

INTERSTATE 35 COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION WORK SESSION MINUTES

November 25, 2014

The Interstate 35 Community School District Board of Education held a work session, Tuesday, November 25, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. in the High School Library in Truro, Iowa.

President Julie Brownlee called the work session to order at 5:30 p.m. Directors Julie Brownlee, Leah Gray, and Dan Kirkpatrick were in attendance. Director Tracy Bean arrived at 5:32 p.m. Also present were Superintendent Dr. Kevin Fiene and Board Secretary Ted Bauer.

Motion by Kirkpatrick, seconded by Gray to approve the agenda; motion carried 4-0.

In the spirit of transparency and making information available to keep patrons informed about our school district, Brownlee explained that board meetings and work sessions will be video-recorded and shown unedited on the public access channel at Interstate Communications and made available through a link on the district's website beginning with this month's meetings. Brownlee explained that the Board will commit to doing this for several months and determine if it is being adequately utilized to continue it. Brownlee thanked Ms. Schwenk, her Journalism class, and videographer, Sam Cook for their work to record it.

The discussion regarding the Instructional Support Levy (ISL) continued from October's work session. Of all the districts in the State of Iowa, I-35 is one of nine districts that does not have the ISL. Fiene explained the ISL can be either board-approved for five years or voter-approved for ten years and funded by either property tax or a combination of property tax and income surtax. There is a tighter timeline if it is a voter-approved due to limitations in the code on special school elections. Once approved by either the voters or by the board, each year the board determines how much to levy (up to 10 percent of the operating budget) and whether to use property taxes or a combination of property tax and income surtax. Fiene explained possible uses for the ISL to assist student learning would be instructional coaches in math and reading, further development of a K-12 intervention program, additional professional development and technology opportunities for staff and students including 1:1 initiative, additional support for TAG program, development of K-12 At-Risk program, further MAP testing providing frequent and relevant student performance data, training on formative assessment used to adjust or drive instruction, and development of comprehensive districtwide assessment system. Fiene stated that the ISL increases cash and spending authority for the district to help the teaching and learning process. The objective is not to increase taxes, but simply to reallocate existing tax dollars to increase funds available for teaching and learning.

Fiene explained the Modified Allowable Growth for Dropout Prevention (MAG) (now being referred to by the State as the Modified Supplemental Amount for Dropout Prevention or MSA) is another locally-controlled option to supplement the general fund. The funds can only be used for approved dropout prevention strategies, programs, and positions. Interstate 35 has requested the MAG in the past, but due to the carryover balance did not request it for the current year in order to spend down. The MSA, like the ISL, increases the district's spending authority. The MSA application is due December 15, 2014, for the 2015-16 school year. Fiene will ask the Board for authorization to request the maximum MSA for 2015-16 in the regular board meeting.

Fiene explained each of the district's tax levies and the current rate of each. He further asked hypothetically if the tax rate for certain levies could be reduced to generate fewer dollars in certain areas (example being the Management Fund) and shifted to another area (example being the Instructional Support Levy and/or the MAG<MSA>) without increasing the tax rates overall. Fiene pointed out that the percentage of our district's overall levy spent on teaching and learning (general fund) compared to non-instructional levies (management, PPEL, debt service) is below the state average on percentage of overall levy for instruction and over the state average for non-instructional levies. Currently I-35 uses 66% of our total levies for teaching and learning (34% for non-instructional areas) while the state average is 79% for teaching and learning and 21% for non-instructional areas.

Brownlee explained that we currently have 16 employees who would qualify for early retirement. The policy states that to qualify for early retirement benefits, employees need to have worked for the district at least 15 years and be 55 years of age. Early retirement benefits are paid from the Management Fund. Fiene explained that the current balance of the Management Fund would require that we would need to cap the number of early retirees at no more than seven or eight employees. Fiene explained if the Board did vote to accept applications for early retirement, the eligible employees would receive notice that they are eligible to apply for early retirement and if they are interested would need to turn the paperwork into the Board Secretary by the deadline to be approved or denied at a later board meeting.

Fiene shared the need to begin discussing the Superintendent evaluation process. He shared how he was evaluated at his prior district. He explained how the evaluation needs to be based on the Iowa Leadership Standards, regardless of the evaluation used.

Fiene briefly discussed legislative advocacy efforts and explained the importance to developing relationships with our legislators. Fiene provided contact information and maps of congressional districts to the Board. Fiene and our administrators will begin contacting our Senators and Representatives and encouraged our board members to continue to do more also.

Fiene explained the need to review how the district "brands" and "markets" itself and requested authorization to organize a Branding and Marketing Committee to work through the issues and bring recommendations to the Board for consideration. Branding examples cited include the district name: "Interstate 35 Community School District" or "I-35 Community School District"; the official mascot spelling: "Roadrunners or Road Runners." After the branding is finalized, Fiene discussed the importance of positively marketing the district.

The BP Series 100, 200, and 300 were completed and ready for review from Lynch, Dallas, P.C. A first reading of the policies is scheduled during the Regular Meeting; second reading/approval will be scheduled during the December 2014 Regular Meeting.

At 6:45 p.m., motion by Arzani, seconded by Kirkpatrick to adjourn; motion carried 5-0.

Julie Brownlee, Board President

Ted Bauer, Board Secretary