

OFFICIAL MINUTES
JT SCHOOL DISTRICT #34
CULDESAC, ID 83524

The Board of Trustees held a special meeting for public input regarding the supplemental levy on Wednesday, September 7, 2011 in the School Library (Posted as Cafeteria due to ADA issues meeting held in Library to accommodate access for all attendees) at 7:00 p.m. as posted. Those in attendance were Chairman Cecil Martin, Vice-chairman Lori Zenner, Trustees Kathryn Bomar and Bryce Scrimsher, Superintendent Darrell Olson and Clerk Loretta Hammond-Nichols, 13 staff members, 37 patrons, six students and one Highland School District member. (Absent-Trustee Richard Grant/Zone #3)

ORDER/SALUTE

Chairman called the meeting to order stating that this was scheduled for public input regarding the levy request at 7:04 p.m. Chairman announced that each person would have an opportunity to speak. A sheet was passed around for the public to sign-in. (PTSA requested a copy of the list)

Superintendent explained that the budget was submitted to the State without levy dollars and this would be a tight budget year to operate. The staff is doing multiple duties due to cutbacks. The major budget holes will need to be addressed if the Levy passes. Next available date to run the Levy is in November and then March. These dates however, do not allow the school to collect the tax dollars until the following year for next school year. The State does not fully fund the school operations. In the last three years, the state has cut funding to the school in an estimate of \$750,000.00. Superintendent Luna is proposing a flat budget for 2012-13 with shifting of category money to help provide funding for the new programs that are being implemented at the State level for education. The question is how do we keep Culdesac a K-12 School operational without local support or levy money?

Chairman asked for Board Comments

Trustee Lori Zenner thanked everyone for coming and explained that it is a sad position that the school is in as her family has graduated from this school. She would like to see the school stay open with the support of the levy and hopefully, it is not too late.

Trustee Bryce Scrimsher noted that this is a tough time and everyone needs to pull together. The Superintendent has taken a cut and the Principal time has been cutback as well.

Trustee Kathy Bomar extended a thank you to everyone for attending and expressed the concern that the Board wants to keep the school open. The public needs to fight for the school by voting for the levy to help keep the school.

Chairman read a letter from patrons who were unable to attend. Letter expressed their concerns of the several years of funding cutbacks, declining enrollment and the struggling economy.

Chairman opened the floor for patron input and concerns which included - waiting so long to ask for additional levy funds, single income not able to afford additional taxes, one bus route with three kids, administrative pay, staff wage and salary raises, IEA Union issues, bullying, van vs bus for transportation, community volunteers vs teachers, pay parents to bring students to school vs bus for transportation, cutback on bus routes, students bring lunches and eliminate lunch program, cost to ship students to another school, tuition costs for open enrollment, cost per student, special needs student issues, discipline problems, cut staff benefits, loss of school does not mean you avoid paying taxes, compare other school tax levy with Culdesac, District house,
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Modular unit, get rid of extra buses, loss of music and art programs, basic education, on-line class options, Levy request rate, PTSA support, multiple year levy for stability, November levy-just another no vote, Spring levy option, college bound student course options, band aide fix, enrollment projection, dual credit classes for college, school accreditation for 75 years, student motivation with on-line classes have taken college credits at Culdesac, State Department of Education requires certificated staff in classroom, community volunteers welcome to help PTSA and staff in the classroom, election process regarding mailed ballots, new dates for consolidated election with County, use volunteers in the class versus Aides, many farm families have supported the school for decades and continue to support the school, no sports offered, loss of nine open enrollment students, close enrollment only if program is full, four day week of Tuesday through Friday versus Monday through Thursday, other schools are not charging tuition for students, people do not trust the Board to make good decisions, Board does not allow the public to have input or listen to their concerns or a deaf ear is turned when asking a question, seat time money for open enrollment students, how much is needed for levy and how many years, what is the Board willing to do to get students back into the school who attend other schools, enrollment has always went up and down, enrollment has hit bottom and will continue to be low for several years, how long can school survive on basic state education funding, number of bus routes needed, survey of community opinion, home school student option, special needs students have received excellent services at Culdesac, enrollment at one time required school to purchase modular unit to house all the students, combined classes, census indicates double the number of children vs the number enrolled in school, why are kids not attending our school, students being bullied by teacher, need a strong leadership, campaign and promote the positive that school has to offer, quit with the negativity, bigger schools are not better, a Culdesac diploma is the same as a Lewiston diploma, Culdesac does provide a quality education, good teachers and staff, additional time and focus with small numbers in the class for students is a positive point, shift goal to promote school and encourage families to move into the area, school is hub of community, sports and extracurricular provides more options to interest students to stay at Culdesac, tired of hearing negative comments about the school, tired of seeing the levy failed again in the paper, need to support the school and community because without one the other won't exist, need stability, focus on what is needed to bring the programs back into the school not just continue with the basic education level, continue to hear that Culdesac is not having a school or when are they closing their doors, many families have pulled their students due to issues, Junior High sports have been cut, quality teachers have left to teach up the road, kids are versatile-it is the adults who have problems with change-time to close the doors, not the end of the world-kids will attend school at another district, voted no since the school continues to cry wolf and needs more help, pull the plug and pay lower taxes, Levy rates are absorbed into other districts to help pay the cost when schools consolidate, Board needs to know why students going to other schools, what fundraisers can the community do to help raise money, staff wear many hats during the day, mail newsletters home, students are participating in the sports coop that Culdesac has with Highland, support for the school needs to focus on positive options available at Culdesac School. Administration salary and state funding were discussed.

