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self-directed,
lifelong learners


effective
communicators


complex, creative
& adaptive
thinkers


collaborative
& productive
citizens



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

The Board of Education of Community Unit School District Number 304 met in a board retreat on Friday, May 10, 2024, at 6:13 p.m. at Coultrap Educational Services Center, 227 North Fourth Street, Geneva, Illinois.

1. CALL TO ORDER

- 1.1 Roll Call
- 1.2 Welcome
- 1.3 Pledge
- 1.4 Reminder to Sign Attendance Record

Board members present: Molly Ansari, Policy Committee Chair Stephanie Bellino, President Larry Cabeen, Dan Choi, Vice President/Finance Committee Chair Jackie Forbes, Willard Hooks, Paul Radlinski. Late: None. Absent: None.

The President welcomed everyone and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

District staff present: Dr. Andy Barrett, Superintendent.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

3. BOARD DIALOGUE TOPICS & PENDING ACTION CONSIDERATION

- 1. 2023-24 School Board Calendar – Updated

Dr. Barrett shared that there was informal communication about the retreat being one day instead of two. It is still on the board calendar as two days. If we are sure that we still want to only do one day, then we need to formally vote to remove the second day from the calendar.

Board comments, questions, concerns: We should also amend the time of tonight's meeting on the calendar.

Motion by Choi second by Ansari, to approve the above-listed, item 3.1. On roll call, Ayes, seven (7), Ansari, Bellino, Cabeen, Choi, Forbes, Hooks, Radlinski. Nays, none (0). Absent, none (0). Abstained, none (0).

4. BOARD DIALOGUE TOPICS

- 1. Board Working Agreements

Dr. Barrett shared that the board calendar is a good example of some of the things we could talk about under this topic. Is the way we communicate working? Is the way I am communicating with the board working? Are there approaches that should be done differently? One of the things I would like to talk about is next year's meetings. Is this the best time for a retreat? Do we want to split that up? My goal is to take your information back, synthesize it, and come back to you with it. In your packet are the protocols, commitments, and expectations. Are there things that have come up this year in terms of our Working Agreements?

- **Board Agenda** – This has been working well. The topics are cut and dry. There has been talk about more presentations with students and teachers, so there is an activity we can do to brainstorm that list. I would like it if we could annually review the presentation agenda together. We have it on every agenda, but should we target once a trimester to look at it at an open meeting? (That would be a great idea.) Do

we need to do it three times a year? Would twice a year be sufficient? (We can see how it goes.) Board members would like to know more about all the great programs you have ongoing in the district, which makes it hard to say that we would really like to hear about a certain program. It would be better if it came from your team. (After we talked about this at a board meeting, Shonette Sims and George Petmezas have created a document with some of the things that should be coming next year.) We touched on the reading program, but now I would like to know how we are doing. Every year Anne Scalia should give a presentation on student services and the areas it entails.

2. Board Education Brainstorming

The suspension list has come up at a couple of meetings and I am wondering if there is a way to get more information other than just the offense. It might help for us to see if something is trending. Is this something that is going to be discussed at the Parent Teacher Advisory Committee meeting? (Yes.) Will this information then be brought to the board? (Yes.) How public is this information? (We could probably disaggregate this information more. This is something that we probably need to talk about once a year.) When we talk about teacher burnout syndrome, one of the things that is driving teachers out of the profession is because they are dealing with more of these kinds of things. Programming will be discussed in some of our future presentations because we do have more students that have special needs. When we had the discipline hearing a few months ago, there was a comment made that this is the first one since COVID. I do not know how it was before COVID, so I have no data to show if we are doing better or worse.

Is everyone okay with agenda items? Are you getting answers? Is the timeline working? How about communication's via email? (I do not feel overwhelmed, but I do feel informed. This past week, you sent an extra update and that was helpful to be informed. This will be a good topic as new board members are added.) Do you feel that as a board we are not communicating or overcommunicating? (It has been perfect. I would rather know if there are questions or concerns.)

