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A matter of time

Bear Lake school officials discuss length of board member terms

By KEN GRABOWSKI
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

BEAR LAKE — Four years or six years?

That is a question concerning the new length of school board terms that members of the Bear Lake Board of Education pondered this week during their regular monthly meeting in the school media center. Board members



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were undecided on what direction to take as they must have something in place by their organizational meeting on July 1, so they can change their bylaws.

The state changed the time school elections could be held from May until November and that change has caused some present terms to be extended so they can fit into a proper rotation in the

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future. However, to avoid a major turnover in one particular year it would mean switching to six-year terms.

If boards stay at four-year terms there would be four members up for election at one time and three in the next cycle. If they switch to six-year terms it would be a two, three, two format and less of a turnover at once on the board.

"I think we should remain at four years," said vice president Rick Bobian.

President Charles Brooks said he wasn't so sure that might be the best course of action. Brooks pointed out by staying at four years meant there would be certain years where a hot issue at the time could result in a major turnover of the board taking away from its stability.

"I can see boards changing drastically over a single item," said Brooks. "You could be having a major change to a board on a continuous basis."

Fellow board member Eric Smith said he could see how it could be detrimental to a school district to constantly undergoing a major change on its board of education.

Bobian countered that six years is a long time, and there are occasions when someone gets elected to the board who is a single issue person and doesn't have the overall best interest of the board in mind.

"Six years is a long time to have that person on the board," said Bobian.

Board member Wanda Schafer asked if it was possible to switch down the road from a six-year term to a four-year one, so they could get back to a better rotation.

"It would be a process to get back to four years,

but it could be done," said Manistee County Schools Business Management Cooperative's Rita Curtis, who handles election issues for the schools.

Long time Bear Lake board member Terri Alkire Schmidt was not at the meeting, and board members felt they should get some input her before making a decision.

"You really can't go wrong either way," said Bear Lake superintendent Mike Matesich. "As I look around this room I do see people who have been on the board much longer than six years."

Board members agreed the matter needed further review, and they plan to discuss it again at the Feb. 15 meeting.

Principal Marci Augenstein also gave her regular monthly report on the activities at the school. They included the following items:

■ The National Honor Society received recognition from the National Association of Secondary School principals for recognizing and promoting the important qualities of scholarship, leadership, service, and character in students by maintaining an active chapter.

■ School buses in the district receive a certificate of excellence for having all buses pass certification.

■ Board members heard the Filer Credit Union told the school they are establishing an annual donation to Bear Lake High School and all the other county schools.

■ Augenstein praised the teachers for all their hard work and dedication to their students during the winter festivities prior to the holiday break.

■ Teachers are gear-

ing up for the next round of NWEA testing for the students. The testing makes sure they are progressing up to state standards.

■ Manistee State Police Trooper Greg Hubers has worked with Bear Lake elementary students on anti-bullying.

■ The principal said they are continuing to work on their school improvement plan, and we will continue meetings this month with a focus on literacy.

■ The board heard the end of the marking period is rapidly approaching and final exams will be for Jan. 18 to 20.

■ Teachers have a scheduled teacher in-service on Jan. 30 and will hear about the college and career readiness standards.

■ Students are preparing for Spirit Week and

Homecoming activities on Feb. 3.

Board members also took time to review Michigan's new anti-bullying legislation that was recently passed in Lansing. Matesich said Bear Lake is in pretty good shape with existing policy.

"We do have an anti-bullying policy and have had it for a number of years," said Matesich. "Our policy has everything, but two things in it that the state does and NEOLA is working on getting those wrote up for us. We need to have them taken care of by June 7."

January is school board appreciation month and board members were honored by the teachers of the Bear Lake Education Association, and the administration for all that they do during the course of the year.