

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
BUTLER SCHOOL DISTRICT 53  
OAK BROOK, ILLINOIS  
Administrative Center  
Butler Junior High School  
Wednesday, January 31, 2018  
6:30 P.M. Committee-of-the-Whole Meeting

MINUTES

Members Present: Elizabeth Chun, President; Sally Beatty, Vice President; Ahmad Sulaiman, Secretary; James Chow; Cabin Kim; Lou Paskalides  
Members Absent: Chris Edmonds  
In Attendance: Heidi Wennstrom, Superintendent; Chad Prosen, Principal Brook Forest Elementary; Amy Read, Principal Butler Junior High

Dr. Chun, President, called the Committee-of- the-Whole meeting of the Board of Education of Butler School District 53 to order in the board room at 6:32 P.M.

**Visitor Comments**

Dr. Chun recognized Ann Wolff to speak. Mrs. Wolff requested to speak after the presentation and discussion on the strategic plan.

**Approval of Agenda**

Motion by Mr. Sulaiman, seconded by Mr. Kim to approve the agenda as presented.

VOICE VOTE:

Ayes: Dr. Chun, Mr. Chow, Mr. Sulaiman, Mr. Kim, Mr. Paskalides

Nays: Dr. Beatty

Absent: Mr. Edmonds

***Motion carried.***

Dr. Beatty stated she was opposed as the survey was received in December and was confused why it wasn't on the last board meeting agenda, "and why this last minute Committee-of-the-Whole meeting was convened when there was data that was held for quite a period of time before it was shared with the board."

Dr. Chun explained, that the meeting "is on the data that was partly used in the compilation of the strategic plan goals. And so we wanted to be able to have a meeting to just discuss this separate from the strategic plan presentation, which will be at the February 12<sup>th</sup> meeting." The purpose of this meeting "is to clarify any questions that people may have."

**Presentation**

**Strategic Plan Data**

Dr. Wennstrom clarified that the topic for tonight's meeting was the strategic plan survey results. "At the November Board of Education meeting, the board voted to use an experienced consultant to garner community feedback to insure our strategic plan would be built upon reliable data and reflect the needs of the community. There were to be two phases of the data

collection: An online survey for stakeholder satisfaction and in-depth interviews through stakeholder feedback sessions.

In phase one, during late November and early December, Hazard, Young and Attea (HYA) lead by consultants Dr. Pam Hollick and Dr. John Perdue, met with 186 stakeholders, representing board members, administrators, parents, teachers, staff, community members, and community leaders, as well as students, both present and former. These feedback sessions yielded highly beneficial data. Across all groups, people opened up about their hopes and dreams for their students, and for the future of Butler 53. Sessions were generally an hour, although some lasted a little bit longer than an hour. Doctors Hollick and Perdue posed challenging, thought provoking questions, and then they listened to the opinions of our community.

Their listening sessions revealed strong themes that were then cross-referenced and found to be fairly consistent with the two previously written strategic plans by the administrative team during the last six months, and the strategic plan framework presented by Mr. Edmonds to the administration.

During phase two, ECRA's online Butler 53 Strategic Planning survey window opened on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and stayed open for three weeks. During this window, 348 entries were completed on this survey. Prior to the survey closing on December 13<sup>th</sup>, the superintendent received notification from a concerned parent that a board member was influencing parents to negatively respond on the strategic plan survey, and specifically to make statements against the superintendent.

Over the course of the weeks since the closing of this survey, additional parents shared concerns. This pattern of negative behavior suggests that there is an outcome that will negatively affect the district and all its stakeholders in the form of the strategic plan.

Three years of Butler 53's 5Essential data has received satisfactory ratings by parents, teachers, and students, and is among the very highest in the state of Illinois.

This data has previously been shared with the board, and was also shared with the HYA consultants, their HYA Regional Vice President, and the president of the HYA's parent company, ECRA. They verbally acknowledged considerable difference between HYA's strategic plan survey data in contrast to two other forms of very credible data."

Board members were provided with the HYA survey report and three years of 5Essentials data for review. The 5Essentials' data is put out by the University of Chicago. It's been around for over 20 years. This is a highly regarded survey, and it is made up of four quadrants that then compiled into an overall indicator for the school.

Dr. Wennstrom also informed the board of communication with HYA regarding their survey and an issue related to an apparent loop hole. That loop hole provides a way for an individual or multiple individuals to take this survey to sway the community results. The loop hole allows individuals to take the survey from multiple devices, in an effort to flood the survey data with their own opinions. Dr. Wennstrom went on to state, "This survey was launched in good faith and was premised upon the honor system. It was not intended to be used as a tool to fulfill a personal agenda....we have reasonable suspicion regarding the quality of the HYA survey data."

Dr. Beatty questioned the use of the 5Essentials' data as a comparison to the HYA survey data, and being "selective about what data we want to talk about....and the comparison of apples and oranges." Dr. Beatty also asked, "Why are we hiring a company that can't manage the integrity of the data?" Mr. Paskalides noted, "I think what concerns this board right now is that the superintendent has suggested that this data from ECRA has been tainted."

Dr. Wennstrom continued with examples from the 5Essentials' to demonstrate a pattern of inconsistent data in survey areas related to district vision, high standards, teacher personalization, instructional strategies, school safety, and transparent communication. The comparison indicated very disparate data. Parent and student data on the HYA survey is consistent with 5Essentials' data.

The board held a strong debate on the validity of the data, parent concerns, a board member concern related to actions unbecoming of a board member, and the possibility of tainted data.

Dr. Wennstrom referenced the 5Essentials' report that stated, "we had the highest score for *Ambitious Instruction*. Of all of the top 20 school districts that we compare ourselves to, only 13 of those have the distinction of being marked *Well Organized for School Improvement*. That's the top distinction that you can [be awarded]. And if you take a look at the data in comparison to 2014, it has exponentially grown."

The board debated again the validity of the data with serious indications that it may have been tainted, parent concerns, rumors, and the possibility of an investigation.

Dr. Wennstrom informed the board that a final draft of the strategic plan would be presented at the February 12<sup>th</sup> regular board meeting. "The strategic plan you're going to see in February is built very firmly on the stakeholder feedback sessions. We have high quality data in those feedback sessions."

#### **Visitor/Board Comments**

Ann Wolff, Social Worker at Brook Forest, introduced herself and spoke on how saddened she was by all of this news. "We really teach integrity to the children as one of the major keys of putting our behaviors and our values and then they align to tech that integrity piece. And I think we, as adults, need to model the piece of integrity as well....I hate to hear about any dishonesty. It really saddens me. I love working here; I've always been proud of this school district. I feel this district has a very phenomenal reputation. And to hear this, it just, it saddens me, because I know how hard each one of us works for the kids."

President Chun spoke about how difficult all these issues can be and how we get really emotional when we think about our children because we want the best for them. Dr. Chun encouraged parents to not be shy about their concerns and stressed how important it is to have open conversations and communication.

#### **Adjournment**

Motion by Mr. Paskalides, seconded by Mr. Kim to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 P.M.

VOICE VOTE: ***Motion carried.***

Elizabeth Chun, Board President

Ahmad Sulaiman, Board Secretary

Approved at the 3/12/18 regular board meeting.