



*Respectful, Responsible, Safe & Prepared*

## **SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES May 7, 2024 Special Meeting**

Pursuant to the regulations, a special Board meeting was held on the above date in the Waupaca High School Community Room.

The purpose of the Board Meeting Minutes is to capture the essence of discussions through the actions voted on. These minutes should not be interpreted to represent a transcription of the meeting. To watch a recording of this meeting, please click [here](#).

### **Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by President Ron Brooks at 5:00 p.m. and he asked Lori Verhalen to lead the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Roll Call:**

Present in the WHS Community Room: Ron Brooks, Steve Klismet, Betty Manion, Dale Feldt, and Lori Verhalen; Bob Adams was present via phone.

Excused: Molly McDonald.

### **Also Present:**

Present in the WHS Community Room: Austin Moore, Laurie Schmidt, Sandy Lucas, Dave Poeschl, Jay Seefeldt, and Sandy Robinson.

### **Review of Board Meeting Norms:**

The Board reviewed their collective commitments.

### **Approval of Agenda:**

A motion was made by Dale Feldt and seconded by Betty Manion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

A motion was made by Dale Feldt and seconded by Steve Klismet to approve the May 2, 2024, Special School Board Meeting Minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

### **Continued Discussion from Special Board Meeting on May 2, 2024, in Regards to Superintendent Hiring:**

Board President Ron Brooks introduced Dr. David Poeschl who was invited to attend tonight's meeting to review the policy governance model with the Board. Dr. Poeschl advised that he was District Administrator for the School District of Waupaca for 24 years, and has served on many different boards. He brought the policy governance model to the District.

The School Board has one employee and that is the district administrator. The Board's job is to hire the right person and to make that person successful. All other decisions are made by the district administrator; however, the Board may place executive limitations on what the district administrator can do. The Board also holds the district administrator accountable for the goals that have been set. Most importantly, there is no one annual evaluation of the district administrator in that s/he is being evaluated at every single Board meeting and is held accountable at every single meeting. If there is anything that needs to be corrected, it should be addressed immediately, not at an annual evaluation. Again, it is up to the Board to make that person successful.

Dr. Poeschl pointed out that the Board does not run the Board meetings and does not run the day-to-day operations of the District; people are hired to do that. He added that it is more important that the Board be mentored, not the newly hired district administrator. The Board needs to let that person know up front what they want so there are no surprises.

Dr. Poeschl noted that the Board's agenda is part Board business and part administration business, so the agenda needs to clearly enunciate what is Board business and what is administration business. Therefore, in looking at the District's agenda, the minutes of the Board's meetings do not belong in the consent agenda because they are Board business. An item cannot be pulled out of the consent agenda unless the whole Board agrees and it is not under the administration's authority.

Dr. Poeschl reiterated that the Board can limit the decisions the district administrator makes by setting executive limitations on their responsibility. The Board can set more executive limitations at first and can revisit those limitations as needed. In addition, based on evidence, those limitations can be made more restrictive.

Board President Brooks spoke about the importance of the chain of command/rope of respect, which is also part of the Board mentoring; the Board has to trust the chain of command. Dr. Poeschl added that the role of the Board is not to respond, and has no authority to respond, to the complaint but to follow the chain of command. Most importantly, the Board needs to stay in their lane. Dr. Poeschl added that he is willing to mentor the Board and administration on the policy governance model but will not be a mentor to a district administrator in all their job duties.

Board President Brooks advised that the Board has two options: Option #1 being to move forward with the application process and interviews; and Option #2 being to hire an Interim District Administrator for one year to work with the Core Team and the Board to bring in applicants. However, Dr. Poeschl asked if things would be any different a year from now – what is the Board's goal? Mr. Brooks responded that because it is late in the game and the applicant pool is smaller at this time, perhaps there would be more candidates if we pushed it out further. Dr. Poeschl pointed out that you can post and interview now but that does not mean you have to hire now.

Board member Dale Feldt suggested bringing in a consultant group such as WASB to provide guidance to the Board in the hiring process, noting that they probably would not be able to complete the process by July 1.

Board member Lori Verhalen suggested that the Board post for the position now to see what kind of applicants respond, and asked if Director of Teaching and Learning Mark Flaten is interested in helping out in the interim. Mr. Brooks advised that Dr. Flaten is willing to take on the additional district administrator responsibilities through the summer only, but could not continue with those additional responsibilities when school starts. He advised that Dr. Flaten may apply for the position.

Board President Brooks commented, and Dr. Poeschl agreed, that it is not appropriate to have the District's Business Office handling the applications when one of those individuals may be their boss. The Board needs to review the applicants and vet them, not the Business Office.

Board member Betty Manion advised that it is important not to rush into things, and suggested that listening sessions with staff should be held. She would like to bring someone in as an interim district administrator so the Board can take their time in finding someone and receive input from staff. Dr. Poeschl cautioned that while it is a feel good effort to go to staff for their input, you will most likely end up with a superman/superwoman because everyone wants someone different. Although it indicates that you are willing to listen, that does not mean that is what you are going to find. It could

also lead to staff saying that you did not hire what they wanted so you did not listen to them – it sets you up for not meeting their expectations.

Regarding what to look for in good district administrator qualifications, Dr. Poeschl advised that most likely you are not going to get an applicant that has a long track record. The Board should look at the system that applicant was brought up in. He recommended that the Board should be more interested in personality than technical, etc., and someone who is moldable. Mr. Brooks added that possibly hiring an inexperienced person could mean that person comes in without any bad habits. He also noted that it is vitally important to listen to staff and obtain community input, but make it clear to them that the Board is going to make the final decision.