Chairman asked public regarding the option to run or not to run a levy as single year or multiple year and for how much?

Patron asked Board to focus on getting some of the questions answered which will help find out why people are voting no on the levy. A committee could use a phone tree to call with a survey to talk with the community before making any levy decisions. This way the Board could actually listen to the patrons and consider their opinions. Focus and direction needs to start and come from the Board.

Chairman noted that several people expressed that due to the low number of students and poor economy are reasons they had voted no. It will be difficult to maintain the school until 2013 when levy dollars can be collected if passed. To run a two year levy would give the school stability with light at the end of the tunnel.
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Other concerns were working on getting students back into the district and promoting the small staff to teacher ratio to bring up the enrollment which will help with the funding. Not all students are athletic and programs are needed for their interests as well. The school needs to demonstrate stability to the community. Focus needs to be positive and develop flyers which promote the school and opportunities we can provide. The school now has an Ag program again which the community has been asking for the past several years. The staff needs to have reassurance that the school is going to continue and a K-12 school will be offered. The school needs to bring back programs that have been cut versus just offering a basic education with the levy dollars. We need enough to build up reserves to get ahead. Levy amounts of consideration were: \$500,000.00, \$350,000.00, \$250,000.00, \$200,000.00, or none, for two years, one year, five years, and all dates to run election in November, March, May or not at all were discussed. Patron asked people to contact their legislature and let them know about your concerns. Community newsletter helps get the word out to the town people. Retired people live on fixed income with no students in school who vote no and against raising taxes. Sports Booster account has \$600.00 available to help but no group exists currently. Without a school, property will not sell or places will be hard to rent and market value for homes will drop. Many years ago, a bond was passed to build this school and those same families are willing to support the school. Property taxes for schools have dropped by half over the years.

Chairman explained that enrollment has bottomed out and future numbers should come back up in a few years. The school needs to make the best with what we have and wait it out until 2013 when levy funds can be collected if passed. It will not be a pretty as we look for the light at the end of the tunnel. It would be great to see the levy pass at 60% which would give the Board confidence that the community is willing to fight with us to keep the school open. A thank you to the classified staff whom are demonstrating both devotion, great work ethics and is doing a great job.

Trustee Lori Zenner asked patron why they took their students to another school.

Patron response- student had bullying issues, lack of enrollment, four-day week of Monday – Thursday more convenient, community is more involved with school at Highland, lack of curriculum options at Culdesac, more sports opportunities at Highland, no tuition issue, transition seamless, only few additional dollars to drive students to bus stop, less levy rate for more benefits and other child attending Highland has done well and likes the school.

PTSA representative announced that they meet the first Wednesday of the month at 5:30 p.m. and anyone interested is invited to attend. They volunteer in the classrooms and help with fundraising to benefit the students and staff at school. In a small community you have more control or voice in what is happening versus a large school. The PTSA did flyers, signs and door to door contact to help pass the levy.

Superintendent announced that he will listen to Superintendent Luna's presentation tomorrow regarding the 2012-2013 budget. Both Administrators are part time without benefits with the salary paid at the rate the state is funding. Without community support, the school will be operating on state funds which provide a basic education.

Chairman explained that the Board will need to look at the levy issue at the September meeting to make some decisions. Timing is going to be a big issue when running another levy. The school needs to prepare for the next levy to get the word out. We want to run the levy for at least \$350,000.00 to \$400,000.00 to keep on track.

Patron commented that they did not receive ballots to vote at the last levy. Other patrons reported that their ballot was not received due to lack of postage.

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Patrons were advised to go to the Court house to vote if they do not receive a ballot. Ballots will be mailed for all elections except during the primary with the election polls in each precinct.

Trustee Bryce Scrimsher thanked everyone for the good comments and suggestions to work with the public on a multi-year levy by promoting the positive points and get away from the negative that people feed on. We have good staff with a low student to teacher ratio with college credit options for high school students as a focus. We need to squash the rumors and welcome more input at all the meetings. The last few years the Board had been allowing comments and more feedback. The more patrons that attend the better.

Trustee Lori Zenner expressed that the Board is listening.

Trustee Kathy Bomar commented that patron input is needed.

Chairman Martin explained that a public comment is on the agenda which gives everyone the opportunity to express their opinions or concerns and questions at the meetings. Chairman operates the meeting under a controlled set of rules to maintain the business needed to be completed at the meeting each month. The Board tries to make the best decision they can with the information that is available to them. Open enrollment forms have a section for a parent to list comments of why they want their child to attend Culdesac School. The most common response is that we have a great small school and the chance to participate in extracurricular. Please take the time to contact your local Board member if you have questions or contact the school.

Patron asked that additional public meetings be held during the month which would give more opportunity for the community to express their concerns. Patron commented that the last few levy mailings were more informative than previous years but most people are voting no due to the economy. The more information you can get out to the public, the better your chance of turning the no votes around.

Chairman asked how everyone heard about the meeting as the Tribune published an article, students took home flyers and PTSA mailed out letters as well as made phone calls.

Response-all options were effective but the largest turnout was from the mailing.

Student comment regarding the school was that at Lapwai, as Kindergartner, she was not given as much attention as she gets attending Culdesac School. The teacher did not know her name at Lapwai. At Culdesac, staff will say hi to the students. The students are not pushed aside as done in Lapwai and she feels more positive about the school and kids where she can get more one to one help with her education.

Meeting adjourned: 9:45 p.m.

Chairman

Clerk

