

**RIVER BEND COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT #2**  
**1110 3<sup>RD</sup> STREET**  
**FULTON, IL 61252**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR JANUARY BOARD MEETING**

River Bend Community Unit School District #2

January 24, 2024

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of River Bend CUSD #2, Whiteside County, Illinois was held on January 24, 2024, at the River Bend District Office.

President Portz called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:31pm. Member Simmons was appointed Secretary Pro-Tem. Upon Roll Call by the Secretary Pro-Tem, the following board members were present: Elizabeth Falls, Jane Orman-Luker, Dan Portz, Jay Ritchie, and Mary Simmons; Absent: Eric Fish and Andrew Meyers; Others Present: Darryl Hogue, Superintendent and Jennifer Griser, Recording Secretary.

President Portz led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Portz welcomed all visitors including: Bob Lewis, Principals: Patrick Henrekin, Jeffrey Hoese, and Jeffrey Parsons and Assistant Principal: Kelli Parsons.

Additions to the agenda. Dr. Hogue added to the superintendent's report an update on remote learning.

*It was moved by Member Orman-Luker, seconded by Member Simmons, to approve the agenda as amended. Voice Vote, all yea, motion carried.*

There was no communication from the RBEA.

President Portz asked if anyone would like to speak as part of public forum. There was no one wishing to speak during public forum.

Principal Reports. Mr. Hoese shared the elementary school is going to be starting a new fundraiser called Books are Fun. The students are to gather names and email addresses and will earn books for themselves and the classroom. A family fun night is being planned for March 11<sup>th</sup> which will coincide with the Scholastic Book Fair.

Mr. Henrekin shared the middle school is hoping to find an alternate activity for students who do not wish to take part in the ski trip. He shared there were 54 students who chose not to attend the ski trip this year.

Mr. Parsons shared that No Pass, No Play continues to work well for the students involved in extracurricular activities at the high school. Freshman orientation has been scheduled for the evening of February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

(Member Meyers entered at 7:03pm)

Dr. Hogue reported on the Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting held on January 24, 2024.

- Attendance Postcard: Dr. Hogue shared that the State's definition of Chronic Absenteeism is 18 or more missed school days per year. Last year, the districts rate was 19%, which is lower than

many local schools. Dr. Hogue reviewed the post cards that were mailed home for each student and asked for feedback. The committee members were okay with receiving the post cards but inquired about ways to combine multiple students into one mailing, or emailing the information versus mailing home. Some committee members felt being notified about student absences at three, six, and nine days was overwhelming. Discussion was had about changing to only notifying families after five and nine days, or five and ten days.

- FES Construction Update: Mr. Hoese shared the Q&A Page of the letter the elementary school will be sending out to families updating them on the construction and new drop off and pick up procedures. The first attempt at changing the procedures was started today after school and some changes will already be made based off that attempt. One of the committee members inquired about having 5<sup>th</sup> grade student ambassadors helping the younger students to their cars, Mr. Hoese said it would be considered.
- Thomson Annexation: Dr. Hogue gave the committee members an update and explained that the current construction is not based on the Thomson annexation and that additional construction would be needed to accommodate the increase in students. Dr. Hogue shared that once the feasibility study is completed the district will be provided more information and is hopeful the bulk of questions will be answered by the study. Committee members shared their apprehension of adding more students as the district is maxed out for space with our current enrollment.
- Upcoming Bonding: Dr. Hogue explained the bonding process to the committee members and shared different payback options the district has and how those would affect homeowners. The committee members agreed that explaining to the community what the funds are going towards and why there would be a potential increase to tax dollars would be beneficial.
- Weather Related Delays and Closures: Dr. Hogue updated the committee on the number of days the district has used. The district is allowed to use five days for remote learning and it has used four. While the committee members like using the remote days to avoid adding days onto the end of the school year, they do not feel the remote days are as beneficial as in person to the younger students as they are for the older students. The committee members would like to see the district use the built in make-up days before using remote days for weather. Mr. Hoese shared that his staff does not feel that the remote days serve students as well as in person days, but they also did not feel that making up days at the end of the school year would be better than remote days.
- 5 Essential Survey: Dr. Hogue asked the committee for ideas on how to get the parents more involved and how the district can incentivize taking the survey. This will be discussed more at the next committee meeting.

Dr. Hogue reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held on January 24, 2024.

