

MINUTES

Boulder Elementary School District No. 7  
Special Meeting

February 22, 2024  
Boulder Elementary School

Board members present:

Carrie Harris – Board Chair                      Cheryl Hecht – Vice Chair                      Andrea Dolezal - Trustee  
Kyle Simons - Trustee

Administrators present:

Doug Richards, Superintendent  
Britton Mann – District Clerk

Staff:

Devyn Ottman – Facebook Live Operator

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Visitors: Kessie Strausser

CALL ELEMENTARY BOARD TO ORDER                      The Elementary Board was called to order at 5:31 by Carrie, who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA REVIEW                      None

PUBLIC COMMENT                      Carrie read the Public Comment Statement.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Onsite IT Boots Resignation Letter** – Carrie asked if Mrs. Ottman would provide a brief explanation to the change in her end date for Onsite IT Boots position. Mrs. Ottman read the following statement, “Please accept this letter as a change in resigning from the IT BOOTS position to effective immediately. Thank you. Carrie asked Mrs. Ottman if she would give a quick statement as to why she did resign since her letter was so brief, and then give board members an opportunity to make a statement if they wanted, and not to interrupt the person speaking. And then have an open conversation once everyone has had a chance to speak. Then there will need to be a motion in regards to the resignation. Mr. Richards stated that before we begin he wanted the board to be aware that the Smartboard is not working, however we are still being recorded.

Carrie asked Mrs. Ottman to begin. Mrs. Ottman stated that she respectfully is requesting to be released from her IT Boots contract, effective February 22, 2024. She asked this because based on her previous letter she no longer feels comfortable attending board meetings. This stems from the last meeting during the executive session and the statements that were made.

Carrie asked if Ms. Strausser had anything to say, she stated no. Carrie then moved to Kyle and asked if he had a statement, he also stated no. Carrie asked Andrea if she had a statement and she said she did. Andrea stated that she is frustrated that we are in this position to have to have this special board meeting, she is also sad that our staff and our students will be impacted by the rash behavior of one person at the board meeting last week. She added that she strongly feels that this is not the best interest of the school and the students by those reacting to personal agendas. We have had every opportunity to take care of this at the end of the contract. Instead we decided to turn everything upside down and impact a ton of people. Trustee Dolezal also stated she appreciates everything our staff does daily and wanted to thank them for all of the time that they put into the school. She said directly to Mrs. Ottman that she is sorry that you had to make this decision, and she stated that Mrs. Ottman has done a good job as the IT person, and that the letter that was received from Schoolhouse IT confirms that. And as a parent, alumni of Boulder Elementary and a long time community member she is very disappointed that we are here now doing this. She stated that she thinks the board needs to strive to do better for this community, our school and our staff.

Carrie asked Mr. Richards if had anything he wanted to say. Mr. Richards stated that he wanted to thank Mrs. Ottman for the efforts and what she has done this year for himself and the work with the IT position. Mrs. Ottman has helped him enormously and he very much appreciates what she has done and he respects her decision as well.

Carrie asked Cheryl if she had any comments. Cheryl stated that she has more questions than she does statements. And asked if they had to be statements. Cheryl also stated that she didn’t think there was anything in policy that regulates what is said. Carrie stated that she was hoping to give everyone an opportunity to speak and

then have a dialogue. Carrie stated if she wanted to ask her questions, to go ahead and then reiterated we would wait to answer them once everyone had an opportunity to speak. Cheryl stated that Mrs. Ottman said why she changed her mind, however it says in the staff handbook on page 15, "Certified personnel will be expected to fulfill the terms of their contract unless there are compelling and mitigating circumstances which prevent the certified or exempt from doing so." Cheryl said she was just looking for compelling and mitigating circumstances from Mrs. Ottman. She stated that examples would be relocating, serious health issues and good cause. Carrie asked Britton if she had anything to say. Britton stated that she spoke with James from SchoolHouse IT and he said that his most successful schools that they contract with come twice a month and have a onsite Boots IT person specifically skilled like Mrs. Ottman. Britton asked James if she could share that with the board and he stated absolutely and to also let the board know that her replacement has tough shoes to fill.

