

## **Minutes of the Regular School Board Meeting**

Of the School Board of Independent School District No. 709 held at the Historic Old Central High School, 215 North First Avenue East, Duluth, Minnesota 55802, on

Tuesday, January 21, 2014

### **Members Present:**

Annie Harala  
Art Johnston  
Rosie Loeffler-Kemp  
Mike Miernicki  
Judy Seliga Punyko  
Harry Welty  
Bill Westholm

### **Others Present:**

Bill Gronseth, Superintendent  
Bill Hanson, Deputy Clerk  
Sue Talerico, Secretary

### **Student Representatives:**

Kobi Tremble  
Paul Manning

➤ Chair Miernicki called the regular school board meeting of January 21, 2014 to order at 6:30 p.m., and welcomed new School Board Members Annie Harala, Rosie Loeffler-Kemp and Harry Welty, and Student Advisors Kobi Tremble and Paul Manning. The pledge of allegiance to the American flag was given.

**M-Westholm, S-Welty, to approve the agenda as presented. Upon a vote on the agenda as presented, the same was approved – unanimously.**

Chair Miernicki asked school board members if there were any corrections or changes to the minutes of the Regular School Board Meeting of December 17, 2013.

**M-Westholm, S- Seliga Punyko, to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2013 Regular School Board Meeting as presented. Upon a vote, the same was approved as presented – unanimously.**

Chair Miernicki asked school board members if there were any corrections or changes to the minutes of the Annual Organizational Meeting of January 6, 2014.

Member Welty asked for explanation of what annual meeting meant. Chair Miernicki explained that it is the Annual Organizational Meeting.

**M-Seliga Punyko, S-Harala, to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2014 Annual Organizational Meeting as presented. Upon a vote, the same was approved as presented – unanimously.**

**School and Community Recognition**

**January 2014**

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Transportation Manager Ken Willms was chosen for recognition. The Minnesota Association of Pupil Transportation selected Mr. Willms as the 2013 MAPT Administrator of the Year. He received this honor at the Minnesota School Bus Safety Expo held in St. Paul on January 17, 2014. MAPT is a non-profit association of school transportation professionals and industry leaders who promote safe and efficient student transportation. The award recognizes Mr. Willms' leadership and excellence in the area of student transportation.

**Public Comments**

**January 2014**

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Sue Urness & Judith McKeever, 24 W Mulberry Street and 1202 Missouri Avenue, chairperson and members of the AFSCME Local 66 Paraprofessionals' Bargaining Unit and employee at Denfeld High School, spoke to the board regarding concerns regarding changes in in-service training days provided for the 2013-14 school year.

Mitch Wiss, 1524 Cliff Avenue, paraprofessional at Denfeld High School spoke to the board regarding duties and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, stating the knowledge and training that is needed. Stress is put on many paraprofessionals when they are not paid for a weather closing day and this year for the two days of paid staff development days that were removed from their work calendar.

Margaret Omen, 4016 W 6<sup>th</sup> Street, paraprofessional for the District spoke to the board regarding paraprofessionals and asking the board to not balance the district budget on the backs of the lowest paid employees, that many are struggling to make ends meet, and they counted on the two paid staff development days.

Richard Paulson, 524 W Ideal Street, spoke to the board regarding his concern about transfer of dollars from the general fund because of tax code. Asking the board to use the majority of the additional funds for students. Asked the new board to request a state audit for 2015, which he believes is overdue.

Loren Martell, 623 E 7<sup>th</sup> Street, spoke to the board regarding free speech and the ACLU sponsoring his free speech at board meetings.

**Communications, Petitions, Etc.**

**January 2014**

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There were no communications received.

**Superintendent's Report**  
**January 2014**

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Superintendent Gronseth Bill expressed appreciation to new board, the MSBA conference they all attended, and looks forward to working together throughout the year. The Superintendent introduced and welcomed the **2014 Student Advisors to the School Board**.

- Kobi Tremble ... Denfeld High School
- Paul Manning ... East High School

Senator Al Franken met with the East Daredevils Robotics Team and the Superintendent for a conversation about Career and Tech Education.

