



GRANT SCHOOL DISTRICT #3

401 N. Canyon City Blvd. • Canyon City, OR 97820
Phone: (541) 575-1280 • Fax: (541) 575-3614

WORK SESSION

TUESDAY, September 7, 2021 • 7:00 P.M.
DISTRICT OFFICE

MINUTES

1.0 PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

1.1 Call to order

1.2 Pledge of allegiance

Pursuant to notification of Grant School District 3 board of directors and news release to The Blue Mountain Eagle, KJDY and posted on the district web site. Haley Walker called the school board meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Other board members in attendance were Chris Labhart, Aaron Lieuallen, Jake Taylor and Dr. Colleen Robertson. Kelly Stokes was absent. Superintendent Bret Uptmor and Business Manager Heidi Hallgarth were also present.

2.0 DISCUSS STAFF AND STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Uptmor explained to the board and leadership team his plan for the discussion around this subject. The group split into mini groups to come up with questions and action ideas that will be shared with the entire group and then strategies will be created that will be accomplished by the administration.

Split into mini groups.

Student discussion:

Robertson said that after her discussion with Attlesperger she realized that GSD #3's situation was not out of the ordinary but because we are a smaller district it is more evident.

Attlesperger said that a lot of the reasons that students left the district were things that the district couldn't control. Attlesperger said that bullying was something that could be controlled though so how do we support the students with the reasons that the district can control.

Shelton asked how the district was trying to showcase what we did offer. Shelton said that having Huerta onboard would make a difference but how can we share with the community things like the district's drama class, science club, etc.

Lieuallen asked what programs the district doesn't have but could and how can we get them started. Lieuallen asked how the district could better support someone that wants to form a club. Lieuallen asked why Grant Union had lost some elective options. Lieuallen asked if there was a better way to obtain or present the data that Uptmor gave them on transfers, resignations, retirements, etc. Uptmor said that he had started to see an influx in the irregularity so he pulled out the folders to see if there was a pattern but if there was a way to present it better please let him know.

McCumber said that if students have more of a voice and feel like they are more involved then they might be happier.

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Gerry said that he would throw out the data from years 2020-22 due to COVID because these are things that are out of our control. Gerry said that the district needed to focus on providing things for Grant School District 3 students.

Labhart said that he felt there needed to be a student on the board for this particular reason. Labhart said that Prairie has a really good school but he believes that GSD #3 holds our students to a higher standard than they do at Prairie. Labhart said that he initially thought that students were leaving because of masks but after looking at the sheets Uptmor handed out maybe he was wrong. Labhart said that he believes that if some of these students couldn't play co-op sports then they wouldn't leave.

Huerta said that is the claim right, it's easier in Prairie. Huerta said that if you have a discriminative teacher here then you can have one there, it will follow you. Huerta said that students do transfer to other schools for the programs that the other schools offer though as well.

Lieuallen asked if the district was losing electives due to not having money to pay staff members or was it due to scheduling conflicts. Uptmor explained that every year the leadership team looks at the priorities to determine what we offer to the students. Lieuallen asked if the district had made the decisions not to add more staff due to declining enrollment or because of reduction in funding. Uptmor said that in the past there was a reduction in funding so that probably did drive those decisions but there is probably the funding for that now but we need to increase our enrollment so that we can start using our grant funds to bring these electives back.

Walker suggested that the district ask the students what electives they would like to see at the school.

Huerta said that he agreed that 2020-2022 have been the weirdest 2 years ever and he thinks that this starts to bring up ideas in these kids minds. Huerta said that he had one student tell him the teachers are pushing their political views on the students. Huerta said that he doesn't believe that is true but because the student's viewpoint is different than the teachers and the students are being forced to have their eyes open from the teachers they decide that they want to leave. Taylor said that he knows for a fact that is happening but he doesn't think that this is the reason that these kids are leaving. Robertson said, let's be honest, it is happening in our schools. My kids have experienced it, teachers are human, but let's be honest it does happen in our school.

Taylor asked when it became so easy for the kids to transfer from school to school. Uptmor said that open enrollment started in 2011. Labhart asked Uptmor if he had to sign off on the inter-district transfers. Uptmor said yes, but because the board sets the transfer number every year that is the only thing that he can go off of so signing the form is basically just a formality.

Labhart said that when he worked for the district there was NO bullying and if there were then the teachers came down on it hard.