- **Staff** – Has anyone had any concerns being pulled into building-level conversations? (The only time that happened, I had a conversation with you.)
- **Visits** – How about visiting buildings? (When I need to see someone, I let the Superintendent know, then I contact the building principal.) We need some structure around our programs. We do sometimes get invites from teachers.
- **Community** – Are you happy with how those communications have been filtered through me? (Yes. Parents and the community are surprised at how quickly you respond to them. Paul shares at PTO meetings that if you send an email, you will get a response.)
- **Media** – Are you getting a lot of media requests? (No.) Someone just spoke to my wife today about ICEC, so there is lots being covered in the community. Some press are assigned to cover our district.
- **Closed Session** – There has been a lot to discuss during closed session lately. You do an excellent job with the topics for closed session.
- **Meetings** – There have been good discussions around the table and people have different opinions, which work well.

Is there a pecking order with the board that those that have decision-making are parents versus those that do not have children? (No.) I feel this way, because of the optics on some of the committee's I have been watching. When I was collecting signatures for petition, I heard people say, "you know the board is only interested in people with children." Is this just my perception? (I think so.) When I became part of the board, I was assigned to the Theater

Booster's and one other group, but as people left the Board we shuffled around. I do think that the more experienced board members get assigned to committees like the Finance Committee. I do tend to put new board members on the Policy Committee, because that is information that we need to know. There are questions I want to ask, but I cannot because I am not on the committee. (You can ask questions about any of the committees.) Maybe as we look at new people coming on board, this is something you might share with them that they can ask about any of the committees even if they are not on them. One of my concerns is technology and I wish I had more input. It does take a while to get comfortable on the board. Being that our theme this year is "Open Communication & Transparency," I would be interested to know what committee specifically you are talking about. (I was just collecting petitions and there seemed to be a perception.) When does the committee list come out? (Just when we are transitioning.) We should revisit the list to see what is on there. I am on the Mental Health Committee, but I have not been to a meeting yet. This could be part of my board report to relay information that others might need to know. Is the Parent Teacher Advisory Council a once-a-year thing? (It is a required meeting in the school code. It could meet multiple times if needed.)

Are there any concerns with communication on how it has been communicated and what has been communicated? (We have made a huge improvement with communication this year. You are great about giving additional information if needed.)

At 7:12 p.m., the Board took a short break.

At 7:22 p.m., the Board resumed open session.

3. 2024-25 Planning

Strategic Planning – We have four areas that we have been highlighting. We have highlighted the mission, vision and values in terms of making this transition away from tradition. We are more forward focused preparing our kids for a diverse world, performing at a high level, and making sure they are intellectually engaged in valuable work. What we will talk about on Monday night is our operational strategies and key things we want to do. If this plan is approved on Monday, you will task us with going back and coming up with the specific targets and benchmarks that we think we need to set over the next five years.

- **Enrollment & Staffing** – We need to rightsize our staffing with enrollment trends and student needs and optimize recruitment and retention.
- **Boundaries & Facilities** – We need to look at this one.

In the next five years, do we see the population dropping to the point where we must consider closing a facility? (We are waiting for the demographic report. My honest assessment as of today is no, but we will need to explore contemporary programming needs.) How about the elimination of certain classes? (We need to conduct an analysis of our master schedule and staffing capacity at all levels.) So, what I am saying is different from what you are saying about contemporary programming? (Yes. An example would be the TSI class. We got a lot of feedback on the early childhood program when we went through the data.) What kind of feedback? (Are there more opportunities for early childhood? GELP is great, but it is not enough. Is it a full-day program? (No.) There are parents who are putting their children in programs through their churches who are now saying, "I'm paying property taxes, so why isn't this program expanding?" Do we charge for this program? (Yes, we have to.) Friendship Station is the Park District preschool, and it has been around for years. It is located in Geneva Middle School South (GMSS). We partnered with the Park District on this program and put an addition on the back of GMSS this preschool. We have a contract with Park District that is good for twenty years. As special education needs and requirements grew the partnership was stressed. They run their program in our facility. The Park District is aware there will have to be conversations about this. There could be an opportunity to partner again in a different way. Some families desire a full-day option.

- **Career & College Pathways** – This is an area that we have some room to grow as a district. We think we can have very explicit goals and achieve those goals. We are behind on dual credit courses. There are some career pathways, but we need to be

more explicit about educating our kids and community about them.

