

**GENEVA COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER 304
227 NORTH FOURTH STREET, GENEVA, ILLINOIS
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF A REGULAR SESSION
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The Board of Education of Community Unit School District Number 304 met in a board retreat on Friday, January 17, 2025, at 6:10 p.m. at Coultrap Educational Services Center, 227 North Fourth Street, Geneva, Illinois.

1. CALL TO ORDER

1. Roll Call
2. Welcome
3. Pledge
4. Reminder to Sign Attendance Record

Board members present: Molly Ansari, Policy Committee Chair Stephanie Bellino, President Larry Cabeen, Vice President/Finance Committee Chair Jackie Forbes, Willard Hooks, Paul Radlinski. Absent: Dan Choi.

The President welcomed everyone and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

District staff present: Dr. Andy Barrett, Superintendent.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

3. BOARD DIALOGUE TOPICS

1. Review of Norms & Agreements

The Superintendent addressed the board asking if there were any protocols that needed to be addressed on how meetings are run and communications.

2. Board Presentations

The Superintendent asked board members their thoughts on the board presentations.

Board comments, questions, concerns: By the time we get to committee meeting discussions, decisions have already been made. If we are going to be open and participatory as committees there should be collaboration before decisions are made. (Historically, when it is something like the tech proposal, it is first presented to the finance committee and then taken to the board at the next meeting, which would allow for any discussions prior to the board voting.) With policies, we have a first and second reading, so maybe we need to do something like this for finance as well. This would also allow the community to give input. It may not even need to be presented to the board, but instead they could watch the video instead. (I like the idea of over communicating.) Do the vendors approach the district or does the district approach the vendor? (We would reach out to the vendor.) Not all the committees are structured the way the finance and policy committees are. It would be nice to see minutes or a recap of the other committees. What if in addition to presenting at one meeting and voting at the next, we include the agenda from the other committees on the board agenda as information? (Minutes or a recap would be better.) So, it sounds like what you agree on with finance is presenting at both the committee and board meetings, then waiting until the next meeting to vote? (Yes.) What about asking you or fellow board members follow up questions as opposed to the committee, is that okay? (This is fine if you are only talking with one board member at a time.) Who should we respond to when we are invited by a teacher to attend something their class is doing? (It is probably okay to respond to the teacher, but to be on the safe side, responding to Bonnie would be best.) Communication from you has been great this year. Does the board need to see monthly credit card statements? (Yes, because on occasions someone will ask a question about an expense. It also keeps things transparent, but we can check on this.) Where it talks about the superintendent and staff treating board members with respect, you should probably add "and vice versa." We addressed this in the last retreat, and I think some of the presentations have been excellent and some of the creative ways you have presented have been not only informative but have also included staff and students sharing their experiences. Can we get a copy of the Superintendent's Report before the meeting? (Yes.)

3. Board Correspondence & Record Retention Overview

The Superintendent shared that he has sent information on email correspondence and the reason is because the question out there is “Should board members have district issued email addresses?” There was a question from the board about record retention and keeping your correspondence. It was also asked how long you should keep specific emails. Part of the answer for this from our attorney is “well, they should have district emails.” There are different rules for different types of emails. If you have a district email, then the district monitors this for you. The other part of this is FOIA. If someone were to FOIA you it would be your responsibility to provide the emails they were looking for. One challenge with this is that theoretically, folks could send you emails. This poses a problem if you respond without consulting with other members of the board. Mike Wilkes could manage this by giving you emails that could not be deciphered. This also means that you will have to have multiple email addresses, because the district email would only be for school business. You would have to be intentional during election time because that email address could not be used during elections.

Board comments, questions, concerns: We could keep our current emails we have to be used only for elections. It would mean we would have three email addresses. What about text messages? (Those can be FOIA'd as well.) So, should we do this? (Yes, we should do this.) We will probably have to set up time with Mike or someone from his team to get these set up. Could we bring our own computer when we do this? (Yes.) If you want it set up on your phone, then you will have to have multi factor. You will also have to have the Microsoft Suite app, because if I send you a PDF it will not open in other browsers. If we get access to our email, will we also get Microsoft Suite? (On your phone this is free. You just must download the app.)

4. Board Organization

The Superintendent shared that with the upcoming election we will need to take a new oath and by law we are required to do a reorganization. In this district, the superintendent is the board secretary, but that is not the practice in any other school district. In other districts it is either a board member that is given the title or the recording secretary is also the board secretary.

Board comments, questions, concerns: Would Bonnie be okay with being the board secretary? (Yes.) Would she get a stipend for this? (No, but she does get paid for being at board meetings.) So, she would sign the minutes once we approve them? (Yes.) The board president must sign the minutes as well. The Board gave a thumbs up for Bonnie to be the board secretary when the board reorganizes in April or May.

