

MINUTES OF A **REGULAR MEETING** OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, THORNTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 205, COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS, HELD ON **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2016** IN THE AUDITORIUM AT THORNTON HIGH SCHOOL, 15001 BROADWAY AVENUE, HARVEY, ILLINOIS, BEGINNING AT 6:30 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. President Lawrence made the following announcement: Any person may record or broadcast an open Board meeting. Special requests to facilitate recording or broadcasting an open board meeting such as seating, writing surfaces, lighting and access to electrical power shall be directed to the Superintendent at least 24 hours before the meeting. Recording meetings shall not distract or disturb Board members, other meeting participants, or members of the public. The Board President may designate a location for recording equipment. Please know if you participate in public participation, you are part of the Board meeting and you may be taped.

ANNOUNCEMENT
BY BOARD
PRESIDENT

On roll call, Members Banks, Butler, Graham, Lawrence and Whittington answered. Members Gibbs and Williams were absent. Dr. Leotis D. Swopes, Interim Superintendent; Dr. Jerry Doss, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Toriano Horton, Director of Business Operations; Mr. Brett Fickes, Director of Curriculum; Mr. Thomas Porter, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Mr. John Arrington, Director of College and Career Partnerships; Mrs. Maria Brunson, Director of Information Technology; Mr. Tony Ratliff, Thornton Principal; Mr. James Walton, Thornridge Principal; Mr. Dennis Willis, Thornwood Principal and Mr. James Petrunaro, legal counsel, were also present.

ROLL
CALL

Report from Curriculum Committee: Ms. Graham reported that the next Curriculum meeting will be held on January 28, 2016 and will be posted. The agenda will include: mid-year reports from IB and AVID; ACT exam information; credit retrieval program update, family reading night and PLATO online course program.

COMMITTEE OF
THE WHOLE

Report from Finance Committee: Mr. Butler reported a Finance Committee meeting was held on January 5, 2016. Discussed were the snow removal bid; architectural projects updates and the transition of projects between the past architects and the new architects; a transportation report regarding the homeless, ECHO non-payment of rents at Thornwood and an inquiry how \$52 million was spent.

Report from Policy Committee: No report.

Report from Discipline Committee: No report.

Report from Facilities Committee: Mr. Banks reported that the Facilities Committee meeting was combined with the Finance Committee meeting relative to monitoring payments made to the previous architects and outstanding projects which will be completed by the new architectural firm.

Ms. Graham moved, Mrs. Whittington seconded, to **Approve the Consent Agenda**, which includes the following:

CONSENT AGENDA

- Minutes of the Regular Meeting and Executive Session of November 12, 2015.
- The District 205 bills as presented for payment dated December 11, December 18, December 21, 2015 and January 8, 2016.
- Personnel dated January 13, 2016 (Resignations, Leave of Absence and Employment) including:
Certified employment:
Anne Bailey, Thornwood Special Ed Teacher
Non-certified employment:
Le'on Willis, Thornwood Civil Air Patrol Retention and Recruiter Office
Resignations:
James Catlett, Resignation effective January 4, 2016
Ben Duggan, Resignation effective January 26, 2016

MINUTES

BILLS

PERSONNEL

On roll call, Members Banks, Butler, Graham, Lawrence and Whittington voted aye; nay, none; motion passed.

At 6:38 p.m., Ms. Kierra Williams joined the meeting.

MS. WILLIAMS
JOINED MEETING

The following individuals spoke during Public Participation:

PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION

- Diane Clifton (South Holland) stated her son does not feel safe at Thornwood and is afraid to go to school. She believes the situation is not being handled fairly. Mr. Fickes met with the parent outside the meeting.

Mr. Doss reported that since the last scheduled Board meeting, there have been no Freedom of Information Act requests with none pending.