What about life sciences? Is there a career enhancement for that? (Not right now, but we think that might be a place we could enhance.) Fifteen percent of our students do not further their education after high school, and I am not sure we do enough to support them in getting a job after they graduate. We should investigate having a job fair in the spring for these students. Do we do a work program for students? (We do, but it is limited.) The Fox Valley Career Center has some amazing programs, and we could probably offer some of them. One thing I did wonder was if we were preparing them to step out that door after graduating and interview for a job.

- **Cultural Competencies** – We have spent a lot of time in our group talking about this. The work in this area is going to revolve around preparing our students for a world that does not look like our community. We need to coordinate and enhance some cultural opportunities at all levels. We need to look at those things we are doing well but are in pockets and figure out how we can make them systematic. We need to think of ways to get our kids out and engaging with the broader community. We need to look at the potential for creating new programs. Are there standards in this area that could guide some of our work? One of the programmatic things that came up a lot was a dual language program.

Are you talking about students in our population? (Yes.) There are parents that want their students to speak more than one language fluently. Do we have enough Heritage Spanish speaking students to support dual language? (We do not.) With the second item you may not need to develop a whole thing like this. There is a big community service program at the high school, but it does not expand past our community.

- **Community Engagement** – We have already come a long way this year, but we must keep getting better. There are three big goal areas: (1) establish some practices; (2) streamlining our communication practices as a district; (3) sharing and promoting the vision, mission, and goals.

Number one, goes back to communication and how we tie everything our schools are doing back to the district. At the Fabyan PTO meeting they spoke about this, so they are listening. Sandy will be a big part of this. We will need to rebrand from the Tradition of Excellence. This is a long-term goal. What you have here is great, but as you develop your dashboard you will need to have more concrete objectives. Once you tell us to do this it will be our goal to define the strategic indicator. Depending on how you set your targets, there could be some controversy.

What are some other topics that you think we should be looking at for presentations for next year? (It would be nice to have a general presentation from each of the elementary schools or all the schools in general about something that makes their school special. A presentation by the GELP program right before enrollment would be nice. I would like to see more insight into how the Special Education program is doing and maybe a demonstration of what these students can do. It would be helpful to know more about when a child is put into a special class and when they mainstream them out. We need to bring Acceleration & Enrichment back for another presentation to show how this leads elementary and middle schools into high school. We need to hear more about curriculum, and specifically the reading curriculum and what the teachers think.) Teachers used to be in presentations all the time, but when COVID happened it stopped. We need to bring them back. I would also like to hear more about the social emotional curriculum and what is the same and what is different at the middle schools. (Sometimes being different is good. The presentation that the students from Williamsburg gave was about something unique to their school.) How many times have we brought those teachers in from other school who were not doing something and let them listen to the same presentation that excited us. You do not have to say “though shalt not do this,” but instead let them see it and say, “wow we could do something like that.” You get to the same place, but it is how you get there. Maybe it is about what kind of collaboration they have. Are our teachers across elementary and middle school talking? (Yes, but not enough.) Because the middle schools are a unique circumstance, it feels different than when things are different at the

elementary schools. (I agree.) We are currently addressing some of this rightsizing at the middle schools through attrition as teachers resign and retire. Once we get to the place where we are rightsized with staffing, then there are going to be opportunities to have some other conversations about how the middle school campus should look. What is the capacity for students at the middle schools and where are we at? (Before North was built, we had more kids in South than are in both schools now.) The groups that we are liaisons for should present at a board meeting to talk about what they are doing and encourage people to volunteer. It would be nice to be able to tour some of the facilities our students attend, like Safe Schools or the Fox Valley Career Center. There was a safety tour at the beginning of the year, which would be nice for us to be a part of. We should also inform board members on the reunification process for students and parents during a crisis. We will work on a plan for presentations that we can bring back to you.

5. **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 BODY [5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1)].**

At 8:46 p.m., motion by Forbes, second by Hooks, 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 9:00 p.m., the Board returned to open session.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:01 p.m., motion by Ansari second by Radlinski and with unanimous consent, the meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED _____ PRESIDENT
(Date)

SECRETARY _____ RECORDING SECRETARY