Walker said that she discussed with Uptmor the classes that the district is currently offering and how good the district's SPED program is and how the district needs to keep that going. Walker said that she thought the district needed to start a Pre-K program. Taylor asked why the district didn't have one now. Walker said that Uptmor said it was due to logistics. Taylor asked if this was something the district wanted to take on considering that there are already successful programs in town. Taylor asked if this was something the district wanted to fight for and if we had the staff and space for a Pre-K program. Uptmor said that he was part of a group that is working with BMHD to do a feasibility study on the needs of daycare/preschool in the John Day area. Uptmor said that the hospital is looking for a fulltime program here in John Day. Uptmor said that there are three different ways that the district could fund the program, Pre-school Promise, SIA fund that is separate from what the district already receives and by partnering with Head Start by putting a building on the district's property. Uptmor said that Frontier Hub sometimes has some funding as well. Taylor said that if we are struggling to get high end math teachers during a time of COVID is a pre-school worth it right now. Taylor asked if the district would even be able to find staff for the program. Lieuallen said that he thinks now is the time for the district to spend money because doing this during COVID will make the public say "look what the district did, they spent money during a down time".

Teachers:

Gerry pointed out the number of teachers that have retired, moved from the county or gotten another job in the county.

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Shelton said that education is one of the highest careers for burn out and this is not a Grant county problem this is a state problem, this is a national problem, this is a COVID problem. Shelton asked how the district was supporting our teachers that want to go above and beyond either financially or by simply acknowledging their extra work.

Gerry said that he thought the mentor teacher program was important. Gerry said that even an experienced teacher that is new to the district might need to learn how things are done in our district.

Huerta said that he sees the teachers that are helping the new incoming teachers and he thinks that is a good thing.

Lieuallen asked if there are teachers in the district that have a lot of experience but feel like they're not being heard so they're frustrated and just going through the motions. Lieuallen suggested that maybe the district needed to re-engage these teachers.

Robertson said that the district should have spotlights on our staff. Huerta said that was his next project, giving the staff a public shout out.

Labhart said that we have staff that are teaching outside of their license/education and they hate it. Labhart said that we have to remember that we need to support our senior teachers as well as our new teachers. Labhart asked if there had been any talk about our teachers going into other classrooms to see what other teachers are doing that is successful. Labhart said that teachers are your biggest money in your district and without them you don't have a district.

Lieuallen asked what the district was currently doing to recruit and how can we do it better. Gerry said that if we go to job fairs we have to be prepared to hire these individuals on that day, on-site. Gerry said that we will have to change our hiring practices in this district.

Robertson said that wages are a huge thing and we need to look at increasing our salaries for our classified staff.

Attlesperger said that she had talked to her staff and asked them what they needed from her and their answers looked eerily similar to the reasons that are in the board packet. Attlesperger said that we need to start with our support staff (give them higher wages) so they can support our teachers. The district needs to start at the bottom and work our way to the top.

Lieuallen asked if the district would even be fully staffed when all of the open positions were filled or does the district need more employees overall. Uptmor said that we are getting there but I'm still not supporting the leadership. Uptmor said that we are surviving, but surviving is not supporting them.

Labhart asked what kind of support we are going to offer the employees; they are talking about money. Attlesperger said that it is not just about the money it is about supporting the staff in many different ways.

Gerry said that GU was including the classified staff in their trainings and meetings so they are feeling like they are being included in the district.

Robertson said she would love to offer to pay for some of our past students' education and hold them to a contract for a period of time in order to get these kids back and teaching in our district.

Uptmor recapped what he needed to do for the student portion of the recruitment/retention part of the conversation.

1. Send a survey to the students (include what extra-curriculars they would like to take)
2. Look into a Pre-K program
3. Get a student body representation at board meetings
4. Look into bullying and victimization support

Uptmor recapped what he needed to do for the staff portion of the recruitment/retention part of the conversation.

1. Staff support
2. Look into a student program like Oregon Teacher Pathways (grow your own)
3. Mentorship and onboarding new teachers and checking in with new teachers
4. Attend job fairs

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5. Celebrate staff
6. Ensure that Budgeting/board priorities align with what the district is doing

Actions:

Lieuallen said that he would like to see the district create a committee made up of students, staff and board members to continue with this process. Lieuallen said he would volunteer to be on the committee.

Robertson said that she thought the Pre-K program seemed like a valuable thing to pursue. Robertson said that she would love to see the OTP (Oregon Teacher Pathways) program embraced so we can make sure that we are talking to kids that might want to come back. Shelton said that there was absolutely no interest in the OTP program this year.

