

School board sets goals at annual workshop/planning retreat

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 07 February 2013 17:48 -

By Diane Stamm

The Wauneta Breeze

The Wauneta-Palisade school board traveled to McCook Tuesday, Jan. 29, for the board's annual retreat.

Through the recommendation of the Nebraska School Board Association, the board opted to have the meeting at the Armed Forces Reserve Center. Superintendent Randy Geier said as the principal in his previous tenure, the board workshops were usually held out of town. During the day, board members discussed the school's budget, transportation needs, building and grounds, continuing improvement and instruction, technology, enrollment, athletics and swore in newly elected member Jason Hicks

Transportation

Looking at a vehicle schedule provided by Kenny Lawless, Bill Bischoff said Lawless would like to trade off the school's Bluebird bus and a 22-seat bus and get another 28-passenger bus to be used for routes. Funding is available to cover most of the cost of making this bus handicap accessible.

The board would also like to increase the number of bus drivers it has available and discussed ways to find more drivers, including adding a \$1 pay raise for drivers with CDLs who can drive the activity buses.

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Suggestions during the discussion of transportation also included making a map of the schools' bus routes to help make the routes more efficient, a better job description for the transportation supervisor and drivers, new signage for the suburbans and making sure buses first pick up students in Palisade if activities are to the west or first in Wauneta if buses are traveling east.

Bischoff encouraged the school to be "aggressive" in its busing to make sure kids are able to participate in all the activities they can.

Activities

After meeting with some Hayes Center board members during the RPAC basketball tournament, the board agreed to move forward with discussion of cooping athletics.

While the coop would not mean consolidating the schools, the possibility could be there to compete together in other, non- athletic activities such as speech.

With the prospect of smaller classes coming up, the board would like to see more athletes available to protect the health of younger, sometimes smaller, athletes, give younger players a chance to develop before joining varsity-level play and give coaches more opportunities to scrimmage and run drills during practices.

The day before the retreat the boys' basketball team only had six athletes available to practice and it is anticipated the football team may only have 7-8 boys out for the 2013 season.

The board feels that without the school's ability to offer activities more students will choose to leave the district for schools that can offer them what they want.

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While W-P has a higher enrollment, Hayes Center has a higher participation rate.

President Jon Anderjaska said the decision to work with another school will be easier to make now when there are options rather than the one that may come up in a couple years when low enrollment will force the schools to make decisions.

Technology

Providing a survey of teachers performed by Data Coordinator Jill Hurtt, the board discussed the school's technological needs.

Acknowledging that Aaron Behrends has done a good job for the school, Bischoff said Behrends' plate is full, with teaching music, band, physics, science and computer classes and attending to day-to-day computer needs, and the board agreed it would be good to bring in an outside source to perform a technology audit for the school to determine needs and weaknesses, then develop a comprehensive plan.

Budget

After talking to other school administrators, Superintendent Geier said he is planning to increase the school's depreciation fund from around \$5,000 to over \$50,000. Geier anticipates moving \$48,000 from the general fund to build up the depreciation fund.

Geier went on to announce estimated taxes received in 2012. In February the school received around \$230,000, March \$70,000, April \$100,000, May \$500,000, June \$400,000, July \$40,000, August \$30,000, September \$600,000, October \$150,000 and November \$50,000. After

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averaging the amounts the board noticed a discrepancy between what had been and should be collected. Finance committee members Allison Sandman, Laurie Maris and Bill Bischoff agreed to meet with school accountant Lynette Kisker and report at the Feb. 11 regular board meeting, with Kisker possibly in attendance.

“Maintaining our budget has become a big challenge due to the drastic reduction in state aid. This school year the district received only \$30,000 in state aid compared to \$173,000 last year and \$630,000 just two years ago,” Geier said.

The school received \$845,000 for the 2009-10 school year and \$892,000 in 2008-09.

With the cut, the board emphasized staying on top of the matter and maintaining good communication with Kisker. Monthly expenses for the school are around \$200,000 in payroll and \$70,000 in other bills.

Discussion moved on to the school’s savings. Bischoff said that with the building projects that have been completed and paid for with CDs the school needs to start building up its CD totals again.

Buildings and grounds

As with many other board meetings, the group discussed the Palisade Attendance Center. Emphasizing that there will always be an attendance center in Palisade and the site wouldn’t change, the board continued to talk about construction possibilities of the site and the item remains near the top of the school’s five-year plan.

The board agreed that it may have to ask for more taxes for the building fund to make the needed changes in Palisade.

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Priorities for the upcoming year include a new bus barn door in Palisade and making the transition from T2 to T5 lighting in both schools.

Instruction and Continuous Improvement

Geier said teachers are buying into the new curriculum added over the past few years, including Reading Street, Write Tools and Saxon math.

While it takes time to gather data from the Reading Street program, Geier said most teachers have bought into the program. Data does show improvement in writing and math is going well in the elementary.

Joseph Freck, Chad Cochran and Jennifer Loker were complimented as being great first-year additions to the staff.

Other topics of discussion

Saying more kids are opting out than in, Bischoff encouraged the administration to visit with parents whose children attend other schools and let them know they are always welcome back to W-P. The board also discussed revamping pre-kindergarten and kindergarten round up to make the events more exciting and family friendly.

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While communication between the two attendance centers is important, the board would also like to improve communication with families and discussed sending a daily email with school announcements.

The board wrapped up the meeting by going into executive session for an evaluation of Superintendent Geier and school personnel. The board will meet for a regular board meeting in Wauneta Feb. 11.