

MINUTES OF JOINT MEETING
JACKSON SCHOOL BOARD/BARTLETT SCHOOL BOARD
Jackson Grammar School
November 1, 2010

1. Call to Order:

The joint meeting of the Jackson/Bartlett School Boards was called to order at 6:15 p.m. Present were: Nancy Kelemen, Vicki Harlow and Rob Clark from Bartlett; Joe Kopitsky, Andrew Kearns, Genn Anzaldi, Keith Bradley and Lauren Synnott from Jackson, and Dr. Carl Nelson. There were three members of the general public present.

2. Approval of Minutes (5-17-10): Note was made by Mr. Bradley that in listing those present Ms. Synnott's first name was listed incorrectly. **Motion was made by Ms. Kelemen, seconded by Ms. Harlow, to approve the Minutes of the May 17, 2010 Joint Boards meeting as corrected. Motion carried with 7 votes in the affirmative and Mr. Clark abstaining.**

The Chair opted to take care of "Other Business" next.

4. Any Other Business:

Storage of skis for Jackson students – Mr. Bradley noted the issue of transportation of skis for Jackson students going to Bartlett. Ms. Kelemen stated the trailer to transport skis for downhill is at Attitash at 7:30 a.m., so they would already be there when the Jackson students board their bus. Mr. Clark noted the trailer is going to be locked up during the week at JBES. Mr. Bradley questioned whether they could leave their skis the day before. Mr. Clark said they may not be accessible at all. Ms. Kelemen suggested talking to their bus driver to see if he could deposit them at the mountain; however, there was then the question of putting responsibility for the skis on the driver. It was noted that presently Jackson parents drop them off at Attitash on Thursday mornings. Ms. Kelemen suggested the two Principals discuss this further, and will ask Mr. Voci to contact Ms. Dembowski.

Ferry Beach Trip – Mr. Kearns noted that at the last Jackson Board meeting there had been mention that Bartlett is considering not doing the Ferry Beach trip in the future because of the fundraising issue, and it was his opinion that it is one of the important events that gets the two 6th grades together. Ms. Kelemen was not aware of this and agreed it should be clarified. She noted that in the past Bartlett kids have done magazine drives; last year they each brought in \$5 a week which went into a bank account instead of fundraising or having to pay all at once. Ms. Anzaldi offered help if there is anything Jackson can do toward their fundraising efforts as she does not want to lose that trip.

3. **Discussion of Possible Budget Cuts in Conway** – Mr. Kearns noted that the Jackson Board is unanimous in its disapproval of the proposed cuts [a copy of a letter expressing that to the Conway School Board was distributed]. Ms. Harlow noted Bartlett is meeting on Nov. 16th and will discuss it, but that she cannot imagine that their feelings are not similar to that of Jackson. Dr. Nelson explained Conway School Board wanted the administration to go through an exercise – last year they had \$1.3 million in bonds they were able to retire, and were able to keep an even budget; the year before they had \$850,000 in tuition trust funds so said if that happens again they want a zero budget. They asked for two scenarios of budget cuts: \$1 million and \$1.5 million. They have had reinforcement to not make the cuts. He feels the majority of the people are looking for what the parents want and what the sending towns want; Bartlett has the least percentage of dollars to be cut because it is at or below State average. The high school cut is \$300,000 out of a total budget of \$9 million.

Ms. Kelemen questioned if they cut French, how many language teachers that would leave. Dr. Nelson suggested the position they should be taking is how they want to express the feelings of the sending towns to the Conway School Board – maybe the way Jackson did, or maybe include all sending towns. He said the budget is the same as this year - adding in the cost for health insurance, etc., it is basically going to be a default budget. When asked whether Board members should attend the next Conway School Board meeting, Dr. Nelson noted they may have people coming to discuss the issue, but it is not on the agenda.

Ms. Harlow said she cannot imagine any Board member from the sending towns not being in favor of making no cuts, but if they have to have it, that they please consider the arts and music and AP offerings. Dr. Nelson said you can weigh in on anything you want, but need to wait until they make a decision: whether not making any cuts, making \$1 million cut, or \$1.5 million. He commented some members from sending towns may be in favor of cuts because that would reduce the amount of money they have to send. Ms. Kelemen pointed out also the revenue goes down. Dr. Nelson agreed the real fiscal conservatives might want that.

Dr. Nelson said we will build the default budget, the \$1 million in cuts, and the \$1.5 million, showing the impact of each; however, the difficult part is guessing what the revenues are – we will not know the State revenues. Ms. Anzaldi pointed out that Dr. Nelson has stated he does not think those cuts will affect accreditation.

Peter Benson said you have an opportunity to stay proactive, they have an open ear – he encouraged the Boards to speak often and well, noting staying correct and staying positive is important. He pointed out that Jackson, as a donor town, will be sending \$400,000 out of town again – it is going to Concord and we do not know how it will be distributed.

Mr. Benson said he was on the Task Force for Student Success and they did excellent work on reducing drop out rates. He said one of the things that came out of that was work on the gifted and talented program. He said maybe next year the Conway School Board can see what a \$1.5 million *increase* would look like. Mr. Kearns said the Conway voters *should* be willing to see what an increased budget would look like.

