

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Board of Education Meeting Minutes

February 3, 2003 - 7:30 p.m.

Regular Meeting - 148 N. Binkley, Soldotna, Alaska

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Joe Arness, President
 Mrs. Sammy Crawford, Vice President
 Ms. Deborah Germano, Clerk
 Mrs. Margaret Gilman, Treasurer
 Mrs. Debra Mullins, Member
 Dr. Nels Anderson, Member
 Mr. Al Poindexter, Member
 Mr. Cameron Poindexter, Student Representative

STAFF PRESENT:

Dr. Donna Peterson, Superintendent of Schools
 Mrs. Melody Douglas, Chief Financial Officer
 Dr. Gary Whiteley, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction
 Mr. Todd Syverson, Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mr. Guy Hayes	Mrs. Penny Vadla
Mr. Dan Gensel	Ms. Terri Woodward
Dr. Roy Anderson	Mr. Tim Peterson
Mr. Bob Ermold	Mr. Henry Anderson
Mrs. Christine Ermold	Mr. Rick Matiya
Mr. Jim White	Mr. Mike Gustkey
Mrs. Sandra Ghormley	Mr. Mike Wetherbee
Mr. Sean Dusek	Mr. Lee Young
Mr. Doug Blossom	

Others present not identified.

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Arness called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mr. Arness invited those present to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

Dr. Nels Anderson	Present
Ms. Deborah Germano	Present
Mrs. Sammy Crawford	Present
Mr. Joe Arness	Present
Mrs. Debra Mullins	Present
Mrs. Margaret Gilman	Present
Mr. Al Poindexter	Present
Mr. Cameron Poindexter	Present

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

(Tape 1, 133)

The agenda was approved as written.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

(Tape 1, 145)

The School Board Minutes of January 6, 2003, were approved as printed.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS:

(Tape 1, 156)

The Board presented Golden Apple awards to Mr. Dan Gensel, KSRM Radio, for his school sports reporting and to Mr. Guy Hayes, community member, for his volunteer service to the students and communities of the District.

SCHOOL REPORT:

(Tape 1, 410)

Mr. Lee Young, Soldotna Middle School principal, presented the school report with the assistance of Mr. John Harro, teacher, and Miss Jamie Edwards, Mr. Jared Struthers and Mr. Robert Engebretsen, students.

RECESS:

At 7:59 p.m. Mr. Arness called a recess.

RECONVENE AFTER RECESS:

At: 8:01 p.m. the Board reconvened in regular session.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:

(Tape 1, 1643)

Mr. Danikt Kuzmin, Nikolaevsk Elementary/High student, gave a history of Nikolaevsk village, and spoke against the Long Range Plan for Consolidation and in favor of small schools.

Ms. Martha Mary, spoke against the Long Range Plan for Consolidation and asked the Borough to encourage commercial growth and solicit homeschool students.

Mr. Palmer Bailey, Nikolaevsk parent, spoke in support of the Nikolaevsk Elementary/High School and expressed concern for the Long Range Plan for Consolidation.

Ms. Joy McMahill, former Nikolaevsk teacher, expressed concern for the Long Range Plan for Consolidation and noted that many Nikolaevsk students will not participate in busing to Homer High.

Mr. Blake Sawyer, Nikolaevsk Elementary/High student, stated that he is receiving a better education in a small school setting than at previous larger schools outside of Alaska and expressed concerns for the proposed reductions.

Ms. Elaine Hall, Ninilchik Elementary/High School parent, asked the Board to be fair and equitable to all students of the District and expressed support for small schools.

Mrs. Penny Vadla, Ninilchik Elementary/High teacher and parent, spoke in support of small schools and listed the successes of students who have attended the school. She asked the Board to consider weighted grades.

At 8:11 p.m. Mr. Poindexter left the meeting.

Mrs. Milli Link, Kenai Central High parent, urged those present to write letters to state legislators regarding additional funding for education. She spoke against the proposed course reductions at the school.

At 8:15 p.m. Mr. Poindexter returned to the meeting.

Miss Nikki Melkomukov, Nikolaevsk Elementary/High student, spoke against proposed reductions at the school.

