

March Agenda

Special Meeting of Trustees

The special meeting of the Board of Trustees of School District #35 has been scheduled for Thursday, March 30, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. at the Gallatin Gateway School Multipurpose room.

(All policies mentioned in the agenda can be found at www.gallatingatewayschool.com.)

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance

Presiding Trustee's explanation of procedures to be followed for addressing the Board – (GGS Policy #1441)

Public Comment- Non Agenda Items- Public Comment- Sign in sheet- (GGS Policy #1441 & #1420F)

New Business

***Academics**

Permission to Medication to be Given at Gallatin Gateway School- GGS Policy #3416F2-new
Permission for Medication to be Given During Field Trip- GGS Policy #3416F3-new
Consent for Emergency Medical Care- GGS Policy #3431F- new

***Public Relations**

Discussion: 2006-2007 school budget (GGS Policy #7110)

Adjournment

For more information on agenda items, contact Superintendent Kim DeBruycker, 763-4415 ext. 13 or debruycker@gallatingatewayschool.com. (All policies mentioned in the agenda can be found at www.gallatingatewayschool.com.)

Special Meeting, Board of Trustees, Gallatin Gateway School District #35

Open Session

DATE: March 30, 2006

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Gallatin Gateway School Multipurpose Room

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Erik Yager, Chair
Helen Zinner, Vice Chair
Jess Holloway
Alec Nisbet
Cheryl Thiem

MEMBERS

ABSENT: None

STAFF

PRESENT: Carrie Fisher, District Clerk; Ken Mosby, Business Manager; Renae Myers, Teacher; Susan DeVries, Teacher; and Scott Vollmer, Teacher.

OTHERS

PRESENT: Celia O'Connor, Diann Calvin, Pam Border, Steve Fisher, Nikki Robbins, Kristin Horgan, John Vincent, County Commissioner; Shawna Brenner, and Ann Prescott.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm by Board Chair Erik Yager.

Board Chair Erik Yager explained the public comment process to be followed for addressing the Board in accordance with Gallatin Gateway School Policy #1441. He stated that prior to a vote the public may comment on agenda items. There will be time for public comment on non-agenda items. Public comment periods are not intended to be a question and answer session and may not include discussions of performance, evaluations or anything that may infringe on any person's right to privacy.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None.

PUBLIC & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Board Chairman Erik Yager led a discussion with the community regarding the 2006-2007 budget considerations and requested community input regarding the needs for the upcoming year.

Public Comment: Pam Border stated that the current middle school schedule worked well this year, but may not work next year because of the increased number of students. Kristin Horgan stated that in Bozeman Schools the classes are larger and students rotate between teachers for different classes and noted that it works well. Trustee Alec Nisbet stated that 31 students in seventh and eighth grade seems like a lot and eighth graders have certain privileges that require them to be out of the building more, which makes it hard for a

teacher that is responsible for both seventh and eighth graders to juggle field trips and such. Susan DeVries noted that there could be an increase of students over the summer making the class even larger than 31 students. Kristin Horgan asked if there could be anything done with scheduling with the existing number of staff to separate the students more during the day. Shawna Brenner asked what the cost of hiring another teacher would be for the district and an art teacher. Scott Vollmer stated that the teachers on staff currently teach about one hour of art a week and that it is built into his class schedule. Ann Prescott recommended that the Board narrow down the wish list for next year based on goals adopted at the beginning of this year. Pam Border stated that using the goals would be a great idea if the basic needs of the school were being met, but currently the school is less two classroom teachers and therefore basic needs are not being met and so the Board should focus on getting one teacher for every grade. Ann Prescott stated that several ideas for improvement were brought up by community members at the April 19, 2005 goal setting meeting such as creating a team atmosphere, creating school-wide art program and increasing enrollment in middle school. Trustee Alec Nisbet stated that his personal concern was primarily middle school and that is where the most ANB money per student is generated. Shawna Brenner stated that if the school was going to sell itself to increase enrollment would families think it was good that the school had combined classes or good if it had one teacher for every grade. Ann Prescott stated that she felt team building was very important and people don't necessarily take jobs for the money, but they feel more valued when the compensation is competitive. She reiterated that people work harder when their compensation is higher and that if there isn't a full staff at the school, the teachers and staff have to work harder for less compensation. She continued by stating that the Board is apt to burn out staff by not having a teacher for every grade. Ann Prescott stated that she would also like to see an increase in Board training on "how to communicate with the community."

Kristin Horgan asked that if the Board approved for the estimated \$51,680 and it was passed by the voters would the money be able to be used for whatever the Board wanted or would it be earmarked for a specific area such as hiring more staff members. She also stated that her impression within the community is that the upcoming kindergarten class could be very small again. Ann Prescott noted that the current kindergarten was thought to be small, but when school started there were around twenty students enrolled. Shawna Brenner commented that her child, currently enrolled in first grade, is fine in a combined class and would be fine in a combined class next year if needed. She recommended that Board ask the voters to approve a levy for the estimated \$51,000.00 and use it to cover the cost of one teacher because the salary to commit to two teachers would surpass the maximum amount they could ask for and there wouldn't be any left over to cover the increased costs associated with current teacher salary increases or utilities. Celia O'Connor expressed concern that any levy would pass and thought that if the Board told people the specific use of the funds it would be more likely to pass. Susan DeVries stated that if the Board hired one full-time teacher and one .6 FTE teacher they could hire less aides. Shawna Brenner asked if the school could make it work with the current number of staff. Susan DeVries noted that if the kindergarten class was small and there was a second/third combo the other elementary teacher left over could not be moved to a .6 FTE position as a tenured teacher. Board Chair Erik Yager clarified that certified staff are hired at a specified FTE and the administration can utilize them any way needed to fulfill needs and that tenured staff could indeed be teaching .6 kindergarten and .4 something else, such as music, art or physical education.

