

## ***Our Mission***

***East Grand Rapids Public Schools, in partnership with students, parents, and community, will ensure that each student acquires the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary to reach his or her full potential, and become a productive citizen.***

EAST GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Kent County, Michigan

### **REGULAR Meeting of the East Grand Rapids Board of Education**

Woodcliff Center, 2915 Hall Street, SE, East Grand Rapids, MI 49506.  
Phone 616-235-3535.

**Monday, March 29, 2004**

### **MINUTES**

The REGULAR MEETING of the East Grand Rapids Public Schools Board of Education, Kent County, Michigan, was held at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, March 29, 2004 in the Community Board Room, Woodcliff Center, 2915 Hall St., SE, East Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

#### **Board of Education:**

**Present:** Mrs. Beth Lent, Mrs. Natalie Kuras, Mr. Brian Ellis, Mrs. Rosalie Stein, Mr. Charlie Denton, Mrs. Stacy Trierweiler, and Mr. Joe Camp

**Administration:** Dr. James Morse, Mrs. Christine Vettese, Mr. Doug Derks, Dr. Ty Wessell, Mrs. Jeanne Glowicki, Mrs. Linda Kehm, Mr. Doug Jenkins, Mr. Pat Cwayna, and Mr. Mark Tompkins

#### **Meeting Called to Order**

Mrs. Lent called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm

**Acknowledgment of Guests** - There were no guests to acknowledge.

**Public Comments** - There were no public comments.

#### **Communications to and from the Board**

Thank you cards were received from: Linda Kehm (Principal at Lakeside) for the gift basket for Principal's Week, Joann Kuklewski (Middle School Assistant Principal) for the gift basket for Principal's Week, Peter Stuursma (High School Assistant Principal) for the gift basket for Principal's Week, Ty Wessell (Middle School Principal) for the gift basket for Principal's week, Bert Wadel (Breton Downs Special Education Teacher) for the gift basket following her car accident, Sharon Pollice (High School Art Teacher) for the gift basket following her recent surgery and Katy McIntosh

## REGULAR BOARD MEETING

March 29, 2004

Page 2

(Breton Downs Kindergarten Teacher) and husband for the gift basket following the birth of their daughter, Lily.

### Recognition of:

(A) East Grand Rapids Public Schools' Support Staff Week - April 18-24, 2004 -

Dr. Morse

(B) Secretaries' Day - April 21, 2004 - Dr. Morse

(C) Crossing Guard Appreciation Week - April 11-17, 2004 - Dr. Morse

Mrs. Kuras moved to approve the motion to recognize the school and city employees mentioned above and to thank them for their work with our children. Mr. Denton seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0

### High School Student Council President's Report - Ms. Steffie Kabat

All classes are working on service projects. The freshman held a food drive and donated to a food kitchen and a church food pantry. The sophomores volunteered at God's Kitchen helping out with preparation and serving. The Junior Class is busy with Prom. When those preparations are completed they will then work on their service project. The seniors went to Head Start and read to kids. There will be a clean up day at the High School on Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup>. This will be the second annual clean-up day and will be done with help from the PTSA Garden Club, the Environmental Club, the Key Club and the student council. Dr. Morse thanked Ms. Kabat for her report and asked if she was the one who wrote in the "Onion" about the plagues. Ms. Kabat responded that she had nothing to do with the article in the "Onion".

### EGREA President's Report - Mrs. Cynthia Bischoff

There was a vote by the teachers on the proposed calendar. It was passed with 93% of the teachers supporting the calendar. Some concern was expressed for the music program. Teachers are asking the Board to look at accommodations for this program with this calendar.

### Discussion Items

#### Budget Update - Dr. Morse and Mr. Derks

Dr. Morse stated that he constantly hears from parents, "What can the community do to help out the schools due to the under funding by the State?" He shared that the community has an opportunity to help the schools with a Recreation millage. Tonight the Board will discuss a millage but no formal action will be taken. Over the next month more information on the different options will be discussed and a recommendation will be made at the April 26<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. This is a great opportunity for the community to help.

