

NORTH MAC COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT #34
FEBRUARY 10, 2016
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
SOUTH CAMPUS BOARD ROOM
6:30 P.M.

1. The Special Board of Education meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President Robyn Hays.

1.1 Roll call: Alexander, Cole, Handy, Spann Worth, Hays – Present

Nichols – Absent

Also present – Marica Cullen, Patti Fetter, Connie Schroeder, Jennifer Graham, Nikki Harris, Chris Hatalla, Colean Smith, Donna Moyer, Allison Montgomery, Michelle Bearden, JR Earley, Alicia Hatalla, David Harmon, Doug Worth, Rick Maguire, Debra Ochu, Ron Ochu, Roman Durand, Maureen Lucasey-Nichols, Colleen Nichols, Steve Crouch, Heather Kazenski,

2. Closed Session – Motion was made by Spann, seconded by Worth to adjourn to closed session for the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance or dismissal of employees, collective bargaining, pending litigation and other matters at 6:30 p.m. Yea votes: Cole, Handy, Spann, Worth, Alexander, Hays
3. Returned from Closed Session at 8:10 p.m. Motion was made by Spann, seconded by Cole to return to open session. Yea votes: Handy, Spann, Worth, Alexander, Cole, Hays

Pledge was led by President Hays.

4. Community Engagement Policy – Alexander gave a report on the Policy Committee meeting that was held on January 27th. She read the addition to policy of Community Engagement. See Attached. She explained how an organization known as PRESS notifies the school of all policy updates and then the committee meets to review the changes. At the next board meeting following the committee meeting the changes are brought to the board for first reading. The board reviews the changes and then at the next board meeting a vote is taken on whether to adopt the revisions.

Hays then stated how this new addition to policy dovetails with the Long Range Planning on the subject of two way communication. We need Community Engagement and two way communication between community and board.

Worth felt it was also very timely; she has heard good things about the town hall meeting. Hays responded we know we have communication issues right now. How do we become more effective in our communication?

Cole stated we put all notifications in the newspaper, facebook, and the webpage. He also said we have had presentations at board meetings from Ms. Cullen, Principals, First Midstate and others but the meetings were not attended by community. In addition, the Board discussed including increased use of Skylert for meeting notices, paper articles from administration, more Facebook postings, better understanding of jobs of Board, superintendent and principals in promoting the district, and more direct communication of what is happening in the district.

Hays commented that required Board Member training emphasized that Board Meetings are to conduct business in public but are not a public meeting. There are guidelines that the board has to follow when people do have questions. Individual board members really are not to answer as individuals because then it seems like it is a board answer not that individual's answer. Cullen suggested having Larry Dirks meet with the board again for a self-evaluation and/or other services.

Worth asked about the Five Essentials survey reports from ISBE in 2015. Cullen replied we did not receive full reports on each school because we did not have enough survey respondents.

Hays said maybe get outside help for public forums and not have the Board run the meeting, including possibly using trained facilitators to run the meetings. Another possibility would be to add more frequently asked questions and answers to district webpage and increase factual information on webpage and facebook. The district could also explore new ways of communication, including texting.

The Emergency Plan was then discussed and how a new one is needed immediately because the old one has been released to the public. Cullen reported the new plan will be ready on March 2.

Discussion then moved to ways to increase two-way communication. Suggestions included public meeting (such as breakfast with the board), Town Hall meetings or Community Forums. Board members felt that an immediate step would be to contact Mr. Dirks with IASB for guidance on proposed changes and communication issues.

Cole reminded the board that in open meetings, public comments are not typically answered at the time of comment. Board members can address the President regarding comment for clarification or a simple question of fact may be answered at that time if it does not require research to respond.

5. Public Comment – Connie Schroeder asked the Board to continue using the newspaper because they need to support local businesses, why was public comment at the end of the meeting after voting is all done, and why does it take a whole month to get an answer to a question. Hays replied that the first public comment is before any action item is voted upon. The second comment period is for other topics not on the agenda.

Nikki Harris asked how anyone could find out what policy changes were being proposed. She was told that the Board has a first reading at a meeting, then the

changes are available to the public in the Superintendent's office until the next meeting when the changes or additions are voted on.

Harris then asked what was the problem with posting part of the emergency plan on a Facebook page. Hays replied the concern is if non-school personnel have one piece, then they have the entire plan. When the new plan is released everyone will only have the part that they need. Hays also replied to questions regarding the January 20th activities at the elementary school. She stated no evacuation was necessary per the first responder. She personally spoke with the first responder and was told evacuation was not necessary because there was not a problem that warranted it.

Dave Harmon requested permission to speak even though he had not completed a public comment form. President Hays gave him permission. He said Board does not understand the community. We elected the Board; we are your constituents; you ran to do a job; and you should not yell at people who have questions.

Harmon does not understand the problem regarding the posting of the emergency plan because other schools post evacuation routes on the walls. Hays responded evacuation routes are only part of the plan.

Hays stated the board has been discussing ways to open up the lines of communication and asked what would you like as ways of communication?

1. Skylert
2. Paper
3. Forums

Nikki Harris asked if inspection stickers could be placed on items that have been inspected and passed. She was advised that items, such as fire extinguishers, requiring inspection already have either stickers on them or certificates posted near the items as required.

Rick Maguire said it might be a good idea to have a Town Hall Meeting once a semester, like an open forum.

Meeting adjourned 10:15 p.m.

President

Secretary