
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

Board of Education Meeting Minutes

December 6, 2004 – 7:00 p.m.
Regular Meeting

Borough Administration Building
148 N. Binkley, Soldotna, Alaska

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS:

Mrs. Sammy Crawford, President
Ms. Sandra Wassilie, Vice President
Mrs. Debra Mullins, Clerk
Mrs. Margaret Gilman, Treasurer
Ms. Deborah Germano
Dr. Nels Anderson
Mrs. Debbie Brown
Mr. Marty Anderson
Mrs. Sunni Hilts
Mr. DJ Tyson, Student Representative

STAFF PRESENT:

Dr. Donna Peterson, Superintendent of Schools
Mrs. Melody Douglas, Chief Financial Officer
Mr. Sam Stewart, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Guy Fisher, Assistant Superintendent

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mrs. Tanya Boedeker	Mrs. Sara Moore
Mr. Tom Boedeker	Mr. Bob VanDerWege
Mr. Jon Lillevik	Mr. Lee Young
Mr. Joe Nicks	Mr. Dave Spence
Mrs. Barb George	Mr. Neldon Gardner
Dr. Roy Anderson	Mrs. Kathy Gardner
Mr. Layton Ehmke	Mr. Tim Peterson
Mr. Dave Gardner	Mrs. Linda Cusak
Mrs. Carol Gardner	Mr. Jim White
Mr. Larry Streiff	Ms. Terry Myrick
Mrs. Tina Krieger	Mrs. Norma Holmgaard
Mr. Brad Hibberd	Mrs. Linda Hibberd
Mr. Bob Jones	Mrs. Cathy Carrow
Mrs. Elaine Larson	Mrs. Penny Vadla

Others present not identified.

CALL TO ORDER:

(7:00:40 PM)

Ms. Wassilie called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

(7:00:46 PM)

Ms. Wassilie invited those present to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

(7:01:10 PM)

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

(7:01:40 PM)

The agenda was approved with the deletion of the Nanwalek Elementary/High School report. Mr. Darrell Johnston will give the report at a later date.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

(7:03:03 PM)

The School Board Minutes of November 15, 2004 were approved as printed.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS:

(7:04:18 PM)

The Board presented a Golden Apple Award to Linda Cusak for her volunteer service to the District. The Board presented Golden Apple Awards to employees, Larry Streiff, Neldon Gardner, and Tanya Boedeker for their service and dedication to the District.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:

(7:13:57 PM)

Mr. Jon Lillevik, KCHS counselor and parent, expressed concern for the new weighted grade point system and analyzed proposals from Mrs. Gilman and Dr. Anderson.

Mrs. Sara Moore, Soldotna High School counselor and parent, suggested that the weighted grade system not start until 2007 or 2008 depending on Homer High School's decision about students taking Advanced Placement (AP) classes. She expressed concern that the weighted grade system cannot be accommodated by the District grading software.

Mrs. Elaine Larson, music teacher and parent, noted that the weighted grade system is unfair to students and merits further study.

Mr. Robert Watkins, Kenai Central High School parent, asked the Board to return to the 4 point grading system and added that AP classes are their own reward.

Mrs. Penny Vadla, teacher and parent, stated that it is important to promote excellence and suggested the Board research districts where weighted grades are being used successfully.

Miss Jessica Summer, KCHS student, stated that students are penalized for taking AP classes and that the 5 point system does not work.

Mrs. Linda Hibberd, Skyview parent, expressed disappointment for the new weighted grading system and related a personal story regarding her son's credits.

Mrs. Jenny Olendorff, parent, thanked the Board for their support of the Connections Program and stated that the Program has been successful for all three of her children.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS: Dr. Peterson reported that she has received the usual parent and employee communications. She noted that December 15 is the deadline for administrator evaluations by staff. She stated she received a message from a state department employee who thanked her for the student-made Christmas card.
(7:35:23 PM)

**Advisory Committee, Site Council
and/or P.T.A., K.P.A.A., K.P.E.A., K.
P.E.S.A, Borough Assembly:**
(7:36:39 PM)

Mrs. Cathy Carrow, KPEA President, stated that one of her goals is to visit schools and personally meet with teachers and noted that she has been impressed with their professionalism and dedication.

