

SILVER FALLS SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J  
BOARD WORK SESSION MINUTES

November 28, 2016

7:00 p.m.

District Office Conference Room

Attendance: Board members present were Chair Wally Lierman, Tom Buchholz, Aaron Koch, Tim Roth, Ervin Stadeli, Ron Valoff and Todd White. Also present were Andy Bellando, Superintendent; Dandy Stevens, Assistant Superintendent; and Steve Nielsen, Business Manager. Denise Childs, Board Secretary was absent. Press was present.

Chair Wally Lierman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and noted attendance.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

District Report Card: Andy Bellando reviewed various portions of the District's 2015-2016 Report Card. He noted the report card includes information in regard to each school's performance, student enrollment, demographics, class sizes, race/ethnicity of students as compared to staff, funding sources, expulsions and suspensions, graduation rate increase, and performance indicators for various student groups (e.g., English Language Learners, Migrant, Special Education).

Wally Lierman pointed out that it appears grades 3 and 5 are struggling a little bit in math. He felt that is the foundation for the upper grades. Wally said in theory if those elementary grades can do better, they should be able to be even better in middle and high school. He also noted in science it has been a struggle especially in our K-8 schools trying to get a good solid science curriculum that the teachers can deliver and have the right lab equipment.

Ervin Stadeli said it is encouraging to see the District's migrant dropout rate at 0% compared to the State average of 5% and similar school districts at 3%. He felt that is a testament to teachers, administration and staff. Ervin commended them for the good job they are doing.

Tom Buchholz noted the District's economically disadvantaged students were almost at 88% on track to graduate. He said it is good to see kids that don't come from easy backgrounds getting served. Mr. Bellando pointed out that the graduation requirement for Silverton High School is a full credit higher than the graduation requirement for the State of Oregon. He said it is a testament to what the District does to provide our students in preparation not only for graduation from high school but for the future.

Todd White wondered about the availability of minority teaching staff. Mr. Bellando explained one of their long-term goals is proportional race/ethnic similarity of staff members to students in the District. Dandy Stevens added that a lot of times teachers with those specific endorsement areas are paid additional stipends. She noted that some school districts recruit out of state and have concerted efforts to place themselves in a position to be in front of minority educators.

Tom Buchholz inquired if there was any improvement in ethnically diverse people becoming teachers. Mrs. Stevens explained that fewer people overall are

enrolling in education programs because the pay is not competitive, high college debt, and the last recession resulted in people getting laid off. She noted the current teacher shortage across the United States.

Mrs. Stevens then reported that one of the things the District is looking at is expanding its own recruitment programs. She shared that they have been talking to Salem-Keizer School District about the kinds of recruitment they do, not only with classified staff, but also with high school kids who are interested in becoming teachers. Mr. Bellando added that the District has recently reached a partnership with Concordia University out of Portland to offer discounts to current teachers and classified staff to be able to offer an incentive for them to go back to school and get some advanced course work completed.

The Board thanked Mr. Bellando and Mrs. Stevens for reviewing the District's report card and also the additional information on teaching incentives.

SHS Post  
Election  
Update:

Andy Bellando and Justin Lieuallen, Silverton High School Principal, gave an update on the SHS post-election circumstances. Mr. Bellando assessed some summary data from the "Student Wellness Survey" in regard to behaviors and specific cultural aspects that may be in effect at SHS. He also reviewed a student discipline summary/analysis of harassment/bullying reported at SHS.

Mr. Lieuallen shared his perspective of the election activities. He reviewed some of the actions taken afterwards: sending a One Call Now message to inform families of what had transpired on Election Day at SHS, visiting with concerned parents, delivering intercom messages to students (e.g., practicing respect), and meetings with staff, each student class and student leadership team.

Mr. Lieuallen then described some of the short- and long-term plans related to follow-up strategies, which included:

- ◆ Continue messages and posters regarding being mindful, practice respect, and promote equity and a sense of belonging in the school. Get the message out there that discriminatory racist and intimidating words are not acceptable and will be dealt with seriously. The message will also include that everyone should respectfully communicate their thoughts and ideas.
- ◆ Partner with specialists/consultants to speak and work with staff and students.
- ◆ Keep an eye on those students and staff members who were impacted by the election events.
- ◆ Gather baseline data (through surveying students, staff and parents) on topics like discipline attendance, grades, and level of students in school involvement.
- ◆ Encourage students to be involved in a school sport or activity. Increase student, staff and parent connections to the high school.
- ◆ Consider possible attention to cultural relevance in a curriculum.
- ◆ Increase staff knowledge/trainings surrounding cultural and racial biases while developing their ability to facilitate conversations.
- ◆ Create student focus groups, student panel, and/or culture team to share concerns and/or feedback with staff members.

Discussion followed where the following Board members shared their thoughts:

Aaron Koch said that he likes the initial efforts so far. He felt that time should be taken to see what are the best programs for our kids to assure that communicating racial/cultural awareness, inclusion and zero tolerance

responses are conveyed with the lower grade levels. Aaron suggested a key factor should also be communication to the public of what has been done so far.

Wally Lierman said that there will be differences of opinions, but that kids and adults need to learn how to respond respectfully, get the point across and move on. Wally added that discussions do not have to be degrading but be positive.

