



January 2025 – Board Report

Operations Updates: Into another new year we go! Looking to continue new initiatives and improvements as a department. January was much busier with snow and ice than December was, therefore, the crew has been busy with longer hours working to keep the district safe and clear of snow and ice. We did have some unfortunate equipment breakdowns, none of which were completely surprising. The breakdowns came to some of our oldest and heaviest used equipment (Toolcat), this did specifically create some challenges with our sidewalk sweeping and salting operations. During the equipment failure and down time we were not nearly as efficient as we were prior to the break downs. During the time that our Toolcat was in the shop for repair we had to pivot to a different piece of equipment that could sweep but **not** salt and was **slower**. However, we did make it work and survived, the broken down Toolcat is now repaired and back in operation.

Filter First Program - In accordance with new state laws and regulations schools and early childhood centers are now required to provide filtered drinking water for our students and community. This initiative really kicked off this past fall (Fall of '24) and has been fast and furious since. Luckily our district already has established filtered drinking water fixtures but this has been informative and enlightening to elevate our other fixtures to the new regulation standards. This process started with me meeting with a group of folks from Zurn-Elkay touring all our buildings and evaluating all our drinking fountains and bottle fillers throughout the district. Post evaluation, a comprehensive inventory list was created for us to use as our roadmap to compliance. Using that information Michelle Hilla and I submitted our grant application to assist with funding; the state released \$50M in federal grant funding to support the districts across the state. At the beginning of December we did receive \$120K in grant funding which is fantastic and will certainly help us in this process. A huge thanks to Michelle Hilla for her help and support. Following the news of our eligible grant funding I moved right into quoting the required equipment and labor costs. The good news is that based on our current/existing filtered drinking water fixtures and the required minimum of 1 filtered station per 100 students, we should be able to cover the majority of these upgrades with the grant funds awarded to us. Any balance can be covered by sinking funds. This process and upgrades must be completed by the end the 2025-2026 school year. I will be sure to keep you in the loop as these upgrades take place and certainly as we close this out in completion. We are on the right track and according to many folks in the plumbing industry or involved with this legislation we are ahead of most districts in the process.

New Equipment: Lastly, as I mentioned at the top we have had equipment failures and operational issues. Two thirds of our Operations Fleet/Equipment is aged and approaching or at end of life. This is attributed to past purchases of older, used equipment *e.g. trade-in equipment/vehicles from larger organizations or districts, auctions, private sales, etc.* Also, inadequate equipment replacement schedules and proactive budgeting have contributed to these challenges. Historically some of the equipment purchases have been one dimensional and not practical for multi use operations; something in the future we will avoid. This administrative group are all on the same page and collaborating on improved schedules and budgeting initiatives to correct this in the future. We have been in need of a reliable and versatile piece of equipment that can be used year round for a multitude of jobs. We have recently purchased a brand new piece of equipment (*Bobcat L28 articulating loader*) that is dynamic and versatile. This piece of equipment can handle several different attachments for any job. Most importantly this loader will have a 52" angle broom on it for winter snow and ice sweeping (sidewalks) with a receiver attachment to hook up a powered salt spreader. This will allow us to better maintain our district sidewalks (*roughly 6 miles worth*) and create efficiencies. Importantly the loader was made possible for acquisition thanks to administrative support but also by being creative. We traded in 8 different pieces of equipment that were under utilized or not used at all (collecting dust) at a tune of \$19,300 trade in value total. This brought our total price down under the bid threshold. I have no doubt that not only will this loader tractor improve our operations but it will also be reliable, dynamic, sharp looking and boost team morale.

GO BULLDOGS!!

My Best,
Ross Potgiesser
Director of Operations