

School board votes to reduce ag teacher to half time

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 28 March 2013 18:56 -

By Sheri Hink-Wagner

The Wauneta Breeze

The Wauneta-Palisade Public Schools Board met for a special meeting Tuesday, March 26. The primary purpose of the meeting was to hear recommendations of the curriculum committee regarding ways to reduce costs within the school.

The first action item of the board was to hear a report from the curriculum committee. The committee issued a recommendation to reduce the workforce in the Vo Tech Ag program in order to save money within the district.

After discussion, including input from the public, the board approved reduction of the Vo Tech Ag instructor position from full time to half time.

The decision was not made lightly by the school board members. "Ag is the backbone of our community," said board member Allison Sandman.

However, the board members felt the reduction was necessary due to the low participation numbers in the program.

"It all goes back to state aid, we've got to tighten our belts," explained superintendent Randy Geier.

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Geier went on to say that the curriculum committee was very thorough in their consideration of where to cut costs at the school, they looked at all classes and programs before making the recommendation to the board.

Currently, there are only eight unique students enrolled in ag courses in the district.

The school board stressed that the reduction in the instructor position will not effect course offerings within the district.

Geier met with the curriculum committee prior to the board meeting and developed a class schedule that would allow all of the classes currently offered to continue after the reduction in workforce.

School board members heard public input regarding possible ways to reignite interest in the vo tech ag program at Wauneta-Palisade schools.

In reference to the reduction of the instructor's position school board member Jon Anderjaska stated, "We all regret it, we hope it's not a long term thing. We hope we can get it back to full time."

School board members are hopeful that more students in future years will become interested in the vo tech ag program, thus justifying a full time instructor position.

The reduction in the instructor's position will go into effect at the end of the current school year.

Other areas considered for budget cuts

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The curriculum committee is also considering further reduction to the guidance program at the school as another avenue to save the school additional funds.

Board members stated that the school could cut the guidance counselor position to half time while still meeting the needs of students and not effecting course offerings at the school.

It was mentioned that two area schools—Southwest and Hayes Center—are currently looking for guidance counselors. Board members felt it possible the district could share a counselor with another district.

Another place the board is looking to cut costs is within the transportation department. The transportation committee has received a map of the district's bus routes and will review them to determine possible cost savings.

Preschoolers will attend five days a week next year

As part of the in-depth look at where to save money within the district, or "trim the fat" as it is often referred to at the meetings, it came to school board members' attention that the preschool instructor is a full time employee but only holds classes four days per week.

The board voted to change the preschool schedule for the next school year. Starting in the fall, preschool will meet five days per week instead of four.

Board members felt this will more efficiently use the staff person's time as well as provide additional educational opportunities for preschool students.

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They also felt it important to review the curriculum currently offered in the preschool to look for new ideas and ways to engage the preschool students, possibly by visiting and getting ideas from other area preschools.

New elementary principal

The school board passed a motion to extend Roger Reikofski a contract to serve as the elementary principal for the 2013-14 school year with a salary of \$68,000 per year.

Geier briefed the board on Reikofski's background, indicating that he has worked the past 10-11 years with the Department of Education, specifically working with Title 1 and special education programs.

Superintendent's report

Geier reported on the recent meeting of the Hayes Center School Board regarding the possible athletic coop with Wauneta-Palisade. The Hayes Center board had a split vote (3-3) regarding the possible cooperative of all athletics with Wauneta-Palisade.

School board members will send the Hayes Center School board members a letter thanking them for their consideration of the athletic cooperative.

The school is looking at departmentalizing the fifth and sixth grade classes. The plan currently under consideration would have Mrs. Bales teaching reading and spelling and Mrs. Kunkel teaching math.

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Geier indicated departmentalizing the grades would allow teachers to teach to their strengths and give students the opportunity to see diversity in teaching styles.

Geier also congratulated the various coaches and teams who qualified for and competed in state competitions this year.

Other business

The board approved the addition of school days for the current school year for the preschool.

It has been determined that the classes need to make up at least three days of instruction to meet requirements for the current school year. The additional days will most likely be added in April.

The Wauneta-Palisade school board discussed the need to take bids for lawn care for the upcoming summer and fall. They plan to request bids in the near future.

The school board moved to executive session to discuss personnel issues after completion of the public agenda items.

The next regular meeting of the Wauneta-Palisade Public School board will be held at the Wauneta Attendance Center on Monday, April 8 at 5:00 p.m. MT/ 6:00 p.m. CT. The public is welcome to attend school board meetings.