Mr. Derks presented an update of the Budget. There have been various changes since beginning this process and now we are looking at an approximate deficit of \$800,000. He does not foresee any significant changes to eliminate the deficit for next year. Next month the Board will be given the preliminary recommendations from the Budget Committee. Administrators will continue to monitor assumptions, meet with the staff, PTA's and community to discuss recommendations and receive input. In June there will be a public hearing and approval of budget. A new component, a Recreation Millage, is being discussed. A Recreation millage would cover overhead costs for after

## REGULAR BOARD MEETING

March 29, 2004

Page 3

school hours (heat, lights, cleaning after hours). It could also be used for Joint Facilities, grounds, and playground maintenance costs. The duration of the millage could be up to 20 years. A Recreation millage would provide a level of limited local control. The Board can authorize up to 1.85 mills. This amount could offset our projected deficit in total and would allow us to maintain programs and avoid layoff of professional and support staff employees. Mr. Derks stated that PTA groups have warmly received this as an option for some local control.

Mrs. Kuras asked if the Board could choose the length of time up to 20 years. Response: Yes, it can. She also asked if it would be up to 1.85 mills based on current expenditures, can the Board decide what amount and options to ask for. Response: Yes, and various options will be analyzed and discussed.

Mr. Denton stated that he feels that next year again there will be flat state revenues. He feels that the district has made many cuts in last couple of years. He sees the majority of the costs are escalating employee benefits, and utilities. He asked for a commitment of looking hard at controlling employee benefit costs before asking the community for help.

Mr. Ellis pointed out that this is our 3<sup>rd</sup> year of facing budget problems. The Board has been talking for past couple of years about a local option. The Board feels this would put things more in our control. He feels a Recreation Millage is a viable option and is good for the community. He wants to see a balanced effort to control costs and wants the district to be aggressive on costs.

Dr. Morse replied that the Administration is committed to working with the teachers and support staff in controlling costs. The teachers have always worked well with us and may be willing to look at options for the future. He stated that everyone, the Board, administration, teachers, support staff and the community need to take part in solving the budget problems. This Board, community, administration and staff have a commitment to maintain academic excellence in this district. We are confident we can come up with solutions to this situation.

### Action Items - Consent Agenda:

#### Approval of Minutes of REGULAR MEETING of 2/17/04 (Enclosure #9)

Mrs. Stein moved to approve the minutes of the Regular meeting of February 17, 2004 and Mrs. Trieweiler seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0

#### Approval of Minutes of SPECIAL MEETING of 3/23/04 (Enclosure #10)

Mrs. Stein moved to approve the minutes of the Special meeting of March 23, 2004 and Mrs. Trierweiler seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0.

#### Approval of Payment of Bills for February 2004 (Enclosure #11)

Mrs. Stein moved to approve the payment of bills for February 2004 and Mrs. Trierweiler seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0.

#### Approval of Section 6 Non-Resident Student (Enclosure #12)

Mrs. Stein moved to approve the enrollment of one Section 6 Non-Resident Student at Wealthy Elementary as recommended by Dr. Morse. Mrs. Trierweiler seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0.

## REGULAR BOARD MEETING

March 29, 2004

Page 4

### Other Action Items:

#### Approval of Extension of the Superintendent's Contract

The Board conducted the annual evaluation of Dr. Morse on March 16, 2004. They reviewed the Superintendent's goals and his performance. Mrs. Lent, Board President, will present a summary evaluation and recommendation for a contract extension for Board approval.

