

LEBANON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
Lebanon, Linn County, Oregon
February 25, 2016

The Work Session of the Board of Directors was held in the District Office Board Room on February 25, 2016. Chairman Richard Borden called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Those present included:

Richard Borden	Director	Rob Hess	Superintendent
Jerry Williams	Director	Bo Yates	Assistant Superintendent
Mike Martin	Director	Jennifer Meckley	HR Director
Russ McUne	Director	Linda Darling	Business Director
Liz Alperin	Director		

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Board Chairman Richard Borden explained that 15 minutes at the front and end of the meeting would be used for Audience Comments.

Fourth Grade Riverview Student Jack Williams asked that the Board to reconsider changing the boundaries. He expressed his desire to attend Seven Oak and not Hamilton Creek.

Patron Darrel Long expressed his concern that at the January parent meeting held at Hamilton Creek the plan to change boundaries and reconfiguration was presented as “not happening for a least a year and a half”, but the parent survey put a possible timeline of six months. He pointed out that parents like choice for schools.

Parent Stephanie Herb shared that her family researched the schools and choose Hamilton Creek for her children to attend. They have strong ties to Hamilton Creek and value the small rural school. She asked that parents continue to be allowed to utilize open enrollment.

Parent Teresa Peltier said that she does not want to lose sight of the reason for the changes to boundaries and reconfiguration of schools. The schools are overcrowded and the district is trying to trouble-shoot the situation. She shared her view that the sister school configuration idea looked good on paper, but after talking to members of the community it might not be best for our community. She pointed out that most people want to keep their options open. The district is already giving the patrons what they are asking for.

Parent Samantha Miller shared that her family has made financial sacrifices in order for her child to have the option of going to the school of their choice. She expressed her concerns with the sister school idea. She pointed out the challenges for her daycare kids who attend Riverview and asked the Board to consider all the kids in daycare situations.

Introduction to Boundary and School Configuration Discussion

1) Review of Communication

Superintendent Rob Hess gave a brief overview of the history of how the district came to consider boundary changes and school reconfiguration. He shared a power point presentation speaking to the following points:

- 1) Quote from Seth Godin “Worth Thinking About”
- 2) Why are we exploring this topic
 - a) Equity
 - b) Efficiency
 - c) Excellence

(Enclosure I-1)

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- 3) Increasing opportunities for all students
- 4) Electronic staff survey – 112 participants

Assistant Superintendent Bo Yates shared that the mobility rate in the district is 40%. He explained that he met with the City of Lebanon, and found that the population growth rate in Lebanon is approximately 1% a year.

Russ McUne pointed out that there are several plans being discussed by Samaritan Health for building additional medical schools which could possibly bring more growth to the community.

Jerry Williams said that he had heard that there was a possibility that additional companies could build around Lowes, which could bring growth as well.

REVIEW OF FEEDBACK

Liz Alperin pointed out that the surveys did not ask the necessary question and feels that there should be separate sections on the survey to get the correct data.

Rob Hess pointed out that the surveys were developed in January and he wanted to keep one survey circulating. He pointed out that an electronic survey went out to staff and asked questions differently. He suggested sending an electronic survey out to parents also.

Mike Martin pointed out that of the surveys that were answered by K-8 parents, most were in favor of open enrollment. The staff surveys were all over the place for open enrollment. He feels that open enrollment is here to stay in some form.

Russ McUne questioned how many other schools in the state have open enrollment.

Rob Hess said that he does not know of any other school district that does open enrollment the way Lebanon does.

Russ McUne said he likes the idea of open enrollment, but would like to see some caps done to deal with school crowding.

Mike Martin pointed out that the surveys show that parents really want electives.

Richard Borden pointed out that the same questions need to be asked of staff, parents and community. The Board needs time to digest the surveys so they can all be on the same page. He feels that the district needs to find equity in education for all families in the district.

DISCUSSION

Rob Hess shared that the Open Enrollment Policy does not need to be revised, but the Open Enrollment Policy ARs need to be changed by setting enrollment caps at each school. The practice of allowing open enrollment transfers after the June 1st open enrollment deadline might need to be changed as well.

Russ McUne pointed out that the district needs to do what is best for kids. The sister school could be a hardship on families because of the distance between school sites.

Mike Martin shared research from three research projects (see enclosure) showing that there is no consistent relationship between student achievement and grade configuration. The Hamilton Project looked at three factors: 1) configurations, 2) start times, and 3) teacher assignments. It found that three organizational reforms that have the potential to increase K-12 student outcomes at modest cost were: 1) starting school later in the day for middle and high school students, 2) shifting from the separate elementary-middle and high school configuration to K-8 and 9-12, and 3) manage teacher assignments with student achievement as goal. Mike pointed out that academic achievement is our goal, but the research does not show that school reconfiguration to a middle school is the outcome.

Rob Hess pointed out that preparing students for high school readiness is key for graduation. He said that the data that Bo Yates had previously gathered from the high school showed that K-8 students did not do as well at the high school.