Mrs. Connie Ferguson spoke against the increase in pupil-teacher ratio and suggested that money could be saved in other areas.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:

(continued)

Mr. John McCombs, Ninilchik parent, spoke against proposed reductions to the Ninilchik Elementary/High and in support for small schools.

Miss Sara Bailey, Nikolaevsk Elementary/High student, expressed concern for changes to the school resulting from the Long Range Consolidation Plan and asked the Board to consider the comments made by students.

Mr. Justin Dahlen, Skyview High student, expressed concern for lost opportunities as a result of the Long Range Plan for Consolidation.

Mr. Darrell Kincaid, Skyview High parent, spoke against the Long Range Plan for Consolidation as it relates to the reconfiguration of Skyview High School and Soldotna High.

Father Nikolai Yakunin, priest for the Nikolaevsk Church of St. Nicholas, acknowledged that he is not familiar with the Long Range Plan for Consolidation or the No Child Left Behind legislation but is concerned for the residents of his village and asked the Board not to close the school.

Mr. Petrov Tipikin, Nikolaevsk Elementary/High student, spoke against the proposed reductions at the school.

Mr. Greg Fisher, Soldotna High special education teacher, stated that consolidating schools or increasing pupil teacher ratios is not the answer and asked the education community to "pitch in" to find a solution.

Mr. Simeon Kuzmin, Nikolaevsk Elementary/High student, spoke against the Long Range Plan for Consolidation and in support for small schools.

Mr. John Kleinleder, Nikolaevsk Elementary/High student, stated that if the Long Range Plan for Consolidation is enacted, it will be devastating to the school and many students will leave or drop out. He wished the Board a "Happy Board Appreciation Month."

COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS:

(Tape 1, 5076)

Dr. Peterson reported that there are several items in the information packet relating to the Long Range Plan for Consolidation. She reported that she received a positive letter from Soldotna Police Chief Gifford regarding recent school critical incident training and the preparedness of District schools.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE, SITE COUNCIL, AND/OR P.T.A., K.P.A. A., K.P.E.A., K.P.E.S.A.:

(Tape 1, 5149)

Mrs. Sandra Ghormley, Soldotna High PTSA president and Site Based Council representative, and Mr. Doug Blossom, Skyview High Site Based Council representative, presented six key points and recommendations in response to the Preliminary Long Range Plan for Consolidation as it relates to the reconfiguration of Soldotna High and Skyview High.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

(Tape 1, 6203)

Dr. Peterson announced that testimony will be taken Tuesday, February 4, at 11:00 a.m., at the Kenai and Homer Legislative Information Offices regarding HB19 (forward funding for education) and HB26 (increased funding of education and the foundation formula). She stated that the information will be posted on the District website. She clarified that the School District cannot take a position on a specific bill. She reported that the Board and administration spoke to Kenai Peninsula Borough legislators at a worksession prior to the meeting. She announced that a joint worksession with the Borough Assembly will be held on Tuesday, February 18 regarding the District budget. Dr. Peterson clarified that Learning Opportunity Grant money was used to fund the Soldotna Middle School-Within-A-School Program and Title V grant money was used to fund the Read 180 Program. She noted that the visit from the Arctic Winter Games Committee was a valuable experience. Dr. Peterson thanked those who were involved in the Peninsula Reading Carnival (cosponsored by Phi Delta Kappa, Kenai Peninsula Reading Council, Community Schools and the Peninsula Clarion) which attracted over 1,000 children and parents. Dr. Peterson presented a report of the progress to date on Board goals and information of interest regarding superintendent activities. She asked the Board if they wished to cancel the June annual Board planning retreat.

Financial Report:

(Tape 1, 6622)

Mrs. Douglas presented the financial report of the District for the period ending December 31, 2002.

BUDGET TRANSFER REPORT:

(Tape 1, 6658)

Mrs. Douglas reported on quarterly budget transfers Numbers 57 through 146 for various schools and departments within the District.

BOARD REPORTS:

(Tape 1, 6719)

Mrs. Gilman reported that she was invited to be a guest reader at the Peninsula Reading Carnival and commended District staff and community volunteers for their efforts in making it a success.