Think Kids 2014 – heard last year that people inside and outside of our schools wanted the conversation to continue. This year’s Think Kids meetings begin with discussion about the past year – what’s gone well and what’s not gone well, and then moving into two sections:

- 1) Discussion about budget planning for 2014-2015 and how the School District will use the operating levy funds to lower class sizes, help to close the achievement gap, to enrich and expand our curriculum, and gathering input.
- 2) Discussion about class size and the different things that can affect class size – school enrollment across the District, imbalances with enrollment, and how we might be able to address those to help lower class sizes

Dates of Think Kids meetings are listed on website. All are welcome to attend any meeting or give feedback using the online survey at [www.isd709.org](http://www.isd709.org), or give a call, send a letter.

**Education Committee Report**  
**January 2014**

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Member Harala presented the Education Committee report, a copy of same being in the hands of each school board member.

Member Harala presented the resolution:

**RESOLUTION**

**Acceptance of Grant Awards to Duluth Public Schools**

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statute 465.03 requires a school district to accept grants by resolution expressed in the terms prescribed by the donor in full; and,

WHEREAS, acceptance of the grant in accordance with the donor’s terms is in the best interest of the Duluth Public Schools:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Duluth Public Schools does accept the below-described grants from said organizations in accordance with the terms set forth herein.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Duluth Public Schools wishes to extend its grateful appreciation to these various organizations.

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	Organization	Author/Contact	Project Title	Award Amount	Terms
1	Lloyd K. Johnson	Ed Crawford	Youth Success Team Grant	\$10,000	Funds from this grant award will be used to support funding AmeriCorps Volunteers in the Duluth Public Schools as part of our Youth Success Teams.

E-1-14-3157

January 21, 2014

Member Welty asked what the Lloyd K. Johnson award is for. Assistant Superintendent Crawford explained it will be used to support AmeriCorps Volunteers at a part of our Youth Success Teams in the middle and high schools and reading and math corps at the elementary schools.

**M-Harala, S-Loeffler-Kemp, to approve the Resolution E-1-14-3157 – Acceptance of Grant Awards to Duluth Public Schools. Upon a vote, the same was approved – unanimously.**

**M-Harala, S-Welty, to approve the remainder of the Education Committee Report:**

Member Welty withheld Items 1.A.1), 1.A.2), and 2.C.

Member Seliga Punyko withheld Item 2.A.2)

Member Welty withheld Item 1.A.1) – Unity/ALC Presentation – for further explanation and details about the program. Discussion and questions from the board were addressed and answered by Superintendent Gronseth and Assistant Superintendent Crawford.

Member Welty withheld Item 1.A.2) – Random Drug Testing Committee Update – to ask if it is waiting for board action and if the district is moving forward with it. Superintendent Gronseth explained that it is informational at this time and is hopeful it will help start a conversation about the importance of chemical and mental health.

Member Seliga Punyko withheld Item 2.A.2) – Recommended Middle and High School Course Offerings for the 2014-15 School Year – to ask about Family Consumer Sciences replaced by Culinary Department. Curriculum Coordinator Kevin Abrahamson explained that the principals report students are gravitating toward the culinary program and fewer toward the FACS program. Student Advisor Manning talked about music café / music theory (thing) that is a name change that is more appropriate to the focus of the class, and that was brought by the Music department committee. Discussion and questions from the board were addressed and answered by administration.

Member Welty withheld Item 2.C. – Extended Field Trip Requests – to ask about the differences in costs for the trips. Superintendent Gronseth explained the differences and reasons why the Wolf Ridge and Deep Portage trips have different costs – both excellent experiences for students.

**Upon a vote on the remainder of the Education Committee, the same was approved – unanimously.**

**Human Resources Committee Report**  
**January 2014**

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Member Welty presented the Human Resources Committee report, a copy of same being in the hands of each school board member.

