

LEYTON BOARD OF EDUCATION, DISTRICT 17-0003
BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
February 8, 2021 – 6:30 PM

The Leyton Board of Education met Monday, February 8, 2021 at 6:30 P.M. in the High School Multi-Purpose Room. Publicized notice of the meeting was posted in the Sidney Sun-Telegraph, Leyton High School, Leyton JH/Elementary School, at various businesses in the community, and on the www.leytonwarriors.org website on or before February 3, 2021. Said posting gave date, time, and location of the meeting.

1 CALL TO ORDER

1.1 Board President Suzy Ernest called the regular school board meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and gave the location of the Open Meetings Act poster.

1.2 ROLL CALL

1.2.1 The following Board of Education members were present: Ryan Borges, Suzy Ernest, Rol Rushman, and Dave Wiedeman. Absent: None.

1.2.2 The following Administrators were present: Interim Superintendent Chuck Bunner, Elementary/JH Principal Dana Morgan and HS Principal Nick Brost. Absent: None.

1.3 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/COMMUNICATIONS

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Communications were read from the Justin & Jodi Craig and Sherri Craig families.

2 SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS TO THE BOARD

2.1 Senior student Sage Rummel addressed the Board regarding a day trip to Denver on April 9th for the Anatomy & Physiology students and two sponsors to attend a cadaver lab. She stated that total registration costs would be around \$300.00 and they would need transportation.

2.2 STUCO President Zac Henke introduced the members of the Student Council who were in attendance: Brenton Abbott, Hannah Vath, Damyn Russ, Dominick Russ, Chase Rushman, Scout Gamble, Ethan Eckhardt, and Claire Watchorn. He stated that STUCO had three official meetings since his last report and that the members were excited to show off their new hoodies, especially since they were designed by student Hannah Vath. He provided updates on the canned goods drive, the beanie fundraiser, and the shoe drive. The STUCO Corn Hole Tournament is scheduled for February 20th and all are welcome to come and enjoy. STUCO Treasurer Dominick Russ addressed the Board with his financial report. He stated that they had researched the bank CD and would like to withdraw it in March. Those funds will be used for the installation of a water fountain/bottle filler by the main office and improvements at the football concession stand.

2.3 HS Principal Nick Brost recognized the Basic Nursing Assistant students (Ella Draper, Katy Jones, and Kylie Scott) for completing their course work. They will take their final exam on February 12th at WNCC in Scottsbluff. He congratulated them and wished them luck on their test.

3 HEARINGS AND PERSONS TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

3.1 Mr. Cary Linton addressed the Board regarding recent decisions by the Board. He stated that his comments were not personal, but were directed to them as an elected board. He discussed the recent controversies including the Board President placing the Superintendent on paid administrative leave, the Board hiring an interim superintendent, and changing legal counsel; all without board approval. He believes the board is operating on a predetermined agenda. Mr. Linton asked the Board to look closely at the board member candidates' qualifications. He also suggested that the Board reorganize its officers at the March meeting as a gesture for healing.

3.2 Mr. Stuart Morgan stated he has not attended many school board meetings but felt compelled to do so with concerns regarding the process of Mr. Geary's leave. He wanted to know what Mr. Geary did in the eight days the new board had been in session that warranted his removal with only the President's authority and not board action. Only in an emergency situation should this action be taken. Never in his forty years of board service has he seen a president take this action. Mr. Morgan stated, "Due process should be given even if there was a prior dislike or predetermined agenda. If there are no proven allegations or criminal conducts Mr. Geary should not be on paid administrative leave. He should be given a list of deficiencies, an opportunity to