Nikki Robbins recommended the Board hire one .6 FTE teacher to teach kindergarten next year, combine second and third grade and use the existing staff to fill in the rest of the grades including the middle school. Ann Prescott stated that Ophir School also has to deal with small classes and to her knowledge Ophir did not combine grades. Trustee Alec Nisbet stated that Ann was incorrect and that as the eighth grade teacher at Ophir he had a combined class. Ann Prescott stated that many parents like combined classes for the social aspects of a larger class and that it isn't always disadvantageous to have combined classes. Renae Meyers stated that if second and third grade were combined next year there would be one elementary teacher that could be moved to the middle school next year. She also stated that all teachers at Gallatin Gateway School are Montana certified to teach all grades kindergarten through eighth grade and to teach all subject area positions at the school. Celia O'Connor agreed that would be a good idea, but noted that some teachers wouldn't like to teach older students. Ann Prescott agreed and recommended the teachers provide input regarding a decision that would require them to change grades. Nikki Robbins stated that it could be worse to have an unhappy middle school teacher than a combined class.

Ann Prescott recommended the Board specify how much it would cost to hire additional teaching staff when publicizing the passage of the mill levy and stated that she felt it was a top priority to hire additional teaching staff. She recommended the Board ask for the estimated \$51,000. Celia O'Connor recommended the Board tell

people general statements regarding the use of the mill levy funds and agreed to ask for the estimated \$51,000. Kristin Horgan stated that publicizing the mill levy election and what the money would be used for would help it pass. Celia O'Connor noted that the enrollment is more likely to increase than decrease with the current building boom in the county. Ann Prescott stated that from her point of view asking for \$35,000 or \$51,680 would really not make much of a difference to her because either amount would create an increase and if she was going to approve of one she would likely approve of the other. She recommended that if the levy failed, the Board not hire any additional staff because if staff are hired it leads the community to believe that the Board did not need the levy to pass and they were asking for money that was not needed. She continued to state that Superintendent DeBruycker has been very creative in the past with finding private donations and grants to fill in the gaps when levies have failed, but she feels it has hurt the school's public image. Susan DeVries recommended the Board spell out to the community the reasoning behind asking for the mill levy. County Commissioner John Vincent noted that "earmarking" the funds does tend to increase the support because people know where the money is going.

Scott Vollmer stated that not having a custodian this year hasn't changed much for him other than not having his room vacuumed daily. He noted that the students help pick up more and are responsible for taking out the trash. Ann Prescott said that she felt it was good to have kids help clean because it results in them taking pride in their school. She also stated that teachers should be able to focus on teaching and not cleaning the school and doesn't feel that increase responsibility for teachers is good because she doesn't want it to interfere with their preparation time for teaching. Susan DeVries noted that cleaning the toilets takes a lot of time and we probably don't want students cleaning them and tile floors really can't be done by teachers or students, so someone would have to be hired to clean those areas. Nikki Robbins asked for clarification of the duties and the history for the past few years of employing a janitor/custodian/cleaning service.

Susan DeVries asked if the extra money allocated by the legislature could be used for an increase in teacher salaries. Board Chair Erik Yager stated that amount was only about \$8000. Business Manager Ken Mosby noted that an increase of 1% on the base salary equates to a \$13,000 increase in salary expense with the current number of teaching staff. Diann Calvin clarified that this current discussion was leading the Board to have the goal of hiring one additional full-time teacher. Celia O'Connor stated that she did some rough calculations and if the Board hired one more teacher and increased the current teacher salary by 1.5% the Board would still have a little to work with to cover other increases in things such as utilities if the levy passed. Ann Prescott recommended the Board ask the teachers where they think the mill levy funds could be utilized best. Susan DeVries stated that she has never taught older grades and that she couldn't speak for other, but didn't know if teachers would want to be moved from a lower grade to an upper grade. Scott Vollmer stated that regardless of his salary, he recommended the Board do what is best for the kids. Nikki Robbins recommended the Board talk to teachers to see if any of them would want to teach a middle school grade. Shawna Brenner stated that the Board should be specific in what the mill levy money would be used for, but not too specific as to which grade the individual would teach. Ann Prescott stated that she had spoken with a community member that was under the impression that there were teachers at Gallatin Gateway School that made \$60,000 per year. Kristin Horgan recommended the Board clarify teacher salaries for the public. Susan DeVries asked the Board if they would like her to meet with teachers and talk about the different scenarios. Board Chair Erik Yager said "Sure." He noted that the Board would not be bound by any decisions or recommendations that are brought from such a teacher meeting. He also noted that all those in attendance should know that decisions regarding placement of certified staff is a management right and that the administration was hired to make such decisions.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Trustee Alec Nisbet to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Jess Holloway seconded the motion. For: Holloway, Nisbet, Thiem, Yager and Zinner. Opposed: none. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Erik Yager, Board Chairman

Carrie Fisher, District Clerk