Carrie stated that she is sad that Devyn Ottman, who is one of our best employees at Boulder Elementary feels so persecuted and underappreciated that she has chosen to resign from one of the many extra duties that she has taken on since becoming an employee at BES. These duties where she has been assisting the administration are above and beyond the full time job she has as the school counselor. After our budget shortfall from the 22/23 school year, Carrie supported an inquiry into our stipend contracts positions. Carrie stated that her intent was to get good job descriptions, and an understanding of the hours involved and ensure the stipends were paid fairly for the experience and hours required. Carrie also added that she did not for this inquiry to be taken negatively, plus the administration is still working on the assessment at this time, so we still do not know if the stipends are proper, if they should be increased, decreased or even eliminated. Originally Mrs. Ottman tendered her resignation to be effective at the end of her regular contract in June. However recent events led her to tender her resignation from specifically the IT Boots contract Contract early. Carrie stated that she is sadden and disappointed that the stress that has been bestowed upon her has risen to the level of Mrs. Ottman feeling she needs to resign effective immediately. Carrie also stated that she knows Mrs. Ottman cares very for the school and the success of all the students. With that being said, Carrie feels Mrs. Ottman does not take this resignation lightly and leaving the school in a difficult position. Carrie said she respects that Mrs. Ottman is making a decision to prevent and protect her emotional well-being and ability to continue to provide a positive impact in her remaining roles at BES.

Carrie stated that her initial response would be the ability and allowing Mrs. Ottman to resign would be fore cause. Mrs. Ottman is not sick, she is physically capable of performing the job but she has cause to request to resign. Carrie asked the board if there was any other discussion.

Cheryl stated that she did have a statement now that she would like to make. Cheryl stated that she does not believe that this is issue is because of a single person. She stated that that the board has not followed policy and she has proof of that. Cheryl continued by saying that the board is supposed to be the ones that do the evaluation for the Superintendent and we did not do that. It sates clearly in our policies. "The board will evaluate the Superintendent." Cheryl also stated that last week when there was a closed session during the regular board meeting, we did not follow policy 1400 by not noticing the closed session with a 48-hour notice. That was not appropriately called and the content of the session was completely offline in her humble opinion. Cheryl stated that she has been through the policies upside and down and since we have not followed procedure when it came about with the stipends, she said she was upset because there were no amounts listed. Cheryl said she starred digging deeper she believes the board is just not following policies. The board should have committees and those committees should be well defined. Cheryl stated the committees are not well defined, they are named. As a committee you cannot make a decision on your own, you have to bring that information back to the board and have a discussion on it. Cheryl stated that did not happen during our evaluation system. Cheryl went on to add that we (the board) are out of compliance in many pieces and she fears that the district could be sued and would lose. Cheryl stated that to blame one person for this school falling apart, who has no power whatsoever. Cheryl stated that she does not have an individual at the school who is her favorite, she has a child at the school who is her favorite but not her favorite


teacher. Cheryl added that her moral obligation is to the community. She asked are we using tax payer money in the best way, and are we doing what we can to bring in the public. When the stipend information was presented the board did not know the amounts. Cheryl stated that wasn't her, because that was not a committee she was on. Cheryl said if people are going to stand here and point fingers when she does her research on culture of a school, it never says that this comes from one school board member. Cheryl stated that her research said it comes from the administration at the school. She suggested the other board members look at Policy 1400. Cheryl also commented on the agenda and said there is a letter from School House IT that was included in the packet and in her opinion it is a letter of recommendation and should go in a personnel file and not on the agenda. This was not listed on the agenda and should be set aside for a future meeting if on the agenda. Carrie stated that she thought the letter was just a piece of information. Britton stated that was her doing. This was what SchoolHouse IT included in their email for the meeting and so she added it to the packet and apologized. Carrie said there is no action to be taken on a letter, it was just something that SchoolHouse IT wrote and complimented someone. Andrea asked did we not discuss the superintendent evaluation and how the information was compiled? Carrie said yes. Cheryl stated that they did not as a group come up with the information to put on that evaluation and that is what we should have done. Those questions were for the staff and that was not supposed to be done. Carrie stated that is not a subject that is on our current agenda, Cheryl said its policy. Carrie stated we are currently supposed to be discussing the On-site Boots IT position and resignation letter and that is what we need to focus on. Carrie also stated that we need to stay on task. Carrie asked if there were any other comments. Cheryl said do we no longer need the services of an IT Boots? Carrie stated that yes we probably do need those services. Carrie asked Mr. Richards if he had asked the internal staff if anyone was interested. Mr. Richards said that he has not done that, since he was waiting for the board's approval of Mrs. Ottman's resignation. He said that he will await direction from the board on how they want him to pursue that. There was discussion on the board meeting being set up for live streaming on Facebook and how that looks as of right now. Carrie mentioned that we have until July 1 before that becomes into law so we have some time to start to figure this all out. Carrie stated that if there is not internal interest she would assume that we will not live broadcast our meetings right now. Andrea asked if the board would offer the same dollar amount, Mr. Richards replied that again that would be a decision the board would make. Carrie stated that before she would get involved in changing pay, she would want to see a summary of the job description and the hours involved. And to stay on the course that we originally headed on with the stipend discussion, because the board doesn't have anything to make an informed decision on. There was additional discussion on the pay. Cheryl said she had another question and referred to the time that Mrs. McCauley had briefly subbed for Mrs. Ottman when Mrs. Ottman was on her way back from a track meet. Cheryl wondered if someone would be willing to sub for the board meetings and run the technical side. Carrie stated that she would like someone to take all of the IT Boots duties on, not just the board meetings. Britton stated that SchoolHouse IT has stated that they certainly would help whoever was hired as the replacement. Cheryl stated that she suggested a substitute to run the board meeting technical meeting videos due to what she had heard Mrs. Ottman say earlier. She said that should be an easy fix. She doesn't understand out of the 6 contracts Mrs. Ottman has with BES, why she chose to resign the IT Boots one. Cheryl wanted to clarify why she brought up the policy and stated that because a "mythical" board person is creating all of these challenges and as an educator this has become a conflict and has been caused because policies have not been followed. Carrie asked if there were any other comments. There were no other comments at this time. Andrea motioned to accept Mrs. Ottman's resignation letter effective today. Kyle seconded the motion. Andrea and Kyle were in favor of the motion and Cheryl was opposed. Carrie stated that the ayes carried and Mrs. Ottman's letter of resignation has been accepted.