Uptmor said that once the minutes are typed up he can meet with Haley and see what items they think should be presented to the staff. Uptmor said that once the list is comprised the leadership team will get together to figure out how to present it to the staff. Uptmor said that the Pre-K program is on his plate so he will get to work on that. Attlesperger said that she fully supports a Pre-K program but if we can't staff our K-6 school how are we going to staff a Pre-K – 6 school.

3.0 DISCUSS CO-OP PROTOCOLS

Ryan handed out a letter from the coaches which is on file at the district office.

The group broke into small groups to discuss the co-op.

Labhart said that he appreciated the letter from the coaches and that the word support jumped out at him immediately.

Walker asked the board, based on the statement from the coaches, if they saw anything that needed to be changed on the current co-op protocol. Walker reminded the board/leadership team that this co-op protocol was not only about Prairie it was about the other schools in the county as well. Walker said that if the school has enough students to field a team she didn't feel that we should co-op with them. Walker asked if Prairie could co-op with another school in the county.

Taylor said that he knew specific people that want to play here but they will never come to school here because they are Prairie City people. Taylor said that he was going to acknowledge the names that are not on this letter and would acknowledge the ones that are, but he was still going to acknowledge the ones that aren't. Taylor said that we have the best facility in the state and he thinks that some of this discussion and coaches letter is for personal reasons. Taylor said that he feels it would be a shame to stop these co-ops for that reason. Taylor said that we are struggling to fill JV programs and he thinks that could potentially be a problem for our programs if we do away with the co-ops. Taylor said that he thinks that it would be a shame to not let these kids' co-op and play in our programs.

Huerta said that when Art Thunnel coached here you had to go to school at GU in order to play baseball for GU. Taylor said that was because of the hardship and we don't have that restriction now.

Taylor asked why we were going to eliminate opportunities for the students. Taylor said that he needed a better reason to stop this co-op.

McCumber said that we just talked for 2 hours about retaining our students and finding things that are keeping them here, the baseball field is our shining star and so if you want to play on our team then you need to attend school at GSD #3.

Taylor said that we are strong arming people.

Lieuallen asked what had changed to make the co-op protocol feel that, as it is written, it is no longer in the best interest of the students. Walker said that the discussion about the co-op protocol is taking place because there are new board members on the board. Gerry explained why the co-op protocol was created. Gerry said that he has a problem with people thinking that the school is not good enough for them yet our programs are good enough for them to come back and participate in.

Taylor said that we can't give the kids a reason to leave. Taylor said that the district needed to look at the root causes and that we can't feel like we're better than them because we're a bigger district. Taylor said that we have to give them a bigger

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reason to stay; we can't hang it over their head. Taylor said that this has been going on for 3 years and softball and baseball are not the reasons they're leaving. Taylor said that we have to stop hemorrhaging students.

Attlesperger said that colleges recruit for sports all the time and so she didn't think that it was out of the question to recruit athletes/students back to our school. Attlesperger said that she didn't know that the district did a good job of engaging kids that want to play sports.

Shelton said that she didn't think that the district should co-op. Shelton said that when she was in school she was an average athlete and she would have been sad if she had lost her spot to an athlete from another school. Shelton said that she believes that we are morally and ethically responsible to provide opportunities to GSD #3 students. Shelton said that several students left this year knowing that they could come back and play sports due to the co-op because there are no consequences for them leaving.

Walker told the board that at the next board meeting they needed to decide whether they were going to work on the protocol, keep the current protocol in place or even abolish the co-op.

Taylor asked Gerry if he wanted to keep the co-op protocol in place. Gerry said that he didn't think that co-ops are beneficial to our district anymore. Shelton and McCumber said that they both agreed with Gerry.

Attlesperger said that she thought that we should keep the protocol in place for future use. Attlesperger said that we may not have any co-ops for years, but we will still have the protocol in place.

Uptmor said that if the district abolishes the protocol then other districts can still request a co-op and the athletic director will still bring the request to the board so they can either approve or deny it.

Gerry asked if he still had to bring co-op requests to the board if the board decided to abolish co-ops. Labhart said that if Gerry didn't bring the co-ops to the board then he was the one making the decisions not the board and he had a problem with that. Uptmor told Gerry that he would still have to bring the co-op requests to the school board and they would make the decision.

Labhart said that he would like to see the administration team bring the co-op request to the next meeting.

4.0 ADJOURN

Walker adjourned the meeting at 9:58 pm

Haley Walker
Chairman's Signature

October 20, 2021

Bret Uptmor
Clerk's Signature

October 20, 2021