

LEARN BUILD LEAD

Fremont Joint School District No. 215
Special School Board Meeting Minutes
May 27, 2021
Held at Fremont School District Office
Meeting Time 8:00 P.M.

Attending: Jon Bailey-Board Chair
 Tia Cherry-Vice Chair
 Bonnie Moon-Trustee
 Julianne Hill-Trustee
 JayLee Packer-Trustee
 Byron Stutzman-Superintendent
 Hali Mackert-Clerk/Treasurer

Trustee Julianne Hill offered a prayer.

Chairman Jon Bailey called the meeting to order at 8:01 p.m. A quorum was present.

Trustee Bonnie Moon made a motion to amend the agenda to add discussion item prior to executive session, hiring needs and /or organizational structure. The motion was seconded by Trustee Tia Cherry. All "ayes", motion carried.

Trustee Bonnie Moon said I know I bring up our organizational chart a lot, but I believe strongly when we talk about our organizational chart it needs to be in open session, so that people can contribute and we as a board need to discern how we talk about it because there are a lot of administrators not here and the organizational structure is going to affect other schools and Ben Garcia.

Chairman Jon Bailey said I had a good conversation with Scott Marotz regarding this. I didn't have time to get his feedback last night, because we knew we needed to put this together before we go into vacation and the weekend. We were able to work through this morning, and he recommended we talk about certain parts of this. Some of which Nancy brought to us this morning, so all those good things we want to be able to talk about. He recommended to talk about certain parts in open session and other things we need to talk about in executive session.

Trustee Bonnie Moon moved to approve the amended agenda. The motion was seconded by Trustee JayLee Packer. All "ayes", motion carried.

Chairman Jon Bailey said let's talk about hiring needs and organizational structure. Yesterday was hard for lots of people and the day before that harder for others. I've found we have great people in all aspects of this district, and everybody cares and ultimately my hope, my goal, my vision is to find a mutually beneficial arrangement. Because there's mutual respect and collaboration and we make a safe place we can talk, we can find a better outcome than one way or another. We've talked about trying to find a third option and we explored a lot of stuff prior and since we made a decision and acted on a motion earlier this week, we've actually had some even better ideas come forward. We have to do what's best for the district and sometimes that's not what's best for one party or another. We're getting there, and we're trying to walk slowly before we make any crazy decisions. I feel like if we make a decision like already happened this week, then the other side of this circumstance, or people who have the opposing perspective, if they're not happy, it's not fully resolved yet, we've got to find a way to work it. Let's put it on the table and work through it.

Chairman Bonnie Moon said since we're in open session we should set some ground rules for this too, that we are definitely talking about hiring needs and organizational structure and no individuals. This is very general and that's and we're going to hear about needs of the district as a whole. Maybe there's some structure we need to think about as we move forward. I do have an idea that I sent you about restructuring as we move forward.

Chairman Jon Bailey asked Principal Nancy Griffel to share with us her proposal and perspective as we move forward.

Principal Nancy Griffel said the proposal I sent to you; I spent many hours thinking about. To me what is best just not for my building, but for the district, and trying to soothe some hurt feelings. Try to create something that we can all live with, which is only beneficial to our kids. Because, ultimately, it's just not about me, it's about the district as a whole and being able to provide for everyone. The only thing that I could think of was the proposal that I sent to all of you; it was very heartfelt in hopes that we could go and meet in a common ground and actually go there and start that process. Does it mean more work for me? Yes, I am respectfully requesting to rescind my request.

Principal Nancy Griffel read the letter sent to the board rescinding her request for hiring Heidi Stutzman for assistant principal but retain her in her existing capacity as Henry's Fork Elementary Instructional Coach.

Chairman Jon Bailey said Byron and I talked about that as a possibility, but I also said, what about more than one? So, teachers could have options to have one coach or another. There might be other ways of looking at that.