CONSENT AGENDA:

(Tape 1, 6827)

Items presented on the Consent Agenda were Approval of New Teacher Assignments; Long-Term Substitute Teacher Contract; Charter School Appropriation; and Administrative Recommendation Regarding Resignation

New Teacher Assignments:

Mr. Syverson recommended the Board approve teacher assignments for the 2002-2003 school year for Thomas M. Flinders, math teacher (temporary), Homer Middle; and Colby D. Neagley, Title I reading teacher (temporary), Nanwalek Elementary/High.

Long-Term Substitute Teacher Contract:

Mr. Syverson recommended the Board approve a substitute teaching contract for Kristine Barnes, kindergarten, K-Beach Elementary.

Charter School Appropriation:

Mrs. Douglas recommended the Board approve the allocation of \$107,533 of fund balance reserved for charter schools to the respective special revenue fund accounts.

Administrative Recommendation Regarding Resignation:

Mr. Syverson recommended the Board deny the resignation of Jodie Rommel, special education/resource, West Homer Elementary.

MOTION

Ms. Germano moved the Board approve Consent Agenda Items Numbers 1 through 4. Mrs. Crawford seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS/
COMMENTS:**

(Tape 1, 6937)

Mr. Henry Anderson, North Star Elementary teacher, related stories from nontenure teachers who have been told they will not be employed next school year and urged the Board to visit the schools and talk to them.

Mrs. Jennie Hammond., Sears Elementary parent, expressed concern for the increased pupil-teacher ratio and the special education program.

Ms. Terri Woodward, Skyview High head custodian, asked the Board to consider the health and safety issues caused by reductions in support staff.

Mr. David Larson, Kenai Central High teacher, asked the Board to pay attention to the wishes of their constituents and act accordingly.

Mr. Dave Carey, Soldotna City Mayor and Skyview High School teacher, expressed appreciation for the District's cooperation in the bid for the Arctic Winter Games. He suggested that the Kenai Peninsula education community demand that the legislature change the budget cap formula which does not allow a vote of the local residents to decide how much they wish to spend on education. He suggested that a discussion be held regarding the prevention of other school districts to educate students on the Kenai Peninsula. He asked the Board not the change the boundaries of Kenai Middle School to include K-Beach Elementary, a school within the Soldotna City limits.

Miss Nicole Osmar, Ninilchik Elementary/High student, expressed concern for the proposed teacher reductions.

Mrs. Denice Chappell, parent, asked the Board to reconsider the increase in pupil-teacher ratio.

Mr. Dave Blossom, Skyview High parent and coach, spoke against the reductions to extracurricular activities funds and suggested that the Board reduce the cost of administration and other areas of the budget.

Mr. Tim Navarre, former Borough Assembly member, reported that the results from the Area Cost Differential Study prove that the District has been under funded by approximately \$5 million over a number of years and suggested that the Board demand that the legislature provide equitable funding. He suggested that the Board ask the Borough Assembly for forward funding outside the cap. He thanked the Board for their service to the District.

BOARD COMMENTS:

(Tape 2, 488)

Mrs. Mullins thanked Mr. Young and the students for the Soldotna Middle School report and for the greeting card for each Board member. She stated that it is nice to know what is going on in schools, how students are progressing, and how building staffs are working hard to lower pupil-teacher ratios with limited resources. She assured those present that the Board takes public comment seriously. She reported that the Board discussed the budget and the Long Range Plan for

Consolidation during worksessions held two weeks ago and prior to the Board meeting. She expressed appreciation for the public comment and input and noted that all options must be discussed. She assured those present that the Board feels the pain of budget reductions and noted that the legislature needs to hear from the public.