Mr. Dan Chay, KPB Assembly member, updated the Board on a sales tax cap proposal and the Borough's \$7 million budget deficit and noted that the public is being invited to provide input and suggestions regarding the sales tax proposal.

Mrs. Hilts asked how the Borough Assembly budget shortfall will affect the School District. Mr. Chay replied that he believes the Assembly will continue to fully support the School District but that any increases would be difficult to manage. He explained that last year the Borough absorbed a \$5.3 million shortfall. He stated that the Assembly is also dealing with increased pension plan costs and the reduction in municipal revenue sharing and predicted that the financial picture will not improve. Mrs. Hilts expressed appreciation for the commitment that the Assembly has made to education and the School District.

Ms. Germano thanked Mr. Chay for his comments and stated that she is looking forward to the public involvement plan. She clarified with Mr. Chay that the sales tax proposal would not become effective until 2006 if it should pass.

Ms. Wassilie thanked Mr. Chay for his work on the Assembly.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

(7:45:28 PM)

Dr. Peterson reported that on the first Thursday of each month a District representative meets with the Child Study Team which consists of representatives from many other agencies. She noted that the Prevention Coalition delegation will give a presentation at the January 10 meeting regarding Communities that Care. She expressed appreciation for the recent snow cover allowing elementary schools to have outdoor recess. She highlighted the District's intervention team process. She wished those present a Happy Holidays.

BOARD REPORTS:

(7:47:35 PM)

Ms. Wassilie reported that she attended the Career and Technology Education Curriculum Review Committee meeting on December 2. She reported that the Committee is trying to simplify the format and presentation of the courses and in the process is also cleaning up course masters that are used at the middle and high school level. She noted that the Career Technology Education curriculum includes the various Alaska Standards as well as the pertinent Occupational Standards. She stated that the Committee has begun a discussion on what career and technical education should look like in the future for the KPBSD. She noted that the next meeting of the Committee is January 27, 2005.

CONSENT AGENDA:

(7:50:05 PM)

Items presented on the Consent Agenda were Approval of Long-term Substitute Teacher Contracts, New Teacher Assignment, Outsourced Activities Recommendation, Six-Year Plan and School Construction Needs, and 2005 Legislative Priorities.

Long-term Substitute Teacher Contracts:

Mr. Fisher recommended the Board approve substitute teacher contracts for Reubin Payne, Grade 8, Kenai Middle School and Suzie Pyle, social studies/physical education, Seward High School.

New Teacher Assignment:

Mr. Fisher recommended the Board approve teacher assignments for Susan J. Welsh-Smith, (temporary) .40 FTE art teacher at Ninilchik School.

Outsourced Activities Recommendation:

The Kenai Peninsula School Activities Association recommended the Board approve outsource applications for Homer Baseball, Homer Softball, and Seward Softball. The KPSAA Board further recommended conditional approval for Seward Baseball regarding coaching staff, tournament obligations and number of eligible players.

Six-Year Plan and School Construction Needs:

Mr. Fisher recommended the Board approve the proposed 6-Year Plan and list of major maintenance and capital improvement projects for fiscal year 2007.

2005 Legislative Priorities:

Dr. Peterson recommended the Board approve the list of 2005 state and federal legislative priorities.

MOTION

Ms. Germano moved the Board approve Consent Agenda Items Numbers 1 through 5. Mrs. Gilman seconded.

Mrs. Brown requested that Item 10a.(5) be removed from the Consent Agenda.

Consent Agenda Items 1 through 4 carried unanimously.

motion

Mrs. Brown moved the Board amend the Legislative Priorities by removing the second bulleted item, "Assure that health and safety needs are met by providing accountability for all school-age children in the state." Mrs. Gilman seconded.

Mrs. Brown stated that the reason for the deletion is because there are parents who believe they should be in charge of the safety needs of their children and because the statement is vague and could be interpreted many different ways, and that the statement does not follow the theme of the other priorities on the list.