Trustee Bonnie Moon said this is more just an overview of the whole district. This is the conversation I would like to continue to talk about in future months, as we look at the needs of the district. I know that we have a levy that we just passed, and I know that we have to keep status quo and we have boundaries that we have to live in. I thought about the ratios at our country schools would be one principal to 6.5 classrooms and one principal to 6.5 classrooms in Teton. Then I thought about our schools at Henry's Fork and thought about those ratios and I got a little overwhelmed and the ratio right now at Henry's Fork is we have one administrator, with some help of a teacher coach to 29 teachers. So, I mean, we have the help of an instructional coach right now so that's one to 14. Then I wanted to go to Ashton one administrator to 16. I realize we have coaching that needs to happen, and we want to have people in place to do that. When I look at the organizational structure, is there a way to re-organize and revamp?

Chairman Jon Bailey said did I hear your thought is we have these instructional coaches with someone we have to fill that role?

Trustee Bonnie Moon said I think we could find them there or maybe we have the principal and 5 or 6 people. If we had this team that got together once in a while and talked about things, and they brought back what their schools wanted.

Superintendent Stutzman said with our new teachers we do have a mentor program and the teachers that are there we pay an extra stipend to be mentors for the new teachers for the first two years. Using one of our teachers that is currently teaching, it would have to be a whole position. It wouldn't be fair to ask them to teach and do this.

Monique Lenz said I know Shawna Boles at our school is a fabulous mentor and being mentored by her is amazing. I don't feel at our school that we need an instructional coach. I feel that we automatically get together, and if I need something, I go to an expert, and we collaborate. We take on extra if we need to and it's not a big deal, that's a job that you do if you want to do it well. We have so much expertise at our school, and if we're just hiring someone to fill the position, I don't think that's going to be effective.

Nancy Griffel said we have built in the schedule collaborative time for the grade levels, so our teachers have the opportunity to meet during the school day for 50 minutes four days per week. So, my teachers are constantly going to each other. I think that's one of our strength our teachers collaborating with each other, and they do it during the school day, They don't have to have the extra time after school when everyone is burnt out. That is built in our schedule already.

Trustee Bonnie Moon said maybe it's a school level decision where they want to go. We have district goals, and the schools get to decide how they are going to meet those. If they need resources from us, they talk to Byron and see if we can get it in the budget.

Trustee Julianne Hill said I have had the privilege to go into the schools, and I have not been up to North Fremont. I saw such exciting things in all of our schools in the south end, and we are so blessed to have such great teachers that are so willing to do and help each other. I just think it's already happening, and I loved your suggestions, let's go the other way, rather than us providing a person. Let's wait for them to see where their needs are and then come to us as a board and then let's help them get the resources. That's one of the things, staff retention and recruitment, and improvement. Doesn't HRS kind of work with that as you're trying to get your collaboration together? Isn't that the big piece of that is to work together with your grade levels, so you're not only talking about new exciting ways to teach but you're also talking about individual students.

Monique Lenz said our school needs more paras, and that would help so much.

Nancy Griffel said we currently have an opening for six paras, and we don't have any applicants. We don't pay them enough, and that's something to consider as we're going through this. We have very valued people we have had for years, and they are leaving because of benefits, and we can only work them 29 hours per week.

Superintendent Stutzman said you add benefits and that's a pretty substantial jump in cost.

Trustee JayLee Packer said I have concern of you pulling back on this vice-principal, because you asked for it and you go through all the work of the hiring and the whole process and now all of a sudden you don't want it. I don't understand why all of a sudden its off the table.

Nancy Griffel said I never said I don't want it.

Trustee JayLee Packer said but you're rescinding it, and so I think that's probably a position that we probably need. You asked for it, and you have two other qualified candidates, and I feel like it's a position that would benefit the school. Take some of that stress off you, and all the documents you say you need to do, all the things like that.