FOIA

Mr. Arrington presented the following information:

COMMUNICATIONS

- The Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration will be held at South Suburban College on January 18, 2016 beginning at 10:00 a.m.
- Congratulations to Monica Dawson, Thornridge coach, who was inducted into the Illinois Track and Cross Country Hall of Fame for her many accomplishments.
- Thornridge currently has over \$1.3 million in scholarships for students.
- Thornridge Boys Bowling team took 1st place in the Bolingbrook JV Invite.
- Thornridge Band and members of the SAVE team were selected as finalists in the Verizon Teens Against Teen Dating Violence. In October, they performed a video skit surrounding issues of teen dating violence. This national campaign is sponsored by Verizon Wireless.
- Thornton's New Generation of Men will present Step Show 2016 on January 30, 2016 at Thornton High School.
- Thornton basketball team won against Marian Catholic in the Big Dipper Tournament. The Wildcat sophomores won 1st place at the Joliet Central Basketball Tournament.
- Thornton students placed 3rd in the Mock Congressional Hearings State Finals at the Dirksen Building in Chicago on December 11.
- Thornwood Special Olympics basketball team won the gold medal and will advance to the State Championships in March at Illinois State University.

Mr. Butler moved, Mrs. Whittington seconded to **Approve the Overnight Field Trip** as presented by Mr. Porter for 6 special needs students and 4 coaches to travel to Galena, Illinois from February 1 through February 4, 2016 to participate in the Special Olympic Snowshoe Competition. On roll call, Members Banks, Butler, Graham, Lawrence, Whittington and Williams voted aye; nay, none; motion passed.

APPROVAL OF
OVERNIGHT FIELD
TRIP

Dr. Swopes introduced the new Director of Business Operations, Mr. Toriano Horton, and the Manager of Operations, Mr. William Garrett, to the Board and audience.

SUPERINTENDENT
ANNOUNCEMENT

Mrs. Whittington moved, Mr. Butler seconded to **Approve the K-8 Academic Pathway Toward an Engineering Degree and STEM Education** as presented by Dr. Swopes. This is a commitment to work along with Northern Illinois University in conjunction with south suburban school districts to direct students in the area of engineering, primarily the districts that are members of the Superintendents' Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity. On roll call, Members Banks, Butler, Graham, Lawrence, Whittington and Williams voted aye; nay, none; motion passed.

APPROVAL OF K-8
ACADEMIC
PATHWAY TOWARD
AN ENGINEERING
DEGREE AND STEM
EDUCATION

Ms. Williams moved, Mr. Banks seconded to **Approve the Resolution Designating Director of Business Signatory** as presented by Mr. Horton as the new Director of Business Operations/Chief School Business Official. On roll call, Members Banks, Butler, Graham, Lawrence, Whittington and Williams voted aye; nay, none; motion passed.

DESIGNATE
BUSINESS
OFFICE
SIGNATORY

Ms. Graham moved, Ms. Williams seconded, to **Approve the Appointment of the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) Agent.** Mr. Horton will become the IMRF Agent representing District 205. On roll call, Members Banks, Butler, Graham, Lawrence, Whittington and Williams voted aye; nay, none; motion passed.

APPROVAL OF
APPOINTMENT OF
IMRF AGENT

**SUPERINTENDENT
SEARCH UPDATE**

Dr. Lela Bridges-Webb, Consultant with HYA & Associates, provided information obtained from the two days the firm was at District 205 to conduct Superintendent Search focus group meetings. The firm spoke to 102 people and 159 individuals participated in the survey, but they were not able to speak with students. A breakdown of the survey results indicated some strengths of the district are the rich history in academics, athletics and performing arts. There is a strong alumni who give back to the district. Some of the programs the district offers to meet the needs of students are AVID, IB, Navistar, Pharmacy, Civil Air Patrol and the partnership with South Suburban College.

Many responses highlighted the challenges facing the district as the Board of Education turmoil, the constant changing of the Superintendent (7 in 4 ½ years), the financial issues and student academic achievement. Other responses included: the unrest of the Board caused a lot of inconsistency viewed as critical including infighting, nepotism, patronage; the lack of trust, transparency and consistency; goals and objectives are non-existent; teachers and support staff have tried to provide education and support each other in spite of the Board/Superintendent level issues; the revolving door of Superintendents has led to inconsistency in all levels: communication to and from the Board, Superintendent, Central Office, Business Office, buildings, principals and teachers. There is a disconnect and communication is a valid concern. Changes occur on a daily basis. Principals say they are often last to know what is happen. Staff members go directly to central office for approval of things principals are not made aware of.