Mrs. Lent stated the Board met in closed session, at Dr. Morse's request, to review his goals. He is on track to meet the goals in the anticipated timeframe. The Board is appreciative of Dr. Morse's dedication and enthusiasm. He is proactive and continues to have a commitment to strong academic programs. The Board recommends extending Dr. Morse's contract for one additional year from June 2006 to June 2007. Motion to extend Mr. Camp moved to extend Dr. Morse's contract for one additional year and Mr. Ellis seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0.

Dr. Morse stated he appreciates the support of the Board and the community and remains committed to the district.

#### Approval of Middle School Schedule

The Board received a report from the Middle School Schedule Committee at a Special Board Meeting on March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Mr. Denton moved and Mrs. Kuras seconded the motion to authorize the Superintendent to implement the new Middle School schedule for 2004-05 and to thank the committee for its work. The motion passed 7-0.

Mrs. Kuras requested that the administration monitor this schedule for next year as it moves forward to make sure it is working for students, teachers and staff. This move will reduce the deficit by \$110,000. Mr. Denton stated the process was a good team effort by all involved. He stated that the music department might need accommodations and the need to monitor the effects on that program.

#### Approval of High School Student Trip

In accordance with Board of Education Policy #7490, Mr. Cwayna is requesting approval of a European trip, led by Mrs. Kim Ibara (Foreign Language Teacher), for high school students as outlined on the enclosure. (Enclosure #15)

Mrs. Stein moved and Mrs. Kuras seconded the motion to approve a High School European trip as outlined on Enclosure #15, dependent on U. S. State Department approval, as recommended by the Superintendent. Motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Ellis questioned if the Board could be held liable if it approves the trip and then something happens? Dr. Morse stated that the parents have the ultimate responsibility. We can monitor and make recommendations but there is always some risk for travel overseas. We will also be checking with the State Department for any warnings or concerns and will pass any of that information along. Two years ago we did have a trip planned which was cancelled because of State Department concerns. Mr. Cwayna stated that parents are aware that this may happen and are okay with that possibility.

## REGULAR BOARD MEETING

March 29, 2004

Page 5

### Approval of 2004-2005 School Year Calendar

In January this Board approved the KISD countywide calendar. Because of State under funding we have looked at days and hours and made revisions specific to East Grand Rapids Public Schools. (Enclosure #16)

An additional piece to go along with the motion: "The Superintendent will be authorized to sign a Letter of Agreement with the Teachers Association to provide for revisions in the calendar if we receive additional mandates from the State of Michigan. Mrs. Bischoff again stated that 93% of our teachers support this calendar.

Mr. Denton moved and Mrs. Trierweiler seconded the motion to approve the 2004-2005 school year calendar as presented in Enclosure #16, as well as the additional information on the Letter of Agreement with the teachers. Motion passed 7-0.

Mrs. Trierweiler questioned how we would accommodate the music program if there will be a week off in the end of February? Mr. Cwayna and Dr. Wessell have discussed this with Dr. Morse and there are various options: Saturday mornings, evenings, some practice time during some PE time and then give back to PE in the spring, all of these options will be looked at.

Mr. Ellis requested clarification on the conference schedules. The Middle School and High School will be on the same week while the elementary schools will have two conference times both lasting over two week period. Mr. Cwayna mentioned that the Winter break will be at the end of winter sports and students will be expected to complete the season. There needs to be communication between students, parents and coaches as to the expectations prior to the student going out for the team. Mr. Ellis feels this is a good move for district and he is concerned about support staff but as a Board member he must make decisions that are good for the district overall.

Mrs. Stein stated she appreciates that this information is coming to the Board with plenty of time to discuss and make decisions. She has some concern with the Athletic Schedule in February and wants to make sure students understand they must be available during that week school is out.

Mr. Denton stated that the full day calendar is significant for parents and students as well as having full days of Professional Development time is important for the teachers. He feels there are many positives to this calendar as well as a budget savings of around \$50,000.

Mrs. Lent expressed that this is one of the few opportunities the Board had to consider a reduction (in half days), which could enhance learning, by having full day instructional time. She realizes that many of the support staff will be affected, but this decision is good overall for the district. She also feels that communication will be vital for parents on how this will work.