As a homework assignment, Board President Brooks had asked each of the Board members to provide five qualities that they would like to see in a district administrator and three that they can grow into. Those included the following:

Qualities Needed:

- Able to adapt quickly
- Innovative thinker
- A visionary
- Has a collaborative mindset and team building skills
- Excellent communicator
- Motivator
- Transparency
- Respect for everyone
- Non-reactive
- Leader
- Leaves personal biases and beliefs out of the Board room
- Fiscal responsibility
- Good problem solver
- Can handle criticism
- Be organized

Qualities to Grow Into:

- Be a financial steward
- Seek parent and community communications
- Academic achievement improvement
- Immerse themselves in the District and the community
- Grow community engagement and balance that engagement with the school
- Develop plan for progress
- Encourage staff to pursue further education and promote within

It was suggested that the Board should talk to that candidate's community, staff, etc. regarding their personality; however, Mr. Brooks pointed out that could get into legal issues.

More discussion then continued regarding whether to move forward with the application process or look at the interim process.

Board member Feldt cautioned the Board that it needs to be careful regarding the interview questions, etc., and suggested that the Board hire WASB to assist them and lead them through the process. He summarized the WASB guidelines and outlined the services that they can provide, but added that the Board can ask them to only assist in part. He also added that the WASB does not select the applicants nor tell the Board who to hire. They send every applicant that applies to this District to the Board. Depending on what the Board wants WASB to do, the cost ranges from \$9,000-\$15,000.

Mrs. Manion added that there are other organizations that provide those services as well, and Dr. Poeschl advised that the Don Stevens firm is a private firm but the WASB would give you more flexibility. Mr. Feldt advised that Board President Brooks would have to check with WASB to see if the Board could use the interview questions and other materials that they had previously used. Much discussion then continued regarding the WASB process and what was done previously when using that process.

Dr. Poeschl advised that he would be willing to help the Board in any way he can, but that he would not be able to provide the same services that WASB can provide, and the Board would have to be willing to accept when he advises that he cannot help them.

There was some discussion as to whether the money was well spent in using the WASB in the past. It was noted that the process was done correctly but they did not do the hiring, the Board did. There was some question as to whether the Board had seen all of the applicants that had applied.

Sandy Robinson was asked to respond to Dr. Poeschl's question regarding what can the Board do better this time to come out with a better result. She advised that it would be helpful to have someone who knew what questions were legal and not. She did not like a certain aspect of the WASB process when all three candidate/community/staff groups were meeting all at the same time on the same night, as the Board did not get to hear the discussions and there wasn't time to observe the candidates with other community members or staff. But she added that she has also worked with the Don Stevens firm in the past and that was difficult.

Dr. Poeschl suggested that the Board put a proposal together outlining what they want along with a timeline, and send that out to organizations to see if they can do what you want in that timeline and what the cost for that service would be.

Again, Board President Brooks asked the Board which path they would like to take at this time. Several of the Board members suggested that, because the Board needs more time and there likely is a small pool of applicants at this time, they meet with Mr. Craig Gerlach regarding an Interim District Administrator position. Mr. Brooks pointed out that bringing in a district administrator on a "probationary" basis says to staff that s/he is not really the boss; "interim" or "probationary" does not command authority and respect. Dr. Poeschl added that an interim is usually used to clean up a district, which is not necessary here.

Board President Brooks asked the Core Team members who were present, Director of Student Services Laurie Schmidt and Director of Business Services Austin Moore, for their opinion. Ms. Schmidt advised that a probationary/one year contract does not carry a lot of authority or Board trust with that candidate. There is nothing wrong with posting the position at this time and it does not necessarily mean you need to hire. Mr. Moore advised that in his past experience, interims are called in to clean house. We need a path going forward; with an interim, we would be treading water for a year. He agreed that the Board should post the position now and see what kind of applicants respond. The Board can always spend the money for a service if it is needed.

A motion was made by Steve Klismet and seconded by Lori Verhalen to move forward with the district administrator posting, using the same job description that was used previously. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

Mr. Feldt advised that he will provide the Core Team with his binder containing the job posting and other materials that the Board used for their district administrator hiring process previously, and Mrs. Manion will provide her copy to Board President Brooks.

The Board thanked Dr. Poeschl for his service, good advice, and willingness to help the Board. His biggest asset to them will be in mentoring the Board on policy governance.

Board President Brooks advised that there is no need to meet again this Thursday. He asked Mr. Moore to post the position immediately following the Board's approval of the posting. All applicants will come directly to the Board; no Core Team member will have access to them. In

addition, he pushed the proposed timeline out an additional 10 days, so the posting will close May 30<sup>th</sup>.

Board President Brooks also advised that the Board will not be going with WASB at this time, but that the Board's homework assignment is to put together a plan of what they want a service organization to do for the Board and bring that for discussion at a Special Board meeting on Monday, May 13, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.

Dr. Poeschl advised that he is available if the Board wishes to use his services in any way, and it was suggested that he would be a great resource in reviewing the applicants.

**Adjournment:**

A motion was made by Dale Feldt and seconded by Betty Manion to adjourn the meeting at 6:48 p.m. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

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Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Ron Brooks, President  
Board of Education

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Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Betty Manion, Clerk  
Board of Education