

League of Women Voters of Downers Grove-Woodridge-Lisle

Observer Report

Community High School District 99

July 21, 2014

Business meeting

Media: Trib Local

Absent:

Meeting convened at 7:30 P.M.

Superintendent's Report

A. The first item was the 2014 State of the District Report.* The report informed the Board, in considerable detail, about the activities, events, progress, etc. of the past year in each of the following areas of interest:

1. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
2. Facilities
3. Technology
4. Resources: personnel/staff/development/finances
5. Communications
6. Community
7. Innovation/Adaptation

The report set forth Tasks and Actions for each area and then discussed progress made in completing each task.

Also included was a report on the Performance Series Reading test used by the District. It showed student growth in reading skills from the freshman through sophomore years.

*Each part of this report contains detailed and comprehensive information on the particular area of interest. See the District's website, Board detailed agenda.

B. Staff next presented a comprehensive report on the Instructional Technology Plan.* The Overview of the plan states as follows: “The intent of this plan is to provide a roadmap for how and when we will provide all students full-time, mobile access to digital tools, curriculum materials and resources in support of District instructional goals.” Providing these resources to students is known as 1:1 learning, which refers to the ratio of one computing device for every one student. The report heavily emphasized that this is a learning initiative, not a technology project.*

*This report provides extensive, detailed information on the plan, which could not be reasonably summarized for this report. See the District’s website, Board detailed agenda.

C. Mr. Staehlin next presented the end of year financial report. He explained why certain items had changed from last year, but none of the changes were alarming. With minor exceptions, both revenues and expenditures were about where they should be.

D. Mr. Staehlin continued with presentation of the tentative, or proposed, 2014-15 operating budget, which may be changed up until the time it is formally approved. The administration will recommend formal approval at the September 15, 2014 Board meeting. The proposed budget will be available for review until that date. Staehlin discussed the District’s continuing efforts to address large capital problems before greater negative burdens arise as a result of financial actions taken by the state. He also dwelt on efforts to pay down long-term debt, via (1) a transfer from Operating Funds and (2) a plan to refinance outstanding bonds. According to Staehlin, these actions are in accord with the District Strategic Plan, which calls for maximizing available resources. The proposed budget also redirects resources to areas that are key to positive student performance, particularly the provision of more technology devices. A motion to approve the tentative budget passed, with member Matune voting no. A motion to set a hearing on the budget for September 15 passed unanimously.

E. The last item Mr. Staehlin addressed was the plan, mentioned above, to refinance outstanding bonds. These bonds were issued in 2004 and are callable in December 2014, meaning the District can issue new bonds, at current lower interest rates, and pay off the higher interest rate bonds without a penalty. Doing this would save about \$2,000,000 in interest costs

over the next five years. Staehlin then explained that the impact of the refunding on the average homeowner's property tax would only be about \$12 a year. Citing the major costs facing the District, together with cuts in state funding, and the uncertainty of future state funding, Staehlin suggested that the District keep the refunding savings to help stabilize District finances rather than using them to provide very nominal taxpayer relief. While no formal action was taken, the Board directed Staehlin to proceed with this plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

For more detailed information see District 99 website: www.csd99.or

Observer: Peggy Healy

Date submitted: August 6, 2014

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