Mrs. Gilman stated that she does not support Mrs. Brown's amendment because she feels it is the School Board's responsibility to send a message to the legislature that every school-aged child deserves an education. She stated that under the current system parents do not have to register their children with any school district or a private school. She referred to an example of an extremely poor home school situation in the Mat-Su School District. She stated that parents should not have the right to not educate their children and added that children must be educated in order to be productive members of society in the future.

2005 Legislative Priorities:
(Continued)

Ms. Germano reported that state law says that children must be in an education program between the ages of 7 and 16 and noted that although there are truancy laws, they are not enforced. She stated that the state used to have a registration system for those parents who chose to home school their children and added that it is not an unreasonable requirement. She stated that even though there are some parents who are doing a fine job home schooling their children some students come into the system that are academically behind and the District and communities are responsible for them. She stated that she has seen many home schooled students that have been alienated.

Dr. Anderson stated that the reason that he attended the Association of Alaska School Board Annual Conference was to lobby for home school accountability and stated that he was sorry that Mrs. Brown did not hear the discussion during the Resolutions Committee meeting and on the floor. He noted that people who are less literate cost the health care system 8 times those who are literate, which is a financial concern that the state should understand. He stated that he will continue to personally work towards legislation on this issue.

Mr. Anderson stated that he will not support the Brown amendment. He stated that he believes that every parent has the right to choose the method in which their child will be educated and that every child has the right to an education. He stated that home schooling should always be an option but that it should not be an option to deny a child an education. He related a personal story about his father who was taken out of school in the third grade to work in the family business.

Mrs. Brown expressed concern for the reputation of families who home school their children. She stated that there are many parents that are doing a fine job educating their children and added that there are students who graduate from the public school system who cannot read or write as mentioned by another Board member. She said that when legislators receive the priority list they can refer to the Board's conversation regarding the issue.

Mrs. Hilts stated that language in the Legislative Priority List refers to all students and noted that all parents should be accountable for their children's education. She stated that she respects the right of parents to make choices about their children's education. She stated that a standard should be set that all children become educated in the State of Alaska. She stated that the language in the Priority List simply asks parents to declare how their children are going to be educated. She noted that the District asks for more accountability of children who are being educated in public schools.

2005 Legislative Priorities:

(Continued)

Mrs. Mullins stated that she believes in choice and home schooled her son for a year. She stated that along with choice comes accountability and the ramifications for each choice. She stated that the Board expects to have an educated youth and an educated populous. She stated that the reason she became a candidate for school board election is because she feels strongly about educating the future leaders of society. She stated that parents should be able to choose how to educate their own children and must also be held accountable for their choices.

Ms. Wassilie stated that the accountability language in the Priority List is about reaching children that are not receiving an education.

VOTE ON BROWN AMENDMENT:

Advisory Vote: ABSTAIN

YES - Brown

NO - Germano, Hilts, Gilman, N. Anderson, M. Anderson, Mullins,

Wassilie

Amendment failed.

Mrs. Brown stated that all other sections of the Legislative Priority List were revised and well written and added that she hopes that when the Kenai Peninsula legislative delegation gets the list that they will provide leadership that is needed statewide. She stated that she hopes that the Area Cost Differential discrepancy issue can be addressed and that the District does not have to wait for the legislature to provide additional funding to address large class sizes.

Motion carried unanimously.

FY 05 Budget Revision:

Mrs. Douglas recommended the Board approve a revised FY 05 General Fund budget of \$83,245,227 based on the preliminary 20-day student count information received from the Department of Education and Early Development. She reported that the Board conducted a worksession prior to the meeting to discuss the revenues and expenditure recommendations. She reminded the Board that anything that goes into the contingency category would be brought back to the Board for approval.

In response to a request from Mrs. Gilman, Mrs. Douglas reviewed the list of budget items and noted which fall into the 70% instruction category and which items fall into the 30% administration category.

MOTION

Mrs. Mullins moved the Board approve the FY05 Budget revision to the General Fund in the amount of \$83,245,227. Dr. Anderson seconded.