Russ McUne said that if K-8 students are not doing as well at high school we need to find out why.

Liz Alperin would like to compare high school test scores, classes passed, and graduation rate of students coming from Seven Oak, Hamilton Creek, Lacombe, and Pioneer. She pointed out that if the district reconfigures students to Seven Oak then there needs to be money available for the elective classes. Liz pointed out that equity in class size was important to staff. She would like data for the following: 1) class size if the district did a K-6 & 7-8 configuration, 2) class size changes from present practice.

Rob said that class size is large because there are not enough teachers at each grade level.

Richard Borden suggested that the hard data be gathered to look at getting academic achievement for every child. He pointed out that the Board does not need to make a decision right away regarding reconfiguration and boundary changes.

Rob Hess pointed out that Riverview, Pioneer and Cascades are struggling with enrollment numbers. These are not crisis level problems, but the district should start looking at them.

Richard Borden questioned if a school has turned away students who live in their boundary area due to enrollment; and what happens when a class is full and students want to open enroll into the school.

Rob Hess said that if a student lives in their boundary area they can always attend their boundary school. The district looks at class size and gives help through classroom aides.

Russ McUne said that he is not convinced that the middle school model is necessary for graduation rate increase. He does think that we need to address students that are struggling at the high school. He would like to leave the status quo for next year and revise the open enrollment policies to set caps at each school.

Liz Alperin is in favor of waiting to see if the positive things (i.e. AVID) that have been implemented will effect the graduation rate before the District starts moving boundaries and reconfiguration.

Mike Martin is in favor of tweaking open enrollment with a grandfather clause. It sounds like the capacity at the schools at the present time is not even close to their limits, so even with the 1% growth we are still in good shape for a while. He feels that the opportunity to access programs for all students (i.e. music) needs to be looked at by the district. Mike feels that the district should not move students if it is not going to show academic improvement.

Rob Hess would like to ask parents if bussing were provided would they send their students to Seven Oak.

Liz Alperin reminded the Board that many people bought homes based on the present boundaries for schools.

Rob Hess shared the data from the electronic staff survey questions.

Bo Yates said that he will bring the numbers for building a master schedule with electives for sustainability.

The consensus is to have follow up discussion at the next Board meeting.

Richard Borden summarized the “bring backs” for the March 10 Regular Board meeting discussion: 1) data from the High School regarding test scores and passing classes per school, 2) survey results for bussing students to Seven Oak, and 3) other options for equity in class sizes.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Riverview Teacher Sarah Haley thanked the Board for having the Work Session and asked them to think about the children. She pointed out that relationship and longevity is huge for “at risk” students. She explained that mobility is a huge issue for students and our district.

Patron Julie Barnhart shared her experience of being overwhelmed going to high school from a K-8 school saying that she felt behind. She asked that the Board consider how each school is run and make it fairer with class size and student opportunities.

Patron Kate Frances shared her student’s great experience going from Pioneer to Seven Oak. She likes having a choice of where to send her students with open enrollment. She also expressed her concern that preschool is being considered as part of the school reconfiguration.

Patron Teresa Peliter asked that when the survey is readdressed that the district define Open Enrollment and Transfers. She wondered if the Board is getting an accurate answer from parents if they do not know about grandfathering into the open enrolled schools. She feels that the district can afford students better opportunities at Seven Oak. She feels offended when people refer to “country schools” and “in-town schools”, pointing out that we are all one school district.

Anne Williams thanked the Board for having the foresight to have public input at the beginning and end of this meeting. She pointed out that the boundary change letter that was sent in the Tuesday folders needed to be clear to what the boundary changes would be. There was nothing with the letter. There were folks in the community that had no idea that the Board was considering boundary changes.

Patron Natalie Ellis questioned why the district is trying to do changes to boundaries and reconfiguration when the data does not show a need. She agreed that parents do not know what the boundary changes are and did not know where to get the information. She asked that when looking at high school data comparisons that each school is looked at individually (i.e. Lacombe, Hamilton Creek).

Patron Darrel Long pointed out that parents play the biggest role in students' success and he thanked the parents for their involvement. He spoke in favor of letting parents have a choice of where to send their students to school.

Patron Stephanie Herb expressed her concern that changing the schools is going to hurt "at risk" students. She explained that "at risk" students thrive best at smaller schools due to relationships.

Hamilton Creek Teacher Julie Regan pointed out that changing boundaries is a big issue for our community. She appreciates the Board taking time to look at the data. She explained that the graduation rate has to do more with the makeup of our community because of homelessness, drugs, alcohol, divorce, etc., then with the configuration of our schools. Community makeup is a bigger issue and she asked the Board to keep that in mind. She thanked the Board for the community meeting and survey, but she asked that they keep the communication clear. People need to hear the same message.

Richard Borden thanked the parents and staff for being present and giving their input. He pointed out that the Board is their public servant.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

(Recorded by Kathy Schurr)

Richard Borden, Board Chair

Bo Yates, Assistant Superintendent