respond, and a reasonable amount of time to correct them. This did not happen. As a result of such an investigation a decision by the entire board could have been made. This would avoid a need for an interim superintendent. You are still liable for your actions.” Mr. Morgan continued, “Mr. Geary being on paid administrative leave indicates he hasn’t been found guilty of any charges. Mr. Bunner’s contract can be ended whenever Mr. Geary returns. Allowing Mr. Geary to continue would avoid the huge disruption for the students. Mr. Geary has done more to improve the quality of our buildings and grounds. The gym floor was redone with no cost due to floor sponsors. He organized volunteers to make improvements for considerable savings. Extracurriculars are important but classroom education by teachers is the most important. The first news reported on KSID radio stated Mr. Geary received criticism over not renewing the contract of the volleyball coach.” Mr. Morgan wanted to know what started the controversy and what the problem is. He felt that the way this has been handled is very disruptive, caused a huge division in the community, and that we may lose students and staff. These actions could result in considerable legal fees and possible settlement resulting in increased taxes or bankruptcy causing a need to merge with another district. Mr. Morgan doesn’t want to lose the district. He stated, “You are not guilty until proven innocent but innocent until proven guilty.”

3.3 Mrs. Jennifer Eckhardt expressed concerns that the actions taken both individually and as a board over the last month could have potential consequences: “The news reports and social media spats confirm for the world the large divide in our community; amazing teachers/administrators will leave and new teachers will only come here if they cannot get another job; prospective teachers are withdrawing their applications; district is facing long, costly legal battles; tax levies increase if families move their property to other districts; the concerns and wishes of the majority are not represented by this Board; many of our families will seek education elsewhere and the school population declines in such a way that our district is dissolved. We wish to avoid these consequences and that is why we are here tonight.” Mrs. Eckhardt spent six years on a board of education in Texas and realizes it is a difficult and often thankless job. She had two very simple ideas: Let’s eliminate “us vs. them,” and Let’s fix this. Her ideas for fixing the “us vs. them”: “Talk to the parents, the staff, and teachers; Be genuinely interested; Be especially curious about opinions that don’t match your opinions; seek first to understand, then to be understood; and if you can’t represent the majority, you have an ethical obligation to step down.” For the community she suggested: “recognize courage, especially given what we’ve just experienced, that is required for someone to serve on the board, especially the new members; resolve to be part of the solution. Join a committee, come to board meetings, volunteer your time and role model for your kids, show them and talk to them about what good leadership and citizenship look like”. Mrs. Eckhardt’s suggestions for doing the “Let’s fix this”: “You’ve demonstrated the power and authority to move quickly. Here are a few suggestions for the next actions: Adopt and enforce an anti-nepotism policy; employ good human resources practices and policies that keep the district out of legal jeopardy; choose board members that are objective and will consider all the facts and reconsider any policies that allow an individual or small group to make decisions without consultation with or consensus of the entire board.” Mrs. Eckhardt respectfully requested that the board take necessary steps to restore the trust of the public.

3.4 Mrs. Kelly Reimers thanked the Board for giving the community an opportunity to speak. She thanked the staff for working extra hours when the District was without a superintendent for twelve days. She expressed concern that the board president made the decision to put the superintendent on paid leave without first consulting with the board; she said “although she has that right it doesn’t mean she should and what else will she do just because she can.” Mrs. Reimers also expressed her concern that KSB Law Firm fired the District as a client. She said, “This leads me to believe there is something seriously wrong going on for this to happen. I don’t know how to solve these problems but if we stick to the facts I want to be part of the solution so Leyton can continue to exist. I long for a culture at Leyton where everyone can be more kind, compassionate, generous, funny, creative and loving.”

4 PROSPECTIVE BOARD MEMBER INTERVIEWS

4.1 APPLICANT INTERVIEWS

There were four candidates who applied for the two open board member vacancies: Sam Schumacher, Lisa Carter, Ashely Boman, and Kevin Henke. Prior to the interviews, Kevin Henke asked that his application be resigned. The three remaining candidates were each asked the same five questions and took turns in giving their responses.

4.2 SELECTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Moved by Mr. Borges, seconded by Mr. Rushman to have Sam Schumacher become a board member. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Borges, Ernest, Rushman, and Wiedeman. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 4-0.