Tom Buchholz shared that he would like to see more minority staff hired in the future and work toward a more diverse staff.

Ron Valoff inquired if reasons had been heard as to why some students were concerned about coming to school. Mr. Bellando felt that it was not so much what had happened specifically at Silverton High School as much as it was what was going on in the political arena on Election Day and the following days. Mr. Lieuallen added that high school staff strongly encourage students to report concerns to them.

Todd White shared that he has heard a lot of good feedback from students and parents about how things have been handled.

The Board thanked Mr. Bellando and Mr. Lieuallen for their updates.

Bd. Member Chair Wally Lierman noted comments and concerns that the Board members  
Social Media: have received in regard to Todd White's posts on social media – mainly on the "Silverton Rejects" page. He said he was opening up this topic for discussion and summarized some possible Board actions: adopt a statement stating that the Board does not condone Todd's abuse or activity on social media; hire an investigator to look further into this situation; or censure Todd for violating policy **BBF** – *Board Member Standards of Conduct*.

Discussion followed where the Board members shared their thoughts:

Todd White considers that what he posts on social media, which includes his personal Facebook page, has nothing to do with being a school board member. He believes that things were taken out of context and people were being emotional about not liking his opinions on various topics. Todd felt that nothing he has said or written is insulting and that everything has been blown out of proportion. He believes that there are a lot of people who are just out looking to be offended.

Tim Roth felt that Board members are held to a higher standard. He said that Todd has every right to present his own opinions and beliefs, but that he should not go about it the way he does in insulting or verbally attacking people. Tim noted past complaints against Todd. He believes, at this point, Todd has become a liability to the District and Board. Tim suggested the Board members censure Todd and separate themselves from what Todd says publicly or on Facebook that are not the beliefs of the District or Board. He said that he does not want to be associated with it anymore as a Board member. He noted past conversations he has had with Todd and that nothing has changed. Tim believes the Board now needs to take action as they have been dealing with Todd's actions way too long.

Aaron Koch noted that he has seen other elected officials post on Facebook and handle things respectfully. He pointed out Todd's past history patterns where the Board members have had to deal with the consequences and fallout of what Todd has said or posted. Aaron said going after somebody on a public site can result in people interpreting that accordingly and be a liability to the Board. He stated that Todd has the right to say what he thinks (freedom of

speech), but that he does not want to be associated with what Todd says or posts. Aaron felt that Todd has violated board policy multiple times in not dealing with the public with kindness and respect.

Wally Lierman cited a few examples of Todd's Facebook posts where he has taken "digs" at people. He said that causes problems with perception and does not go over well. Wally also pointed out that there have been Facebook issues with other neighboring public officials.

Ron Valoff said that perception is critical and a high responsibility when the Board members communicate with the public. He felt that Todd lacks self-control and awareness. Ron said that Todd needs to understand that how he speaks and/or acts, regardless of it being on his own time in expressing his opinion, it does represent the Board. He pointed out that there are a lot of ways to educate themselves on how to perform on the School Board (e.g., OSBA Summer Board Conference). Ron encouraged participating in those types of educational aspects. He urged Todd to be proactive and take a higher stance because the responsibility falls back on him to not get caught up in emotion and to think a little bit before deciding to act. Ron felt that if the Board members remain silent and do not condone Todd's actions, they are just as guilty. He believes the public will perceive that the whole Board is somewhat apathetic towards what they are trying to achieve. Ron said, at this point, he does not agree with censure, but that he would like a joint unified statement stating that the Board does not condone the behavior or words that Todd is posting.

Ervin Stadeli compared Todd's actions to shaking/poking a bee hive in a tree. He said that Todd is going to get stung and that eventually so will the other Board members. Ervin said that he has found it frustrating to waste energy and time on Todd's actions instead of focusing on the important things with kids.

Tom Buchholz pointed out the Silverton Connections Rejects Facebook page is where people go for vigorous political discussion. He said that if a person does not like it, go somewhere else and/or get off of Facebook. Tom felt that as long as Todd is not talking about school board topics, the Board should be fine. Tom stated that he is a free speech advocate and he does not support censoring.

During discussion, Chair Wally Lierman explained the meaning of censure:

*Censure is an official condemnation, reprimand or criticism leveled at a board member by his peers. Censuring does not remove the board member from office or technically impede his ability to serve. Censuring can be an important means of distancing the board from counterproductive behavior since silence in some cases might be interpreted as passive endorsement or might give fodder to accusations of conspiracy. In that way it can help guard the other board members and organization from liability resulting from a board member's comments or actions.*

Ron Valoff inquired if there was access to data and details regarding other school boards and/or governing bodies censoring people and for what reason. Mr. Bellando said he would check into it.

Following discussion, Chair Wally Lierman said that it appeared there was a majority consensus to consider censoring. He suggested that he and Mr. Bellando work with OSBA on a censure statement for the next board meeting and see what happens. Per Ron Valoff's inquiry, Wally said it would also be great to get some additional data on other governing bodies censoring people.

OTHER

Adjourn: No further business was brought before the Board and the meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

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Chair of the Board

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Superintendent-Clerk

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Date

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Date