

BOARD OF TRUSTEES WORKING SESSION  
Monday, December 12, 2022 - 6:00 p.m.  
Deary School Cafeteria  
MINUTES

1. Call to Order: Chair, Beverly Clark, called the meeting to order at 6: 00 p.m.
  
2. Attendance: Shawna Winter, Brittany Griffin, Beverly Clark, Mandy Kirk, Marc Manni, Kendrick Jared, Stephanie Fletcher, Ryan Minden, Marci Wood, Jen Heath, Kristy Johnson, Tessa Olson, Tim Olson, Mike Majors, Lanna Proctor, Kendra Keen, Julia Proctor, Jamie Johnston, Kelsey Sutton, Kelly Vincent, Patrons: Rich and Lesley Yanak, Heather Stettler, Jennifer Beltran
  
3. Welcome – Chair Beverly Clark stated purpose of meeting: “We are here because we now know that we have an opening for the superintendent and high school principal position for next year. The point of this meeting is to get pros and cons on the current configuration as well as hearing any other ideas, including pros and cons, people may have for a different configuration. If there should be changes, we welcome hearing ideas on what you envision could work and why. We are not determining who might fill these jobs at this time, we are just looking at the structure for next year. Please keep that in mind during any comments and ensure that all personnel are kept out of the discussion.”

WEA Input: Teachers Kendra Keen, and Julia Proctor provided input  
Julia Proctor’s statement is attached.

Kendra Keen’s input included that when a combo position is vacated, it leaves a big hole to fill and at least a year to get up and going again. She provided examples of this. She also added that with a combo role, the chain of command line is too blurry for staff and students.

Shawna Winter asked Kendra Keen if she noticed a difference when the combination was Sup/Secondary Principal or Sup/Elementary Principal. Kendra said not really, there were still no checks and balances. The Sup/Elementary configuration took more time out of both buildings due to the traveling involved. The need to have a lead teacher to handle issues when the principal was away, caused teachers to be pulled from the primary duties of teaching and felt that was not good. Kendra offered that the search committee needed to have diversified opinions.

Mr. Monk made a statement – he felt the current configuration worked well for our school. He encouraged the board to move quickly to post the position to tap into the top candidates of the applicant pool. Shawna asked what he thought about a good search process. He said he thought what we did last time worked well.

Ryan Minden's statement included his thought that tying the superintendent to the principal position shortened the position life span of the principal. It is difficult to build relationships when the position has a new person every few years.

Jen Heath asked how much the district spent on training and certifying a new person every few years. She also offered the option of a combined Superintendent/Bovill Elementary Principal, and a 4-12 Principal.

Other Input: Richard Yanak spoke on behalf of all the patrons present. His statement included the following; he encouraged the board to include all stake holders present, that is would be important to hire someone with values that align with the community, and to have different board members than last time.

Financial Presentation: Kendrick Jared presented his perspective on the financial history of the district and encourage a 2.0 configuration – see attached.

#### Board Discussion

Beverly Clark made the statement that she spoke with another Superintendent that said it is common for the Superintendent position to see change every 2 – 3 years. She also said she felt the need to support the teachers.

Mandy Kirk said she felt “burn out” was not the issue for the past changes.

Brittany Griffin said she likes the idea of having two people to allow for the degree of separation. She said defining roles is important. She felt that a .5 Superintendent would be hard to evaluate if they were not present in the district most of the time.

Configuration – the board further discussed the configuration and the pros and cons of each scenario

Hiring Committee – each board member stated who they thought needed to be included on the Search Committee.

At 6:59 the board concluded the workshop to start the Regular Board Meeting.



Beverly Clark, Chair



Stephanie Fletcher, Clerk

To The Board of Trustees of the Whitepine School District,

I am speaking to you today regarding the superintendent/secondary principal position that you will be hiring for the 2023-2024 school year. To clarify, the purpose of this letter is not to attack our current administration or the people that have held this position in the past, but a compilation of concerns and views from multiple members of our teaching staff, including myself, regarding the configuration of the superintendent/secondary principal position. This letter does not contain all of the concerns or views regarding this configuration, but a general overview of those. I would recommend to you that if you would like more detailed information and feedback from the teaching staff before you make your decision, that you take time to speak to them individually. As many members of our teaching staff are also members of the union, this was one of the reasons the teachers had asked for a meeting to take place discussing those concerns that would have allowed for a more detailed discussion. Unfortunately, that did not take place before today's meeting. Since the teachers are directly impacted by a change in leadership, and are also the ones that have been through these changes consistently every couple of years, their input is extremely important when making these decisions.