- The current treasurer's report was reviewed. Revenue through January is about 50% similar to where the district was at last year at this time. The district has collected all quarterly categorical payments except drivers education. The district has collected \$380,000 of the \$500,000 budget in CPPRT and \$418,000 of the \$650,000 budgeted for the facility 1% fund. Expenses are on track and similar to last year. Budget amendments will be necessary because of construction costs that will need to be paid prior to getting the bonds in July.
- Bob Lewis, an advisor with PMA, was on hand to discuss payment options for the next bond issued. Bob brought with him three options for selling bonds and borrowing money to pay the 3.7 million construction project. Option 1 used the existing \$670,000 levy amount and would require an 8 year pay back. Option 2 increases the levy request to \$800,000 dollars and would allow us to pay the bonds back in 6 years, but would increase taxes \$24 per \$100,000 evaluation

of a home. Option 3 stepped up the bond levy request of two years. Year 1 increase the levy request to \$735,000 and year 2 increase the bond levy request to \$800,000. This would increase the levy tax by \$12 each year and spread out the increase over two years. The stepped increase also allows the district to pay bonds back in 6 years. The committee would like to recommend this bond payback process. Paying the bonds back sooner provides more flexibility down the road as well as provides working capital for other projects in the future. The district's bond levy has remained flat for 10 years. The cost of construction has gone up and the district needs to adjust its tax levy to the higher cost of construction. This allows the district to keep to a short bond payback cycle as well. Also, because the district will begin paying construction costs in March out of current funds, the district will need to pass a construction repayment resolution that will allow the bond proceeds to be used to pay back the expenses used from the district's reserves.

- Preschool construction update: After discussing which funds to use to pay the near \$300,000 to upgrade the preschool, it was determined that using Ed Fund reserves would serve the district's needs the best. Ed Fund reserves are easier to rebuild and have the largest of any of the reserves.

Dr. Hogue shared enrollment remains steady. Typically, the district sees a slight shift at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> semester and the beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, those numbers will be available at next month's meeting.

Dr. Hogue provided a brief construction update. Work is scheduled to begin on February 8, 2024. Mr. Hoese has prepared a letter that will be sent out to all parents letting them know about the construction and changes to drop off and pick up procedures while construction is taking place. Veregy has done more research into the non-Union contractors that were awarded the bids and have neither seen or heard of any issues in regard to the workmanship provided.

Dr. Hogue informed the board the schools sent out surveys to students, staff, and parents to gauge the implementation of Capturing Kids Hearts. At the most recent early dismissal day, all principals split their staff into teams to look at the data and share ideas for opportunities of improvement. Member Portz asked the principals if they felt the implementation of Capturing Kids Hearts has been positive. All principals agreed that there has been a positive impact in their buildings and feel that the mid-year survey data validates that Capturing Kids Hearts has had a positive impact. Dr. Hogue shared that he has also noticed a difference in classroom behavior when he visits for his Junior Achievement time.

Dr. Hogue informed the board of the IASB Northwest Division meeting that is taking place on Wednesday, March 6, 2024 in Stillman Valley. There are both in person and virtual options for registration. The deadline to register is February 28, 2024. Member Simmons, Member Falls, and Dr. Hogue will attend virtually, other members will inform of their decision to attend at the February Board Meeting.

Bob Lewis, with PMA, shared the bonding and payback information with the full board that he had shared with the Finance Committee at their meeting. The board also likes the gradual step payback option.

Dr. Hogue shared an update on remote learning days. The district has used four, and are allotted five for the school year. Once the fifth remote learning day is used, future weather affected days would

result in make-up days on the emergency days per the district calendar, or added on to the end of the school year.

*It was moved by Member Meyers, seconded by Member Orman-Luker, to approve the consent agenda including the December 20, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes; December Treasurers Report; and January Bills Recommended for Payment in the amount of \$387,549.44 subject to audit; and authorization to dispose of the closed session audio tapes for March 23, 2022, April 11, 2022, April 20, 2022, and June 8, 2022. Roll Call Vote.*

*Member Falls, yea*

*Member Portz, yea*

*Member Meyers, yea*

*Member Ritchie, yea*

*Member Orman-Luker, yea*

*Member Simmons, yea*

*Motion Carried.*

The Policy Committee recommends approval of the second reading of select policy updates and to adopt the updates as policy.

*It was moved by Member Orman-Luker, seconded by Member Meyers, to approve the first reading of select policy updates: 2:20, 2:110, 2:120, 2:200, 2:220, 3:50, 4:10, 4:30, 4:60, 4:90, 4:130, 4:160, 4:170, 5:30, 5:50, 5:90, 5:120, 5:150, 5:190, 5:200, 5:210, 5:220, 5:250, 5:330, 6:15, 6:20, 6:30, 6:50, 6:60, 6:65, 6:230, 6:270, 6:280, 7:50, 7:60, 7:70, 7:160, 7:190, 7:250, 7:270, 7:285, 7:290, 7:345, and 8:30. Roll Call Vote.*

*Member Falls, yea*

*Member Portz, yea*

*Member Meyers, yea*

*Member Ritchie, yea*

*Member Orman-Luker, yea*

*Member Simmons, yea*

*Motion Carried.*

Closed session minutes were reviewed. It was recommended all minutes remain closed due to the need to retain confidentiality.

