill introduced by Representative Kapsner to restrict the sale of soda during the school day. She stated that although the Board cannot take a position on Proposition 1, as an individual she will support the initiative. She thanked Mrs. Hammond for the incredible amount of work she has done as a parent volunteer.

BOARD COMMENTS:
(continued)

Mrs. Hilts expressed appreciation for the students at the Board meeting. She told those present that the Board understands parents' concerns regarding the Quest Program and special education and is the reason why the members are serving on the Board. She related personal stories of how each of the programs have benefited her family and added that her husband has been a school counselor. She stated that every issue is personal to the Board members and noted that they do

not take the budget discussions lightly. She stated that there is no way to balance the budget without making painful cuts and added that she hopes that there are legislators in Juneau that will support education. She urged those present to talk about the District's budget problems and to go to the Kenai LIO office and testify.

Dr. Anderson stated that he would like to correct a misperception that the School Board was antagonistic towards home school students. He explained that a former superintendent and staff members were against home school students and did not represent the views of the Board. He stated that he would be in favor of "bribing" students to enroll in the Connections Program but would not like to limit parents' choices. He read a humorous comparison between the No Child Left Behind Act and the game of football. He expressed concern that as the Board is forced to make cuts in the classroom there is a philosophy that the Board must only deal with preparing students to pass the state qualifying exam rather than meeting the needs of gifted students. He stated that he is torn about the possible reduction of the Quest Program. He stated that schools and site councils must insist on a high academic program regardless of the cuts to the Quest Program. He cautioned Mrs. Gilman about the restriction of soda sales because the money purchases a lot of items for schools.

Ms. Germano reported that the Board tried not to reach any conclusions during their earlier budget worksession. She stated that they went through the list of 21 budget cut recommendations and asked the administration about the impact of each one. She stated that although the Board did not come to consensus, she hopes the administration can decipher the Board's comments and return in March with a balanced budget. She thanked Mrs. Gensel for her comments and for the Wells Fargo Bank donation. She thanked the home school parents for their comments and agreed that competition is necessary. She stated that the District has a much different administration than in the past and noted that many laws have changed to support parental choice for education and accountability. She told those present that the Board supports parents who choose to home school their children. She announced that several Board members will attend the AASB Legislative Fly-in and attend numerous lobbying appointments with legislators. She cautioned the Board about spending the time to review the weighted grades issue. She stated that with a limited number of staff members and too many uncertainties she does not feel that weighted grades is an issue to undertake at this moment. She suggested that site councils develop a model to administer weighted grades and present it to the Board. After general discussion it was determined that there was not enough interest by the Board to review the issue regarding the sale of soda during school hours.

BOARD COMMENTS:

(continued)

She thanked Mr. Norgren and the students for the Nikiski Elementary School presentation. She thanked Mr. Norgren and Mrs. Manion for their work within the community regarding school consolidation.

ADJOURN:

(9:51:24 PM)

At 9:51 p.m., Mrs. Crawford moved the School Board Meeting be adjourned. Ms. Wassilie seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Deborah Germano, President

Dr. Nels Anderson, Clerk

The Minutes of February 16, 2004, were approved on March 1, 2004 with a correction.