Mr. Clark wished to echo Mr. Benson's comments about being proactive and positive, stating if we are not, it will build a wall. He suggested offering positive suggestions instead of accusing them of "messing with our students," and if they are leaning toward eliminating a language, see what we can do to be proactive in that way. He said he also questions why this does not affect any sports in any way, that he is not saying we should slash sports, but that question has been posed to him by the public. Dr. Nelson stated the Principals were told to cut, they had to go with the least impact in their buildings and, in their minds, they have done that. He suggested Mr. Clark talk to Mr. Moylan about that; that Mr. Moylan had said he wanted to make sure there is a well-rounded education that keeps everybody connected. It was Ms. Harlow's opinion that what he is putting at risk are the at-risk kids. Dr. Nelson stated then she needs to talk to him.

Mr. Kopitsky stated they know the impact they are making on the Special Ed population, he does not understand how they will weigh this decision. Dr. Nelson pointed out Special Ed is governed by state, federal and local regulations, that what you see in this particular budget in Special Ed was the fact that two kids moved out of the District; also for each of the buildings there is an additional supplementary amount - to each of the units they added 10% - if Special Ed ran at a deficit, another \$30,000 would have to come out of the high school. Mr. Kopitsky said it seems it is easier to talk about Special Ed, but we still have individual sports. Dr. Nelson said these meet the IEPs, but may not be as an elaborate service as we have now. He said the biggest chunk is tuition reduction.

Mr. Kopitsky questioned whether there are other programs they are looking at. Dr. Nelson said a reduction in an art position at the high school, art supplies, part of the performing arts position, the new dance program, and temporary stipends in all classes.

Dr. Nelson suggested the Boards might want to consider the approach of programs right now, and functioning at a high level - we have excellent programs, we got a great rating from the accreditation people, and the Boards might want to center on all the programs and not cutting any. Ms. Anzaldi agreed, noting we got a great rating last year, "why mess with success?" Dr. Nelson suggested they not get involved with picking and choosing as it would lose impact, but suggested considering \$1.5 million addition of programs. Mr. Kearns suggested they should release the report of the Task Force Mr. Benson referred to. Mr. Clark said the impact was phenomenal and agreed they should look at the good points: we have gotten accreditation, have achieved a lot of things in the Task Force report. He

felt people rely too much on what is in the newspaper. Mr. Kopitsky said as School Board members we need to start thinking of ways of improving education.

Angus Badger said the greatest risk is to accept status quo, stating our high school is 155th out of 159 in terms of teacher pay, and Kennett has one of the higher rates of non certified teachers. It was his contention there is a major discrepancy of what Conway is spending on its high school students compared to its elementary schools. He said “we need a better high school than what we need” and cannot get there without more money - Kennett needs to raise starting teachers’ salaries. It has no contract for its teachers – that is not adequate, it is an unstable situation. He stated we should be recommending a higher budget. He said regarding gifted and talented students, we need to meet their needs - it is State law. He would like to see this Board recommending a higher than current State law budget. Dr. Nelson pointed out that last year Kennett was told to add 2.5% to their budget.

Chris Bailey said we need to remind them that Jackson is going to be sending \$400,000 to the State, that is a significant amount; along with the \$300,000 cut at the high school, when divided by the number of sending towns, what it would save the average taxpayer is peanuts. He noted that football self-funds itself with gate receipts - it is the only sport that brings money into the school. Mr. Clark said that is a very valid point and that information needs to get out there. He noted that it is the same with the arts – they have revenue from plays.

Dr. Badger said when he went to Kennett 25 years ago kids went on to Harvard, MIT, Duke – Ivy League schools. He did not see one highly competitive college in this year’s graduates - the school is not doing what it used to do. He stated we need to raise expectations for this high school, Jackson and Bartlett should be telling Conway what we want for our kids; if not, we should not be sending our kids there. We should build a community-wide forum, create a productive approach. Ms. Harlow said unfortunately the stumbling block is the Conway taxpayer. Ms. Kelemen said the joint Boards *is* saying it has expectations of where it wants their kids to be.

Dr. Nelson suggested maybe the next step would be to call a meeting of the joint Boards. Ms. Kelemen agreed, noting there are also Conway members on that Board. Dr. Badger suggested they invite to that meeting other organizations in the valley that have a vested interest in the quality of the high school: Chamber of Commerce, Board of Realtors, State Representatives. Mr. Benson said so much of this is being driven by vocal minority, the real work comes when a majority gets together, saying this is what we think – we need to be consistent, positive, proactive. Ms. Harlow stated they should also lobby the Conway taxpayers. Mr. Kearns requested a copy of the Task Force report. Dr. Nelson agreed to provide same.

Mr. Bailey acknowledged that students have had difficulty getting into the better schools. Mr. Bradley felt they should look back 20 years and see what schools

these people went to. Mr. Clark stated they also have to consider what schools the kids are applying to; if they are applying to Ivy League schools and getting refused he would like to see that statistic. Mr. Kearns stated the second in the class could not get into Colby.

Mr. Clark suggested they might want to look at forming a new task force. He suggested the first level is “what are we looking for?,” the budget comes second.

Conclusion: It was decided Ms. Harlow and Dr. Nelson would together decide on a date and call a joint Boards meeting.

5. **Adjournment: Motion was made by Ms. Anzaldi, seconded by Mr. Kopitsky, that the meeting be adjourned at 7:25 p.m. Motion carried by unanimous vote.**

Respectfully submitted,

Gail T. Currier
Recording Secretary