FY 05 Budget Revision:

(Continued)

Dr. Anderson stated that the Board conducted a discussion prior to the meeting concerning the administration's recommendation regarding the FY05 budget revision. He acknowledged that the finance software and phone system replacement expenditures are necessary. He expressed disappointment for the required purchase of new reading materials to be NCLB compliant and to find out that the District's improved reading scores are not accurate. He stated that he does not want to commit any money for reading materials until there is a better explanation of how the \$500,000 will improve reading scores. He suggested that the Board put the money into the Contingency Account.

Mrs. Gilman stated that it is time that the Board put children first in accordance with the first statement in the 2005 State Legislative Priority List. She stated that the School District budget should be focused on the needs of students which translates to more teachers in the classroom. She stated that according to the Class Size Report there are 19 classes in the District in Grades K through 6 with 30 or more students. She stated that 600 students are in a negative educational setting and added that students need more adults to interact with them. She stated that according to the study there are 108 classes in Grades 7 through 12 (excluding physical education, band and choir) that have 30 or more students which means that English, math, science and social studies classes have too many students per class. She stated that the administration's budget revision recommendation does not address overcrowded classrooms. She stated that teachers should have been hired to address the 300 additional students that have caused the \$1.7 million in additional revenue. She stated that hiring a teacher in December or January is probably not the best option because it disrupts students and suggested that part-time aides be hired for classrooms with 30 or more students to help with reading and math.

Mrs. Mullins asked the administration's advice about placing the elementary reading curriculum into the Contingency Account until the Board can decide what to do about the NCLB requirement. Mrs. Douglas stated that the money can be put into the Contingency Account and will not hold up the processing of the other accounts.

Mr. Anderson concurred with Dr. Anderson and Mrs. Gilman regarding the hiring of more teachers. He stated that on the other hand, the District must also provide the tools for staff to do their jobs and noted that a Boroughwide malfunctioning phone system is a safety and security concern.

Ms. Germano expressed frustration that after nine years of service on the Board parents still do not have toll free access to Central Office from areas outside the Central Peninsula and noted that the new phone system will not likely address that issue. She asked if the Borough has clearly stated the total cost of the finance software replacement. She agreed with Mrs. Gilman's concerns about the Board's priorities and stated that she would like the Board to have more discussions about priorities.

FY 05 Budget Revision:

(Continued)

Mrs. Brown stated that she agreed with much of what is to be accomplished in the proposed budget revision. She stated that she is unsure about the increases in utility costs and suggested that the District might negotiate a special price for utility services. She stated that the deteriorating phone systems need to be corrected. She stated that she thought that the NCLB reading curriculum should only pertain to Title I schools and not the entire reading curriculum. She suggested that the District let the Borough purchase replacement finance software since the change is being initiated by the Borough.

Ms. Wassilie clarified that the Borough mainframe system which houses the finance software is not going to be available very soon.

Mrs. Hilts admitted that she did not understand why the District is being required to replace the elementary reading materials. She stated that the Board will need to have information to share with the public about why the District is spending \$500,000 to purchase new reading materials. She stated that some of the assessments are changing the way students are educated. She asked for documentation about where the current reading program failed.

Mr. Stewart stated that the budget revision allows the District to move the curriculum revision cycle ahead by one year and that the same amount of money would be requested next fall as part of the regular curriculum revision. He assured the Board that there would be no expenditure of funds until the curriculum is revised and after research has been completed showing what best suits the needs of the District. He stated that the District has been doing a good job in the area of reading and that assessment scores prove that. He stated that some Title I schools do not meet Adequate Yearly Progress requirements in the area of reading as specified in NCLB Act. He stated that the programs that the federal government will let districts use have to be research-based and noted that Scholastic, Inc. does not meet that qualification. He stated that the administration believes that the District needs to adopt a new reading test series now rather than wait for the regular cycle. He stated that the District could continue using existing materials and supplement with research-based texts that meet NCLB requirements in the Title I schools but did not recommend a piecemeal approach.