*It was moved by Member Simmons, seconded by Member Orman-Luker, to retain closed session minutes dated August 9, 2023, September 13, 2023, and October 18, 2023 at this time due to the need for confidentiality to exist to all or part of the minutes. Roll Call Vote.*

*Member Falls, yea*

*Member Portz, yea*

*Member Meyers, yea*

*Member Ritchie, yea*

*Member Orman-Luker, yea*

*Member Simmons, yea*

*Motion Carried.*

Dr. Hogue recommended approval of the new Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) student activity account at River Bend Middle School.

*It was moved by Member Orman-Luker, seconded by Member Meyers to approve the new FCA Student Activity Account at River Bend Middle School. Roll Call Vote.*

*Member Falls, yea*

*Member Portz, yea*

*Member Meyers, yea*

*Member Ritchie, yea*

*Member Orman-Luker, yea*

*Member Simmons, yea*

*Motion Carried.*

Dr. Hogue informed the board the district received \$1,660 from CF Industries for Teacher Grants, and from the Baserunners Organization \$1,206.40 for the high school Softball team and \$1,206.40 for the high school Baseball team.

*It was moved by Member Orman-Luker, seconded by Member Simmons, to accept gifts to the District as presented. Roll Call Vote.*

*Member Falls, yea*

*Member Portz, yea*

*Member Meyers, yea*

*Member Ritchie, yea*

*Member Orman-Luker, yea*

*Member Simmons, yea*

*Motion Carried.*

*It was moved by Member Orman-Luker, seconded by Member Meyers, to approve the following personnel items:*

- *Approve the recommendation of the transfer of Maynome Cartee from part-time night cleaner at Fulton High School to full time night cleaner at Fulton High School, effective January 8, 2024.*
- *Approve the recommendation to hire Steve Porter as part-time night cleaner at Fulton High School, effective January 8, 2024.*
- *Approve the recommendation to hire Lilly Cook as paraprofessional at Fulton Elementary School, effective January 22, 2024.*
- *Approve the recommendation to hire Jen Pepper as Career Pathway & Transition Coordinator at Fulton High School for the 2024-25 school year.*
- *Approve the recommendation to hire Samantha Whitney as Special Education Teacher at Fulton Elementary School for the 2024-25 school year.*
- *Approve the recommendation to hire Dawna Kurtz as General Education Teacher at Fulton Blended Preschool for the 2024-25 school year.*
- *Approve Caleb Hesse as Volunteer Robotics Coach for the 2023-2024 school year.*
- *Approve the recommendation to hire Sarah Brubaker as Robotics Coach for the 2023-2024 school year and Caleb Hesse as the Robotics Coach for the 2024-2025 school year.*
- *Approve the resignation of Mark Solie as Bus Driver for River Bend effective January 19, 2024.*
- *Approve the resignation, with the intent to retire, of Paula Ensinger, Paraprofessional at Fulton Elementary School, effective the end of the 2024-2025 school year, under the terms of Article VII, section 7.3 of the collective bargaining agreement.*
- *Approve the resignation, with the intent to retire, of Derek Germann, Physical Education teacher at Fulton High School, effective the end of the 2026-2027 school year, under the terms of Article VII, section 7.2 of the collective bargaining agreement.*
- *Approve the resignation, with the intent to retire, of LeAnn Smith, Library Manager at Fulton Elementary School and River Bend Middle School, effective the end of the 2024-2025 school year, under the terms of Article VII, section 7.3 of the collective bargaining agreement.*
- *Approve the resignation, with the intent to retire, of Connie Hoffman, Special Education teacher at River Bend Middle School, effective the end of the 2026-2027 school year, under the terms of Article VII, section 7.2 of the collective bargaining agreement.*
- *Approve the recommendation to hire Ron Hook as Van Driver for River Bend School District, effective January 18, 2024.*

*Roll Call Vote.*

*Member Falls, yea*

*Member Meyers, yea*

*Member Orman-Luker, yea*

*Member Portz, yea*

*Member Ritchie, yea*

*Member Simmons, yea*

*Motion Carried.*

There was no closed session.

The next Regular Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 21, 2024, at 6:30pm, at the River Bend District Office.

*It was moved by Member Orman-Luker, seconded by Member Simmons, to adjourn the meeting at 9:00pm. Voice vote, all yea, motion carried.*

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Dan Portz, President  
Board of Education  
River Bend CUSD #2  
Whiteside County

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Eric Fish, Secretary  
Board of Education  
River Bend CUSD #2  
Whiteside County