

# BITTERROOT VALLEY EDUCATION COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT BOARD

Tuesday, April 23, 2024

9:00 a.m. – Cooperative Office/Zoom

## MINUTES - DRAFT

1. **Call to Order** – Mr. Fiske, acting Board Chair in Dr. DoBell’s absence, called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM. Board members in attendance: Mr. Fiske, Mr. Thennis, Mr. Biesiot. Board members not in attendance: Dr. DoBell, Ms. Woodard. BVEC administration in attendance: Ms. Rammell, Mr. Hughes, and Ms. Gillespie (via Zoom). Staff in attendance via Zoom: Athena DeLeon, Stevensville Elementary School BC, Liz Pepion and Robin Williams, Victor Elementary School CSCT team. Other guests: Mr. Stiegler, Victor Superintendent effective July 1, 2024. Board Clerk: Jill Reynolds.
2. **Consent Agenda** – approved by unanimous consent.
  - A. Minutes
  - B. Warrants
  - C. Financial Report
  - D. Resignations
    - a. Bobby Sonsteng, CSCT Behavioral Consultant, Stevensville Secondary
    - b. Ellie Garrett, SLP, Lone Rock and Stevensville Secondary
    - c. Nikki Pastian, CSCT Mental Health Therapist, Stevensville Secondary
  - E. New Hires - none
  - F. Next Meeting: May 28, 2024
3. **Public Comment** - None.
4. **Correspondence/Communications** – none.
5. **Board Action** – none.
6. **Information and Discussion**
  - A. Collective Bargaining – Ms. Rammell explained that we had TA-temporary agreement on the bargaining agreement for 2024-2026. A draft was sent to the Association for review and ratification. Most changes in the agreement versus the previous agreement were changes in wording, some of them recommended by Bea Kaleva because some wording was “antiquated”. The salary matrices were updated with a 4.2% base increase in year one. This was necessary to cover cost of living increases and to retain current staff, and to increase base pay to be comparable with like providers in the area. There will be no base increase in year 2, only step increases. Mr. Fiske participated in the bargaining and stated he thought it went well, he felt everyone had the chance to be heard. He also stated Districts will need to stress the 4.2% is for two years as it is likely none of our participating Districts will be able to add this much to their base.
  - B. Review Draft Budget for Special Education – Ms. Rammell reviewed the Special Education Draft Budget for 24-25 and explained that the draft is “worst case scenario” in that we do not have any 24-25 funding dollars from OPI at this time. OPI usually distributes preliminary data mid-May. The draft

budget does include the 4.2% base increase in salaries. The Cooperative will use \$100,000 of our Fund 182 reserves to cover salary increases, but there will be a larger increase in District contributions, 9.9%, versus 5% or less in prior years. If funding increases with OPI distributions in May, these numbers could change. Mr. Fiske asked Ms. Rammell if she had spoken with other Cooperatives to see if they were recommending the same type of increases. Ms. Rammell explained that we are unique in that we allocate 65% of IDEA B funds to our Districts and ask for District contributions. The other Cooperatives do not allocate IDEA B funds to their Districts. We do this to take advantage of Ravalli County program to reimburse us for some of our Retirement costs.

Mr. Biesiot would like to see a flow chart of the Special Education funding and allocation to Districts. Ms. Reynolds will complete this and distribute the file after reviewing with Ms. Rammell. Mr. Fiske added that he would like the district clerks to meet at the Cooperative with Ms. Reynolds to review how the Cooperative funding works, where dollars come from, how they are spent, what is sent back to districts, etc. Ms. Reynolds explained this is something that was planned for this Summer. It had been planned for earlier in the year, but then some of the district clerks changed or will be changing and it was decided summer might be a better time after discussing this with Ms. McLaren, Stevensville clerk.

Ms. Rammell asked for thoughts on the increase and stated this will be on the next Board meeting agenda for approval, but she understands the Board members may need to discuss this with their boards before approving the budget.

- C. Review Draft Budget for CSCT and Program Discussion – Ms. Rammell stated that feedback from all Districts regarding the CSCT services in their district was positive and they value the services. Mental Health services have been free of charge since 1998, with the exception of the one-time ask for assistance in 2020 due to COVID impact.

There was discussion on what had changed that was driving the request for funds from Districts. Mr. Hughes that it was a combination of the change in the billing structure, revenue increases were not covering salary increases, the medical emergency due to COVID was lifted this year and all Medicaid enrollees had to go through redetermination which resulted in a drop from 80-85% Medicaid eligible to 69-70% Medicaid eligible.

Ms. Rammell, Ms. Reynolds, and Mr. Hughes all explained that this was probably going to be a budget request each year unless there were significant changes in Medicaid funding, if some of the changes in services provide significant increases in Medicaid reimbursement, etc. Those are unknowns at this time, we should have more understanding of these issues by January 2025.

There was discussion on the use of reserves versus the request for District funds, should we use less reserves and request additional District funds, how the request is allocated, the impact this would have on District funds, etc. The Board agreed to go with the draft budget recommendations for this year and decide next year if any changes are needed based on the performance of the program.

D. Schedule Meeting to Ratify CBA and Budget Approval – A meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, at 2 PM in the BVEC conference room/via Zoom.

**7. Adjourn** – Mr. Fiske adjourned the meeting at 10:21 AM.