Mr. Camp said that this is new for everyone and we will have to see how it goes for the year. All parties will need to be creative, have flexibility, be willing to give feedback and be prepared to make adjustments if necessary.

Mrs. Trierweiler requested the administration to look at childcare options for the week in February or an open gym option for parents needing help with this.

## REGULAR BOARD MEETING

March 29, 2004

Page 6

### Administrative Reports

#### Superintendent

Strategic Plan Update - The Strategic Plan Committee began meeting in January and concluded in March. The finalized plan will be presented to the Board for approval at the April 26<sup>th</sup> meeting. Dr. Morse is very pleased with the outcome. He commended the Board for going ahead even in difficult budget times. The new plan will begin in the fall of 2004 if approved by the Board.

As an aside, Dr. Morse told of his experience with a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade student at Wealthy Elementary last week. This boy earned the honor of "Principal for Day" and administrators, watch out! This kid is going places. He met with Dr. Morse, read announcements in the morning, read to the 5<sup>th</sup> graders, and played his piano recital piece for Dr. Morse. He is an amazing child! Dr. Morse stated that one of our goals is to endeavor to make each child feel special. This is a good example of a way this can be accomplished.

#### Assistant Superintendent for Business

Self-Funded Health Insurance Update - There are twenty school districts working on putting this together. The application has been sent to the Office of Finance and Insurance Services. Committee members have had meetings with the Attorney General's office. They hope to have this fully approved within 45-60 days. There are other self funded plans in the state but they are singular districts, this would be the first collaborative effort. When this is approved in Lansing it will be brought to Board for approval. He warned the Board that it may be on a fast track for the approval due to timelines and deadlines.

#### Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

K-8 Science Committee - The committee is looking at aligning K-8 science. They hope to have a complete report in May for the Board. Mrs. Vettese mentioned that she received a federal grant from MDE (Title II) and therefore was able to move some funds to facilitate this committee.

#### Board Representative Report

Joint Facilities Committee - Mrs. Lent reported that the committee has looked at next years budget and discussed that the city and schools may have to restore some of the operations cut. There were presentations on the outdoor classroom project at the Middle School, and a presentation on the sidewalk path between the High School senior parking lot and the City complex. If this is approved by voters in June, it would also require school board approval. She reviewed the use of capitol funds for tennis court updates and additional bleachers at Memorial Field.

Facilities Committee - Mr. Camp stated that the committee reviewed the use of the Sinking Funds. These funds can only be used for the maintenance of facilities, not for educational programs. He discussed the work which was done over the summer last year - bathroom upgrades, roofs, and security doors. This year the focus will be on the maintenance garage at Wealthy, removal of the coal bin as well as removal of the smokestack at Wealthy. In addition there would be some work on the Middle School roof and the Middle School locker rooms. All of these items are on a priority list. The committee is currently getting pricing and then will make decisions and come to Board for approval.

## REGULAR BOARD MEETING

March 29, 2004

Page 7

Foundation Board – Mr. Denton shared that the Board met for approval of grants last week. A formal report will be presented to Board next month. He also noted that requests are continuing to increase.

Mrs. Lent expressed on behalf of the Board a thank you to Lakeside and Mrs. Kehm for the “Anniejr” presentation. It was a wonderful program and all involved did a great job. Dr. Morse noted that almost every child in the school had some participation in this performance, either acting or behind the scenes.

### Adjournment

Mrs. Lent adjourned the meeting at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalie Stein, Secretary  
East Grand Rapids Board of Education

\* Minutes for this meeting will be available in the Superintendent’s Office at 2915 Hall Street SE, East Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

\*\* If you plan to attend and have a special need and require accommodation to attend this meeting, please contact Dr. James Morse, Superintendent, at 235-3535.

Superintendent’s Office – 3/30/04