Mrs. Brown expressed amazement that Scholastic, Inc. is not an approved text and asked if they would likely be approved next year. She asked what other textbook suppliers were ahead of Scholastic, Inc. Mr. Stewart explained that Scholastic, Inc. has a problem with phonics and does not meet the research-based requirement. He stated that he will bring forward further information at the next meeting. He stated that the District has been supplementing phonics in Grades 1 and 2.

Ms. Wassilie stated that the Board needs more information than was provided at the worksession. She explained that the Board just received the information about the reading program and supplemental programs. She asked where the federal money is to pay for the federal mandate.

FY 05 Budget Revision:

(Continued)

Mrs. Gilman noted that the Board has been given notice about the deteriorating phone system, and the need to vacate the Borough mainframe system and asked to see documentation about when it will no longer be available. She asked why the Board was not informed sooner about the purchase of the new reading materials as required by NCLB.

Mr. Stewart replied that the Board was notified about the reading materials as soon as the administration was being notified. He explained that NCLB requirements keep changing and added that the District reading program is fine for regular education in schools that meet AYP and are not served by Title I. He stated that the Board must decide whether they want to use the same materials for all schools throughout the District. He stated that the administration recommends that it is better to be consistent among all schools. He stated that the administration has a plan which would speed up the math selection process and to purchase new textbooks.

Ms. Germano asked if it is advisable to take action on the negotiated items listed in the budget revision. Mrs. Douglas advised the Board to approve the health care cost adjustment, the utility budgets, the annual salary and benefit budgets and noted that the remainder of the revisions can be acted on later. She stated that in order to move forward with the FY06 budget process the Board should put all of the revenue into the contingency account.

Mrs. Gilman asked if the administration would have recommended the \$500,000 purchase of reading curriculum materials if the District were experiencing declining enrollment. Mr. Stewart stated that prior to the budget revision the administration had already informed Mrs. Douglas that \$500,000 was needed from the FY06 budget to purchase reading materials. Mrs. Gilman stated that if the Board waits until the final OASIS numbers are available in February or March, then the Board will eliminate the possibility of providing instructional assistance this year.

MOTION

Mrs. Brown moved the Board postpone action on the FY06 budget revisions to a time uncertain and that the Board have a worksession at the next meeting. Dr. Anderson seconded.

Ms. Germano asked whether the postponement of the budget revisions will take away Mrs. Douglas's ability to work on the FY06 budget document.

Mrs. Brown replied that Mrs. Douglas can move ahead with the budget revision items that were not in question.

Ms. Germano asked if Mrs. Douglas could still proceed with the development of the FY06 budget if the revisions were postponed. Mrs. Douglas replied that the administration can accommodate the Board, whatever their decision. Mrs. Douglas recommended the Board approve revisions regarding health care, utilities, the annual salary and benefit adjustment, and the summer school allocations.

FY 05 Budget Revision:
(Continued)

Ms. Germano asked Mrs. Douglas if postponement of the budget revision will prevent her from developing the FY06 budget. Mrs. Douglas said that she could still move forward with budget development.

Mrs. Gilman asked whether the postponed budget revision can be voted on at any meeting. Mrs. Mullins stated that the revision can be voted on at any future meeting since the public has been allowed an opportunity to speak to it. After further discussions Ms. Germano explained that the Board could add the item to the agenda at a future meeting.

VOTE TO POSTPONE AND CONDUCT A WORKSESSION:

Advisory Vote - YES

YES - Hilts, Germano, N. Anderson, Brown, Mullins, Wassilie

NO - M. Anderson, Gilman

Motion carried.

BOARD COMMENTS:

(8:55:19 PM)

Mrs. Brown stated that she believes that the Board has expressed an interest in keeping class sizes small. She stated that the Board has an opportunity to show some leadership and to do something the Board feels strongly about such as provide assistance for oversized classrooms. She stated that she does not feel that the District should spend its resources expanding a program which is not required by Alaska State law, such as kindergarten. She acknowledged the importance of early education but added that there are other options to parents within Peninsula communities. She stated that she appreciated the interaction and wished those present a Happy Holiday. She congratulated those who received Golden Apple Awards.

