

The Grinnell-Newburg Board of Education met in Regular Session on April 8, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 2nd Floor, Community Building 927 4th Avenue, Grinnell, Iowa 50112.

Members Present: Barbara Brown, Kirsten Fisher, Jeff Knobloch, Jonathan Nance, Jeff Smith, Carol Wilhelm and Claire Moisan (arrived at 6:05).

Members Absent: None

Also in attendance at the table: Superintendent Todd Abrahamson and Accounting Assistant Teresa Hawk.

Administrators Present: Kevin Seney and Sara Hegg-Dunne

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Board President Barbara Brown called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Accounting Assistant Teresa Hawk called the roll. Six members were in attendance.

2. Fiduciary Report:

Brown asked about the general fund balance. Superintendent Abrahamson responded, explaining the General Fund has approximately \$3.7 million. Projected deficit appears to be about \$643,527 for the year.

3. Approval of Consent Agenda

Knobloch moved to approve the Consent Agenda and Nance seconded the motion. Motion approved 7-0

A. Approve/Amenda Agenda

B. Minutes: Regular Meeting 3/25/15

C. Financials

D. Claims and Accounts

4. Communications from the Public

Community member Kamal Hammouda wanted to expressed his feelings regarding the Bond referendum vote. He stated he supports our teachers and schools, but voted no to the bond referendum because he was not happy with the process of the referendum.

5. Communications and Reports

A. Board

Board member Knobloch stated he has continued contacting the legislature to determine what the state funding will be. He noted technically they are in violation of the law by not providing the state aid amount to school districts.

Board member Fisher noted there is a legislative coffee this Saturday and it would be nice to have a large crowd attend, believing it would put more pressure on our legislature to make a decision.

B. Principal

Middle School Principal Sara Hegg-Dunne presented data on a Behavior Intervention Module the Middle School implemented last year. Staff involved include Tom Dayton and Kris Loschen, instructors, along with Abby Allen and Dee Mixdorf, paraeducators. Hegg-Dunne explained the program is educationally based, with a focus on teaching and re-teaching appropriate behavior. Tom Dayton spoke on the implementation process, explaining students tend to fall into 3 categories - (1) general population, (2) at-risk, and (3) chronic. Dayton would like to instill a safe, friendly, inviting place for the students. Goals include building relationships, and helping students realize there are people to help and support them on their educational journey, to systemically change behavior. Staff utilize the time between 3:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. for work study, life skills teaching and/or some kind of physical activity for students not involved in athletics. The funding for this project comes from MAGDP (Modified Allowable Growth for Dropout Prevention).

Board member Wilhelm asked what the Middle School needed from the Board. Dayton said he would like to see the paraeducators extend their day until 4:00 - 4:30 to help with the restitution time. He would also like to see some kind of enhanced transition from Middle School to High School, as third-category Chronic students have a difficult time with change and trust. Principal Seney stated that a new At-Risk position will be put in place next year, which will aid in that transition. Brown asked about the transition from 4th grade to Middle School. Dayton explained the principals and counselors are primarily responsible for BI (including transitions) in the lower elementary buildings.

6. Old Business

A. Approve Audit Report

Knobloch requested a detailed explanation of the audit. Abrahamson explained in more detail the items the auditors mentioned in their report, including a batch processing error, purchase orders, and a deposits over the summer. Brown requested the audit responses be added to the website to correspond with the audit. Wilhelm questioned where the money for facility acquisitions came from, stating it was difficult to determine what account was used. Abrahamson noted that the dollars came from the Lost (Local Option Sales Tax) account funds. Motion by Nance to approve the audit report, seconded by Smith. Motion approved 7-0.

7. New Business

A. Out of State Travel - National FFA Convention

Motion to approve the travel request by Moisan seconded by Nance. Motion approved 7-0.

B. Out of State Travel - Outdoor Adventure Club

Motion to approve the travel request by Moisan seconded by Nance. Motion approved 7-0.

C. Out of State Travel - Destination Imagination Globals

Motion to approve the travel request by Moisan seconded by Nance. Motion approved 7-0.