Moved by Mr. Wiedeman, seconded by Mr. Borges to have Lisa Carter become a board member. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Borges, Ernest, Rushman, and Wiedeman. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 4-0.

4.3 OATH OF OFFICE

The Oath of Office was administered by Mrs. Ernest and recited by the new Board members.

4.4 COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

The following Committee Appointments were made by Mrs. Ernest:

Budget/Negotiations (3):	Ernest, Carter, Wiedeman
Building/Grounds (2):	Rushman, Schumacher
Curriculum/American Civics (3):	Borges, Rushman, Wiedeman
Safety (1):	Carter
Security/Crisis (1):	Schumacher
School Improvement (1):	Wiedeman
Transportation (1):	Borges
Technology (1):	Borges
Wellness (1):	Carter

5 REPORTS

5.1 BOARD REPORTS

None

5.2 STAFF MEMBERS REPORT

None

5.3 ELEMENTARY/JH PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Mrs. Morgan reported that the sewer line at the Gurley site was fixed today. In the past month, she participated in the Systematic Supervision Training and attended the HAL Robotics event at the high school with 18 students. She served as the Leyton representative for the NDE ESSA visit, along with Mrs. Rathman, to ensure Title 1 compliance. As of February 5th, Mrs. Morgan has fulfilled 151 days out of 220 on her 2020-2021 contract.

5.4 SECONDARY PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Mr. Brost reported that he completed three CogAT Testing training seminars and attended a Nebraska PreACT Webinar and an ACT Test Administration Webinar. He visited the VALTS/ESU open house with Ms. Primm and Mrs. Rios. Mr. Brost attended 2 away activities and hosted 6 home activities.

5.5 SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Bunner reported that the Fire Marshall recently made an inspection and found our buildings to be in compliance. Two areas of concern were handicapped seating accessibility in the gymnasium and the use of "Push to Exit" buttons on two doors at the high school and two doors at the elementary/junior high. He added that a boiler inspection, earlier in the year, revealed a need for upgrades in two areas: replacing a ladder leading down to the boiler and repositioning a chain restraint. He reported that these items have been corrected. Mr. Bunner stated that he made the decision for the wrestling team to travel and stay overnight for sub districts in Maxwell due to inclement weather. He also gave an update on the sewer line problem at Gurley and his recommendations for the agenda items.

6 REGULAR AGENDA

6.1 EXCUSING A BOARD MEMBER

None

6.2 SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Motion by Borges, seconded by Wiedeman to recognize the January Good Citizens (Kindergarten-Wyatt Martin, 1st-Levi Roelle, 2nd-Carter Jensen, 3rd-Zayden Slaughter, 4th-Paige Frerichs, 5th-Carter Lipska, 6th-Madison Frerichs, 7th-Faith Lee and 8th-Ella Haley); to Auvi Cranmore, Claire Eckhardt, Elizabeth Higgins, Katie Eckhardt, Halle Carter, and Isabella Fischer for representing Leyton Elementary/JH in the Cheyenne County Spelling Bee; to Shawn Syverson for sharing his robotics knowledge with our HAL students; and to the high school Boys and Girls Basketball teams for each placing 3rd at the MAC Conference Basketball Tournament. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Ernest, Rushman, Wiedeman, Carter, Schumacher, and Borges. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.

6.3 APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES – REGULAR & SPECIAL MEETINGS

Motion by Wiedeman, seconded by Borges to approve the minutes of the Regular School Board Meeting on January 11, 2021; the Special Board Meeting on January 22, 2021; and the Special Board Meeting on January 29, 2021. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Rushman, Wiedeman, Borges, and Ernest. VOTING NO – None. ABSTAIN – Carter and Schumacher. MOTION CARRIED: 4-0.

6.4 APPROVAL OF REPORTS

Motion by Rushman, seconded by Borges to approve reports presented at this meeting. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Wiedeman, Carter, Schumacher, Borges, Ernest, and Rushman. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.