Dr. Anderson cautioned the Board about interfering with the administration's job of managing classroom sizes. He stated that he is also concerned about pupil-teacher ratios and suggested the administration consider a solution for large classrooms. He stated that he is stunned by the high percentage of Grade 1 through 3 students that

are not fluent in oral reading. He stated that kindergarten is a vital area that the District should focus its attention as well as preschool.

Mrs. Gilman thanked the Board and administration for the frank discussion regarding weighted grades. She reported that she attended the Kenai Central High School Christmas concert and the Mt. View Elementary Christmas program. She described the Kenai Central High School Christmas concert and noted that Mr. DJ Tyson is an accomplished pianist. She noted that it was a great moment when she watched her daughter being directed by her former music teacher.

BOARD COMMENTS:

(Continued)

Mrs. Hilts reported that she recently watched several hours of junior high school basketball and noted that the Susan B. English Elementary/High School boy's team only had 6 players and finished in second place. She stated that currently it is the last year for a junior high school team for a few years. She reported that the Susan B. English Elementary/High School girls' basketball team won the championship by beating the Nikolaevsk Elementary/High School team. She reported that Razdolna still needs ski equipment, especially short poles. She wished those present a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year and Sprasnikum.

Ms. Germano observed that the weighted grade issue seems to come down to the issue of class rank. She recalled a comment made by Mr. Huftel (former Homer administrator) that each school should set their own criteria to determine a student's class rank. She stated that grades don't have to be weighted in order to determine the class valedictorian. She expressed appreciation for Commissioner of Education Roger Sampson's presentation and expressed concern that the District will be educating toddlers and added that research says 3 and 4 year olds should be exposed to education. She wished those present a Happy Holiday season and suggested that families take time to enjoy each other.

Mr. Tyson thanked those who spoke to the Board about weighted grades and noted that it is a controversial issue among high school students. He stated that he is taking an AP history class and although he can see both sides of the issue, the majority of the students want to keep weighted grades. He reported that students have commented that if weighted grades were not available the number of students who enroll in AP classes would drop.

Mrs. Mullins stated that she has mixed emotions about the issue of weighted grades and suggested that maybe the Board didn't think about it long enough. She stated that it is important for the Board to get all the information and in future decisions she will look further than necessary. She stated that it was not the Board's intent to harm anyone but instead to do something good for students. She expressed appreciation for the student-made Christmas card she received from the superintendent's office. She commended the Golden Apple

Award recipients and added that she wished the Board could honor more nominees. She thanked the administration for their hard work during 2004 and added that she is looking to positive happenings in 2005. She wished those present a Merry Christmas and a great holiday season.

BOARD COMMENTS:

(Continued)

Ms. Wassilie stated that the Board will continue with three worksessions at the next Board meeting (Review of Policy Manual Section 4000, weighted grades, budget revisions). She reported that the Board met with Kenai Peninsula legislators and staff and noted that the Board will continue to conduct monthly teleconferences with legislators to discuss educational issues. She reported that the legislators reported that state budget legislation could move quickly during the upcoming session. She expressed appreciation for those who spoke to the Board regarding weighted grades and added that she feels bad that the Board changed the rules in the middle of the student's high school career especially when students who are participating in foreign exchange programs begin their planning in eighth grade. She stated that the Board will have to continue to try to make weighted grades work and noted that more students are enrolling in AP classes. She reported that the FY05 budget revisions will be discussed at the next Board worksession and noted that the recommended purchase of new reading materials caught the Board by surprise. She stated that she hopes the Board can take action at the next meeting and expressed regret that assistance for overcrowded classrooms could not be provided immediately. She stated that she shares Ms. Germano's concern about placing toll free calls to Central Office. She wished those present a Happy Holiday.

ADJOURN:

(9:19:41 PM)

At 9:19 p.m., Mrs. Mullins moved the School Board Meeting be adjourned. Ms. Germano seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Sandra Wassilie, Vice President

Mrs. Debra Mullins, Clerk

The Minutes of December 6, 2004,
were approved on January 10, 2005, as
written