Mr. Poindexter thanked the public for their comments and especially expressed appreciation for the student comments. He noted that students have a unique perspective and insight which have given him some helpful ideas. He stated that public testimony at the Legislative Information Office regarding HB19 and HB26 is critical. He stated that legislators need to hear the same message as was presented to the Board. He suggested the Board hold a Dine and Discuss session with Mr. Hofseth regarding the Connections Program. He stated that he was told by Mr. Hofseth that families chose the Galena Homeschool Program because they felt unwelcome in the District Connections Program. He announced that he has been invited to attend the Anchor Point Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday, February 5, to speak about School District issues. Mr. Poindexter clarified that the District administrators are under staffed and added that he does not know how they manage to get the work done. He stated that he appreciates the information provided to the Board by the administration, and noted that he is impressed at how they keep up with public visitations as well as their other assigned duties.

Dr. Anderson responded to a public comment regarding whether to fund athletics activities or academics. He stated that he would strongly consider the outsourcing of student extracurricular activities. He reported that in order to outsource school activities, the Borough would have to assume recreation powers (approved by the voters). He stated that he would like to pursue the outsourcing idea as well as transfer the responsibility for the pools and other District operations to the Borough. He stated that he is not willing to allow one year of step increases to eliminate athletics forever. He explained that the Board was forced to consider another \$2.9 million in budget reductions, which included custodians, counselors, nurses, books, supplies, all travel for extracurricular activities. He stated that the equivalent of 100 teachers will need to be cut from the budget because of the shortfall. He stated that the Board does not like making cuts from the budget and acknowledged the impact that the cuts have made on communities and individual lives. He explained that technology has been funded outside of the general fund at no cost to the District from sources (E-rate contributions, agreement with the Borough, etc.) that can only be used for technology. He explained that District student records and finance information must be migrated off the Borough's mainframe computer. He stated that the District has decided to purchase student information software (\$250,000) and begin the transition from the Borough mainframe to P.C. services.

BOARD COMMENTS:

(continued)

Dr. Anderson stated that the Board is trying to be efficient and are willing to listen to ideas from the public. He stated that the Preliminary Long Range Plan for School Consolidation was meant to be a discussion paper and noted that the Board has not had much of a chance to discuss the options. He clarified that the pupil-teacher ratio increase was not approved after an executive session and clarified that each year the Board makes adjustments to the pupil-teacher ratio. He stated that

he is not sure that the District will get any additional money from the legislature. He stated that each Board member cares about education and noted that many are former teachers.

Mr. Cameron Poindexter, student representative, stated that he held a student council meeting at Homer High that included two students from Skyview. He stated that he and the Skyview students informed the other students of the proposed budget reductions and Long Range Plan for Consolidation. He stated that even though the Consolidation Plan does not directly affect Homer High School, the student council members cared about the proposed changes mentioned in the Plan. He stated that the students decided that one way to help would be to write letters to state legislators. He stated that he hopes to travel to other high schools and inform them about the District's funding problems.

Mrs. Gilman, expressed appreciation for the many parents and students who spoke in support of education, their schools, and their community. She stated that even though the funding discussions have been unpleasant, it has brought the problem to the attention of all of the people in the Borough. She thanked Soldotna Middle School for the school presentation. She stated she was pleased to see the increase in reading test scores and to hear the student testimony. She urged those present to attend the teleconference on Tuesday, February 4 at the Legislative Information Office. She suggested that the public testimony given during the meeting as well as others given at previous Board meetings be shared with legislators. She clarified that the section of the borough population that is increasing the most is residents who are over 80 years old and added that the Board must pay attention to this shift. She reported that several years ago her daughter started school at Sears Elementary with 162 other kindergarten students and noted that this year the school enrolled 82 students in kindergarten. She reported that the Board salary is \$180.00 a month which does not adequately reflect the incredible number of hours each member spends attending meetings. Mrs. Gilman disagreed with the concept of using the Kenai Peninsula College to meet the basic academic needs of the students. She stated that it is the School District's responsibility to meet the academic needs of the students enrolled in District schools and not the responsibility of KPC. She stated that the District is required to offer math, language arts, social studies, science, as well as other courses and added that if students desire, they may take an advanced course offered at KPC. She clarified that the annual Board retreat is a six-hour intensive worksession regarding planning and goal setting for the following year. She stated that Kenai Middle School does not have the same level of programs today as compared to 1990 when she taught at the school and credited the loss of programs to years of budget reductions.