6.5 APPROVAL OF CLAIMS, WARRANTS, AND TRANSFERS

Motion by Borges, seconded by Rushman to approve the claims, warrants, and transfers. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Borges, Ernest, Rushman, and Wiedeman. VOTING NO – None. ABSTAIN: Carter and Schumacher. MOTION CARRIED: 4-0.

6.6 RATIFY INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT CONTRACT

Motion by Rushman, seconded by Borges to ratify Mr. Chuck Bunner’s Interim Superintendent contract. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Borges, Ernest, Rushman, and Wiedeman. VOTING NO – None. ABSTAIN: Carter and Schumacher. MOTION CARRIED: 4-0.

6.7 SCIENCE ROOM RENOVATION BIDS

Discussion was held on the bid that was received and that it was significantly higher than a year ago. Ideas were generated for doing it in two phases; getting grants written to help with the payment; and checking on asbestos removal.

Motion by Rushman, seconded by Borges to table action on the science room renovation bid until next month. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Ernest, Rushman, Wiedeman, Carter, Schumacher, and Borges. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.

6.8 ACTION ON BUILDING FUND CD

Motion by Borges seconded by Wiedeman to renew the Building Fund CD for another 6 months. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Rushman, Wiedeman, Carter, Schumacher, Borges, and Ernest. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.

6.9 REVIEW OF POLICIES #2001, #2003-#2009

Motion by Schumacher, seconded by Carter to table the review of Board Policies #2001, #2003-#2009 until next month to give the new members time to review. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Wiedeman, Carter, Schumacher, Borges, Ernest, and Rushman. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.

6.10 REVISION OF POLICY #2002

Motion by Borges, seconded by Rushman to revise Policy #2002 (Organization of the Board, Board Officers, Check Signing, and Committees) with the noted changes in Paragraph 3 (3a & 3b). ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Carter, Schumacher, Borges, Ernest, Rushman, and Wiedeman. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.

- 6.11 TIME CHANGE FOR REGULAR BOARD MEETINGS
Motion by Schumacher, seconded by Borges to move the starting time of regular Board meetings to 7:00 p.m. all year, with the possible exception of July. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Schumacher, Borges, Ernest, Rushman, Wiedeman, and Carter. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.
- 6.12 APPROVAL OF OVERNIGHT STAY FOR STATE WRESTLING
Discussion was held on the qualifying procedures for state wrestling and the timeline for travel and participation. Motion by Borges, seconded by Wiedeman to approve an overnight stay for State Wrestling. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Borges, Ernest, Rushman, Wiedeman, Carter, and Schumacher. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.
- 6.13 APPROVAL OF SCIENCE TRIP TO DENVER
Motion by Borges, seconded by Schumacher to approve the A&P students’ science trip to Denver with Mr. Henderson and Mrs. Henke as the sponsors. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Ernest, Rushman, Wiedeman, Carter, Schumacher, and Borges. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.
- 6.14 APPROVAL OF INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT AS THE DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE
Motion by Rushman, seconded by Wiedeman to approve the Interim Superintendent, Chuck Bunner, as the official representative of the District for State and Federal Forms. ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Rushman, Wiedeman, Carter, Schumacher, Borges, and Ernest. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.
- 6.15 APPROVAL OF NASB MEMBERSHIP
Motion by Rushman, seconded by Borges to renew membership with the Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB). ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Wiedeman, Carter, Schumacher, Borges, Ernest, and Rushman. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.

7 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- 7.1 Board Training via Zoom: February 10, 2021 at 4:00 PM – HS Library
7.2 Next Regular Board Meeting: March 8, 2021 at 7:00 PM

8 MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Borges, seconded by Carter to adjourn the regular school board meeting at 8:29 PM.
ROLL CALL VOTE: VOTING YES – Carter, Schumacher, Borges, Ernest, Rushman, and Wiedeman. VOTING NO – None. MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.

Rol Rushman, Board Secretary

Janella Kruse, Recording Secretary