As an employee of the school district for the last eight years, I have been a witness to how hard it is on everyone when there is a change in leadership. Since the implementation of a principal/superintendent configuration has been used while I have been here, there has been a change in leadership four times. Each time that the leadership has changed, there are many negative consequences that follow. It takes a lot of time to build a relationship with new administrators that help staff, teachers, students, and parents to feel supported and confident that the new administration shares in the collective vision that all stakeholders have for the school and the direction we are wanting to go. Trust, consistency, solid communication, and effective collaboration are the building blocks of any strong relationship. However, those can take a long time to form and when there are changes in leadership every couple of years, it is extremely difficult to ever get to that point. In addition to the relationship with staff and teachers, we also need to consider the relationships with the students. Forming relationships with our students is our core belief and essential to the culture of our school. The principal sets the tone and culture of our school. When you have a superintendent/principal the ability to do that is limited due to lack of time to build those relationships.

As the decision-makers regarding what position and configuration to hire for, it is imperative that you gather all information regarding this position and whether or not hiring for another superintendent/principal configuration is in the district's best interest. As history has shown, we have not been able to hold someone in this position for more than a couple of years. Our goal has been to hire someone that is wanting to stay and

be a part of the district and community long-term, but we are falling short of that goal. We need to figure out why. When one person holds the position of both the superintendent and principal, there are a lot of responsibilities and stress that gets placed on one person. This, as we all know, is a big contributor to "burn out", which then produces negative effects throughout the district.

These negative effects can be felt by everyone. One of those negative effects is the delegation of duties and/or responsibilities that would normally be completed by just a principal or superintendent, but when those positions are combined, one person is then tasked with all. When that position is held by one person, and that one person gets overwhelmed with the tasks that come with that position, then historically we have seen some of those duties and responsibilities get placed on others throughout the district. The result of this process is that the people that these duties and responsibilities have been passed to are now overwhelmed and their other "jobs" suffer and we start to see gaps/problems start to form as a result.

This district and administration has been through a lot the last few years. Having been through a lot of those tough situations alongside the current administration, I can honestly look back at some of those situations and say that they could have had better outcomes, and been less stressful and frustrating for everyone, if there had been a different configuration. Some of those tough situations have come from the special education department. Looking at them in hindsight, it could have helped having a separate superintendent from the principal position. This would have allowed us to reach out to get a different perspective, received advice and feedback, general feelings of support, and the ability to direct parents to the superintendent when they felt like there was an issue/concern that we were not able to resolve. This would have been helpful for not only us as the administrators in those situations, but also for the parents to feel like they had another avenue when there was unresolved conflict.

When there is a combination of the superintendent/principal, if the parents have an issue/concern that they could not resolve with that person, their only option is to go to the Board of Trustees, which is a complicated and confusing process for parents to navigate. Under previous administrations within the same configuration, there have been issues with the chain of command. If a teacher had concerns or issues with their principal, while that principal was also their superintendent, the teacher would then have to go to the school board. Overall, this set up leads to more resentment and frustration from the parents and staff members alike. These are valid and real concerns that need to be talked about and discussed when looking at the best configuration for our schools. We need to look at our needs, our vision, our goals for our district and make decisions based on those and not just what other school districts are doing around us. We are not them, and they are not us.

The bottom line is that this configuration has been shown to not work for students, parents, teachers, other administrators, and the people who have held that

position. It would not be fair to anyone in this situation to continue on the path that we have been on, because it will only lead us in a circle where we end up back where we are at now. The students, parents, staff, teachers, and community members all deserve an opportunity to form positive relationships with our administration, to build that solid foundation that is needed to provide the highest quality education for our students, confidence that we are doing what is best for all, and to build that trust with our leaders. We owe it to our kids and community to take the time to gather the necessary information and input from a variety of stakeholders and then consider that information when making decisions regarding the best configuration for the positions of superintendent and principal for our district.

*Lessa Olson*

*Lessa Olson*

*Lessa Olson*

*Lessa Olson*

*Lessa Olson*

*Lessa Olson*

*Lessa Olson*

*Lessa Olson*

*Lessa Olson*

*Lessa Olson*

*Lessa Olson*