BOARD COMMENTS:
(continued)

Mrs. Gilman stated that the Central Office administration (Dr. Peterson, Mr. Syverson, Dr. Whiteley and Mrs. Douglas) work very hard for the students of the District and seem to create more than twenty-four hours in a day. She stated that the allegations that "the District administration is inflated" are untrue and need to be stopped.

Ms. Germano thanked Soldotna Middle School staff and students for the school report and added that she especially enjoyed the student testimony. She explained that staffing formulas are approved every year and that

public notice is provided in the Peninsula Clarion and District website. She thanked those who spoke against the increase in the pupil-teacher ratio. She stated that this is the fifth year of declining enrollment which has necessitated the reduction in teaching staff and noted that the state law protects tenure teachers from being nonretained. She stated that she is unhappy that nontenure teachers are the first to be "pink-slipped" because it means that programs will be eliminated. She reported that the administration of the School District administration is less than 5% of the budget which is the smallest in the state. She stated that contrary to what legislators may think, administration is not an area to cut in the KPBSD since it does not amount to much. Ms. Germano stated that the partnership with the Kenai Peninsula College is win-win situation for local communities and schools. She stated that while she agrees with the Board's obligation to educate students, the District can no longer be everything to everybody. Ms. Germano stated that the Area Cost Study suggests that the District should receive more money but the amount recommended is not enough. She stated that once again, the District is being punished for doing the best job with little resources. She stated that the amount of money being offered in the Study is not adequate or appropriate in comparison to other Districts in the state. She thanked Mr. Navarre for his comments. She reported that the Homer Chamber of Commerce recently recognized Mr. Mark Robinson, Homer High choir teacher, as Citizen of the Year.

Mrs. Crawford complimented the Board for being fine people to work with. She stated that she has not agonized as much as in the last four years. She expressed her appreciation to Mr. Gensel and Mr. Hayes for their community volunteer work. She thanked Mr. Young for the Soldotna Middle School report and for the cards and banner for Board Appreciation Month. She thanked the public for their comments and explained that the Board tries to balance the comments of the public with the task of balancing the budget. She stated that increasing the pupil-teacher ratio was the most difficult decision she has had to make during her four years as a Board member. She stated that raising the pupil-teacher ratio was one of the ways the Board could afford to give the teachers a raise. She thanked Mr. Navarre for his suggestions. She encouraged those present to attend the teleconference at the Legislative Information Office on Tuesday, February 4. She reported that the most effective way to reach legislators is through personal stories from parents. She reported that 70% of the District's money comes from the state and the remainder comes from the Borough Assembly. She stated that the Borough Assembly has done everything they can to help the District get more funding and added that more funding is needed from the state.

BOARD COMMENTS:
(continued)

Mr. Arness thanked Mr. Young for the Soldotna Middle School report. He commended the Nikolaevsk Elementary/High students for being well spoken. He stated that the Board is aware of the impact of the Long Range Plan for Consolidation. He reported that he and Mr. Larson met on Thursday, January 30 and made progress towards a contract settlement and added that he hoped they could continue in that direction. He encouraged the Board to consider canceling the June planning session since there will be an entirely new Board for the 2003-2004 school year. He encouraged those present to read the midyear report and noted that the evaluation comments received from the administrators about the superintendent were very good. He asked the Board members to let them know if they were interested in attending the AASB Fly-In in Juneau.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Tape 2, 2992)

At 10:20 p.m. Mrs. Mullins moved the Board go into executive session to discuss matters, the immediate knowledge of which would clearly have an adverse effect upon the finances of the Borough. Specifically, the executive session was to discuss negotiations tactics and strategies. Mrs. Crawford seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

At 10:20 p.m. Ms. Germano left the meeting.

At 10:57 p.m. Mr. Poindexter left the meeting.

ADJOURN EXECUTIVE SESSION: At 11:23 p.m., Mrs. Mullins moved the executive session be adjourned. Mrs. Crawford seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURN:

At 11:24 p.m., Mrs. Mullins moved the School Board Meeting be adjourned. Mrs. Crawford seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Joe Arness, President

Mrs. Deborah Germano, Clerk

The minutes of February 3, 2003
were approved on February 17, 2003
as written.