**M-Welty, S-Westholm, to approve the Human Resource Committee report. Upon a vote, the same was approved – unanimously.**

**Business Committee Report**  
**January 2014**

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Member Loeffler-Kemp presented the Business Committee report, a copy of same being in the hands of each school board member.

**M-Loeffler-Kemp, S- Westholm, to approve the Business Committee Report:**

Member Welty withheld Items 1.C., 1.D., 1.E., 1.F., 6.D., and 6.G.

Member Johnston withheld Items 3.A.1), and 7B.

Member Welty withheld Item 1.C. – Budget Revisions – decided had no questions.

Member Welty withheld Item 1.D. – Wire Transfers – decided had no questions.

Member Welty withheld Item 1.E. – Investment Transactions – to ask why there is an increase in November of this year over last year. Mr. Bill Hanson explained that there could be several reasons, including that the State is in process of catching up on its payments to school districts and there has been an increase this year over last year. Also, where a payroll item falls year to year could be enough to change the balance. Member Welty asked for a definition of “investment balance”, to which Mr. Hanson gave an explanation and definition.

Member Welty withheld Item 1.F. – WADM Projections – to ask what PUW and WADM stand for. Mr. Bill Hanson explained that PUW stands for the pupil unit weighting factor and WADM stands for weighted average daily membership, and ADM stands for average daily membership. Superintendent Gronseth addressed the declining enrollment issue, assuring the board that it is something administration watches very closely, tracking the students who are leaving and why they are leaving. Discussion took place regarding the Residential Programs and their effect on student numbers. Further discussion, with explanations regarding weighting and the report were provided by Mr. Hanson.

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Member Johnston withheld Item 3.A.1) – Policies – 8030 School Board Member Compensation – to ask for a history of compensation and some comparisons. Mr. Bill Hanson noted that a report was distributed to the Board on Friday, showing a comparison with five other school districts as well as a 17 year history of compensation to board members of Duluth Public Schools. Additional information can be provided if needed.

Member Welty withheld Item 6.D. – Facilities Management & Capital Project Status Report – no longer had questions. Member Johnston spoke to the Board about the loading docks issue at two schools and appreciates administration finding solutions.. Member Welty asked when the remaining work orders will be completed. Mr. Leider explained the process for completion. Member Seliga Punyko asked about the purchase of seats for the Denfeld commons area due to cracking – Student Advisor Tremble stated that he is not aware of the issue.

Member Welty withheld Item 6.G. – Quarterly Grants and Donations – to ask why we haven't gotten the same level of State grants this year as compared to the past four years. Superintendent Gronseth provided an explanation.

Member Johnston withheld Item 7.B. – Legislative Platform – to share information gained at the MSBA Conference. Discussion and comments about the DTRF (Duluth Teachers Retirement Fund) combining with St. Paul's fund took place.

Member Johnston stated that, although he has voted no on past Business Committee reports, he will vote yes on this month's in part because there are no change orders.

**Upon a vote on the remainder of the Business Committee, the same was approved – unanimously.**

**Other**  
**January 2014**  
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Member Harala attended MLK Day and the East High School student led community events Friday night, commending organizers.

Member Johnston stated that this year was his fifth MSBA conference; talked about sessions and shared a presenter's message of having a unified board, not a uniform board.

Member Loeffler-Kemp appreciated attending the MSBA conference and meetings as well as going as a full board. Thank financial and other staff for the good and complete information received by administration. Also attended MLK Day event at East High School and thanked planners.

Member Welty commented on the excellent board meeting, as well as his appreciation that they attended the MSBA conference as a full board.

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Member Johnston asked to follow up on speakers from the public comment period; the concerns brought up by district paraprofessionals regarding staff development days and their perceived lack of training, asking if it could be an item at a future Education Committee. Superintendent Gronseth indicated it would fit better into either the Business or Human Resources agenda because it was a budgetary consideration from last spring.

Chair Miernicki stated he appreciated the information presented at the MSBA conference, attending as a full board and the positive information received.

- Chair Miernicki adjourned the Regular School Board Meeting of January 21, 2014 at 8:39 p.m.