The financial status of the district is a major concern. Access to adequate funding is almost non-existent. We have lost nearly 1500 students in 4 ½ years but not a significant loss of staff in proportion to the number of students. The opinion is students have not moved away, but have opted out of the district. Test scores are declining. Teachers say Curriculum is not aligned to common core. There are no prerequisites going from one class to another. The Superintendent's challenge will be to restore morale and trust among the schools and the community.

Strengths: Programs: advanced placement, AVID, performing arts, relationship with South Suburban College and a supportive alumni.

Concerns: Academic achievement; Board of Education turmoil; fiscal health; nepotism patronage; perception of school by stakeholders; accountability; technology program; and turnover of the Superintendent. Some employees don't feel good about working here.

The highest chosen candidates will need to: 1) foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff and administrators; 2) listen to and effectively represent the interests of students staff and community members; 3) recruit and employee valuable and effective personnel, and 4) have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change.

Mr. Swanstrom, HYA consultant, stated the desired characteristics for the new Superintendent are a person who:

- engages community in meaningful ways to support its schools;
- establishes a highly -focused and collaborative leadership team;
- fosters a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect;
- is a physical and active member of community;
- keeps all stakeholders informed on a regular basis regarding critical issues;
- effectively represent the interests of students, staff, parents and community;
- possess strong public relations skills to connect the positive story of the district;
- provides meaningful guidance;
- is inspirational, motivational and caring, and
- works effectively with the Board to project a positive public image.

The candidate should demonstrate competency of a financial manager and strategies for long-term financial health of the district; understands collective bargaining; believes in shared decisions and possesses unquestionable integrity and ethics.

Dr. Swopes stated he had hoped for better attendance at the Strategic Planning meetings held in December. Seventy individuals attended. Over 300 suggestions were shared by the participants and people responded to the online survey. The second round meetings will begin shortly. Afterwards, the building steering committees will make recommendations which will be presented to the Board as this process is completed prior to the beginning of the next school year.

SUPERINTENDENT
REPORT

There is a desire for a master's degree in leadership cohort group housed at Thornton High School, which would consist of district teachers interested in advancing their career through getting their masters in education administration. We are working with Governors State University to begin the course in Fall 2016. There is no cost to take the course. The Board agreed to move forward with this endeavor.

At 7:18 p.m., Ms. Williams moved, Mr. Butler seconded to go into **Executive Session** pursuant to Section 2C of the Illinois Open Meetings Act to consider:

EXECUTIVE
SESSION

- Student discipline, the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity;
- Collective negotiating matters, and
- Litigation, when an action against the District, affecting or on behalf of the particular public body has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal or when the public body finds that an action is probable or imminent.

On roll call, Members Banks, Butler, Graham, Lawrence, Whittington and Williams voted aye; nay, none; motion passed.

At 10:22 p.m., **Regular Session Reconvened.** On roll call, Members Banks, Butler, Graham, Lawrence and Whittington answered.

RECONVENE
REGULAR SESSION

Mr. Butler moved, Ms. Graham seconded to **Expel Student Case No. 2-1516-12ddE** from December 18, 2015 through June 2017, with the provision the student be allowed take final exams after school hours, under the supervision of an administrator. On roll call, Members Banks, Butler, Graham, Lawrence and Whittington voted aye; nay, none; motion passed.

STUDENT
DISCIPLINE CASE
NO. 2-1516-12ddE

Mr. Butler moved, Mr. Banks seconded to **Approve the Settlement with Athletic Director Applicant, James Dye**, in the amount of Seventy-seven Thousand Five Hundred (\$77,500.00) Dollars. On roll call, Members Banks, Butler, Graham, Lawrence and Whittington voted aye; nay, none; motion passed.

APPROVAL OF
SETTLEMENT WITH
ATHLETIC
DIRECTOR
APPLICANT JAMES
DYE

At 10:25 p.m., Mr. Banks moved, Mr. Butler seconded, to **Adjourn the Meeting.** On roll call, Members Banks, Butler, Graham, Lawrence and Whittington voted aye; nay, none; motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT

President

Secretary