5. Education Policy Initiatives

The Superintendent talked about the Vision 2030 initiative. At our last meeting it was shared that there is a proposed resolution that ISBE and others are hopeful that we will support.

Board comments, questions, concerns: There is a vague comment that says, “through pension reform,” which we have no idea what they are talking about, and this is a hot topic item with your union organization that we have worked so hard to improve. Whatever pension reform is going to come is going to come through legislation and we would have no input. Can we go into this resolution and change it without upsetting anyone or am I making more out of this than I should? (With legislation it is fixing the difference between Tier I and Tier II.) They are asking us to support them, but they do not say what fixing the pension consists of. It could be reducing Tier I to Tier II. We should not be supporting something that we do not understand. The rest of it is fine. Much of this is about legislation and the point of Vision 2030 is to say that all these bodies are coming together and here is what we are advocating for. Everyone knows that Tier I and Tier II are a mess and that they need to fix this. What they are asking is if they should be advocating for pension reform in Vision 2030. (If they said they wanted to fix Tier II, then I would be okay with that.) It talks about Tier II further down the list. If we pull the language out, it could appear that we do not support pension reform. If you talk with the union and they are okay with this, then we will vote on this at the next meeting.

The Superintendent shared that there has been some concern with federal level policy regarding the abolishing of the Federal Department of Education.

Board comments, questions, concerns: Is the talk about abolishing the Federal Department of

Education serious? (The article I sent you is a concise description of that. Abolishing a cabinet level department cannot be done with an executive order. It would require an act of congress. Many of the things that people are talking about can happen with an executive order, but this is not one of them.) Many of the functions of the Federal Department of Education are statutory, which means they are part of the law. Even if the department did go away, many of the functions of the department that impact us do not go away, because they are based on laws that must be passed by congress. The biggest things that would impact us are special education law, IDEA money, and all the Title funds. It would not be a terrible thing to have a contingency plan in place in case these funds did go away. Another thing is around the issue of Title IV. We just amended board policy around this. As of today, gender identity was added into Title IV. This was recently overturned by a court that does not think gender identity should be a protected class under Title IV. This does not mean that we need to change anything in our policies. If we wanted to add gender identity, could we? (Absolutely, which we have right now.) The other area that we could see changes is in some kind of voucher or tuition reimbursement for private schools. A couple of reasons nothing has happened with this is that it would be subsidizing rich people who are going to private school and the fact that there are not that many private schools. If we received less from the government, then the issue would be we would have the right to compensate for that through higher levies. (Potentially, yes.)

4. EXECUTIVE SESSION TO CONSIDER MATTERS PERTAINING TO APPOINTMENT, EMPLOYMENT, COMPENSATION, OR DISCIPLINE, PERFORMANCE, OR DISMISSAL OF SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS WHO SERVE AS INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS IN A PARK, RECREATIONAL, OR EDUCATIONAL SETTING, OR SPECIFIC VOLUNTEERS OF THE PUBLIC BODY OR LEGAL COUNSEL FOR THE PUBLIC BODY, INCLUDING HEARING TESTIMONY ON A COMPLAINT LODGED AGAINST AN EMPLOYEE, A SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL WHO SERVES AS AN INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR IN A PARK, RECREATIONAL, OR EDUCATIONAL SETTING, OR A VOLUNTEER OF THE PUBLIC BODY OR AGAINST LEGAL COUNSEL FOR THE PUBLIC BODY TO DETERMINE ITS VALIDITY. HOWEVER, A MEETING TO CONSIDER AN INCREASE IN COMPENSATION TO A SPECIFIC EMPLOYEE THAT IS SUBJECT TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT WAGE INCREASE TRANSPARENCY ACT MAY NOT BE CLOSED AND MUST BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC [5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1)]. [5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11)] (Policy 2:220)

At 7:56 p.m., motion by Radlinski, second by Forbes, to go into executive session to consider matters pertaining to appointment, employment, compensation, or discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific individuals who serve as independent contractors in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or specific volunteers of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or a volunteer public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine validity. However, a meeting to consider an increase in compensation to a specific employee that is subject to the local government Wage Increase Transparency Act may not be closed and must be open to the public body.

At 8:47 p.m., the Board returned to open session.

Dr. Barrett and the Board had a brief discussion regarding the district’s preschool program and the use of district facilities for preschool programming.

5. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:00 p.m., motion by Hooks second by Radlinski and with unanimous consent, the meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED _____
(Date)

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY _____

RECORDING SECRETARY