Nancy Griffel said I did say it's a need, but know that this coming year five new teachers, six new paras, a new counselor, and now bring in a brand-new assistant principal that doesn't know my building? That's why. I need the skill set of someone who knows the building, know the kids, knows the routine, knows all of those things that's a go getter. I don't have to worry who will take care of that while I'm doing these other things, and I know it will get done. Do I need an assistant principal? Absolutely. But I also need someone I can trust and rely on that my staff knows. My staff was upset because they need that support also. I'm willing to do whatever it takes in the best interest of my students to get the right person in the position to help me.

Trustee Tia Cherry asked do we have hiring needs throughout the district is what I want to know?

Superintendent Stutzman pulled up the district website and named the positions available in the district. We currently have five in the district who have applied for the small school principal/lead teacher.

Chairman Jon Bailey said we've had an instructional coach and you're asking for one again. As it relates to the district because the last instructional coach that we've had, and the opportunity with COVID, we had to make some adjustments, that person didn't make it around the district. Is there a need for more than one?

Superintendent Stutzman said in my mind yes because there are programs and things that we do. The problems we had with learning Canvas to start the year. The two weeks was not enough. We didn't have the support that we needed. Anytime we adopt a new program it's going to need a lot of support. We had two instructional coaches, before DelRay retired, and Nancy was one of them.

Nancy said that would vary from year to year depending on the new teachers and turnover.

Trustee Bonnie Moon said we hadn't had a vice-principal until two years before DelRay retired?

Superintendent Stutzman said Nancy was vice-principal for two years and was instructional coach before that, and Janelle Bennett was the instructional coach before that.

Chairman Jon Bailey said what if we had a vice principal as well as an instructional coach. Is there a way to do both is it mutually exclusive? Could we have both?

Superintendent Stutzman said I don't see why we couldn't, other than I know Nancy wants a specific person to help her because it's gone so well this year. That's up to the board to make that decision on whether or not you want that to be that building specific. In hearing from Monique, she feels there isn't a need for an instructional coach up there, but I would ask Evan that same question to see what he says, because he may feel differently.

Trustee Tia Cherry said I just have one thought instructional coach wise; we've all had to do it I know we have something set up in our district. Instead of an instructional coach we can tap into our veteran teachers. When we do have new teachers, maybe make it worth their time and tap into real live teachers who are in that classroom. We ramp up our mentorship and make it exciting for our teachers, and they have meaningful benchmarks for our teachers. That way they are collaborating within their own schools.

Executive Session:

Trustee JayLee Packer made a motion to go into executive session I.C. 74-206(1) (a) (b) (d) (f) To consider hiring a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent, wherein the respective qualities of individuals are to be evaluated in order to fill a particular vacancy or need. This paragraph does not apply to filling a vacancy in an elective office or deliberations about staffing needs in general. To consider the evaluation, dismissal or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent, or public school student; To consider records that are exempt from disclosure as provided in chapter 1, title 74, Idaho Code; To communicate with legal counsel for the public agency to discuss the legal ramifications of and legal options for pending litigation, or controversies not yet being litigated but imminently likely to be litigated. The mere presence of legal counsel at an executive session does not satisfy this requirement. The motion was seconded by Trustee Julianne Hill.

Trustee JayLee Packer amended the motion to remove I.C. (f) from the motion. The motion was seconded by Trustee Julianne Hill. Roll call vote: JayLee Packer "aye", Julianne Hill "aye", Jon Bailey "aye", Bonnie Moon "aye", Tia Cherry "aye".

Action Item if Needed:

Discussion Item: Chairman Jon Bailey said our intent is to honor Nancy's proposal that she gave us with making a couple of adjustments and we do want to hire a vice principal. We did ask Nancy to make some minor adjustments to the current job description, that shouldn't be that big of a deal. We do have to review the organizational structure at a next scheduled meeting.

Trustee Tia Cherry made a motion to adjourn at 11:16 p.m.