**Contract with SchoolHouse IT (to include new contract)** – Carrie asked for clarification if we could enter into a new contract with SchoolHouse IT just until the end of the year, instead of starting another new 12-month contract. Mr. Richard stated that he spoke with James today for the remainder of the school year. The direction that he got is they are staying with the 1-year contract. Mr. Richards asked

about an on-call basis and James (SchoolHouse IT) stated that they do not do an hourly call. Mr. Richards stated that he doesn't think that he can recommend the board moving into a new contract with SchoolHouse IT, with not knowing what is going to happen with the potential shared IT employee with Jefferson High School. Britton stated that James did say we could increase our days per month at a higher rate of course. Mr. Richards stated that he will get clarification from James on what a contract would look like if we cannot find an onsite BOOTS IT person. Mr. Richards said he does not feel comfortable moving forward with a new contract until he get more clarification. Mr. Richards stated that just for clarification, the board is directing him to look for an in-house person who is interested in the IT Boots position and the remainder of what is left on the current contract will be paid towards that stipend. Carrie said yes that is correct. Carrie asked if everyone agreed or is there anyone who disagrees with the path the board is setting. Cheryl stated that she disagrees with it, and thinks how this is going to affect the teachers and the students and this is not her decision to move forward like this. Carrie stated that she understands that Cheryl did not agree with the resignation but right now we are talking about the path with finding a new person that would replace Mrs. Ottman. They have given Mr. Richards a course to follow and wasn't sure if this was something that they needed to vote on or what. Britton stated they should vote on what it is they want to happen. Carrie stated that they would like Mr. Richards to move forward on advertising this in-house and if there is no interest then re-group and see if we can have SchoolHouse IT increase their monthly visits. The group agreed to give a deadline of noon on March 1, 2024. Cheryl stated that if you are going to send out a request, and also to make sure everyone receives it. Cheryl also stated that Mr. Richards might have to brainstorm because classroom teachers are not going to be able to just walk out of their classrooms. Mr. Richard stated that he would email the staff for interest with a deadline of noon on March 1, 2024. Britton stated that she would be able to prorata pay. Cheryl asked if Mrs. Ottman would be willing to train the new person, Mr. Richards said he would speak with her and also James at SchoolHouse IT said they would also help the new person. Andrea asked what was the date for the next visit from SchoolHouse IT. Mrs. Ottman stated that would be February 21<sup>st</sup>. Andrea motioned to have Mr. Richards email and offer the remaining IT Boots position for the 23/24 school year to the staff by noon March 1, 2024. Kyle seconded, all present approved.

ADJOURNMENT

Carrie motioned to adjourn at 6:10 pm.

  
Chair, Elementary Board

  
Clerk, Elementary Board