D. FEH Architects & Associates Recommendation and Award Contract for Iowa Telecom Interior Deconstruction

Don Seymour from FEH presented the low bidder for the deconstruction of the former Iowa Telecom building. Neumann Brothers provided the lowest bid and the alternate bid which includes the demolition of the driveway to the garage and the structure itself. The budget for this project was \$232-250,000. Brown asked if this has to be done now. Abrahamson stated moving forward now would keep our investment in a useable form. Seymour stated that the building will begin deteriorating more aggressively, as mold, etc., continue to grow, if the building is not cleaned up. Wilhelm stated that our money would be better spent on protecting our current assets (school buildings). Seymour stated that the deconstructed building would need to be conditioned (heating/cooling) to reduce moisture, which would include purchasing heating/cooling equipment. Wilhelm stated that the district should expect a guarantee from the contractor that mold would not return. At the inquiry of Brown, Abrahamson explained the funds for this project would come from LOST (local option sales tax) funds. Seymour also mentioned that the district could use the building for other functional purposes (storage, etc.), while the district decides what the long-term plan for the building is, and the daily use of the building would help prevent deterioration. The contractor's bid expires after 45 days. Knobloch stated he had more questions before he could vote on this issue. He agreed that we need to protect our investments. Lamb stated that he spoke on behalf of several people who do not want the Board to do anything with this building at this time. The board decided to table the item for the time being.

8. Board Discussion

A. Facilities

Wilhelm stated that she is not against education. She thanked everyone who voted and hopes that we can find common ground so we can move forward together.

Brown posed the question, “Where do we go from here?” She stated it was time to take the problem back to the community and form another plan and move forward again.

TAG (talented and gifted) teacher Tammy Strawser asked to speak. She stated the results of the vote were very discouraging, as she felt the community had an opportunity to become informed, but chose not to. She felt while she was asked to- and does- respect the wisdom of long-time community members, the educators in the district deserve the same. She stated, “educators in the trenches know what is important, and what needs to be done, and they deserve respect and professional courtesy, but were not given that.” Moisan suggested we form another Task Group from across our community. Community member Helen Redmond stated she would like to see parents/community members involved in all decision making aspects (better relationship between teachers, the Board, and community on the communication, so better informed decisions can be made).

Brown reiterated the extreme urgency to find a solution to the financial issue due to the increase of expense in the daily function of our schools. Abrahamson stated that if the district has to delve into the cash reserve, the State will step in and levy the taxpayers. He explained that if the district does not get unspent cash under control, the district will be in violation of Iowa code. Currently 84% of the budget is for salary/benefits; it should be around 75-80%. If the State were to come in, the Board and the community will have no voice, and would be under the control of the state.

Knobloch agreed, explaining this happened in Sibley, Iowa (the last school board he sat on). The State cut teachers, contracts for activities (coaches/sponsors), and activities/programs, and eventually had to close a building.

Brown stated the board needed more communication from the public, as the board cannot follow the desires of community members if they don't communicate with the board. She stated it is rare for her to hear from a community member.

Community member Dan Huebner asked about the student decrease of past 3 years. Abrahamson stated we lost 25 students the 1st year, 57 the 2nd year and 75 the 3rd year (a total of \$883,200.00 the district has lost in revenue). He discussed the problem of lack of growth in young families coming into our Community, and how this has significantly affected the budget. Community member Doug Cameron stated over the last 40 years, he believed enrollment is down approximately 700 students. Abrahamson stated if the legislators do not give the schools any supplemental pay, the taxpayers will be stuck with higher property tax to cover the cost. He urged people to contact their legislator.

Community member George Graham spoke, saying, “Everyone better wake up and talk with their legislators. We need to look at our Community, we have 3 nursing homes, and care facilities. We are becoming a stagnant town with no new industry to bring in young people. People are living in Newton because it's cheaper to buy over there.”

Fisher stated that if we had the money for different programs, we could entice parents to send their children to our school, even if they didn't live here. Lamb believes we should renovate what we have with the finances that we have. He also inquired about future mailings. Abrahamson explained that been resolved. Smith emphasized that we will be expected a Task Force will need to do the work of 3 years in only 6 months. Abrahamson stated that a public hearing will be held on April 22 regarding the Central Office move to the high school.

9. Board Talking Points

10. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Knobloch and seconded by Nance. Motion approved 7-0. Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Board Calendar

Policy Advisory Meeting	4:00 p.m., April 9, 2015
Special Board Meeting (Annual Budget)	6:00 p.m., April 13, 2015
Regular Board Meeting	6:00 p.m., April 22, 2015