

# **BIG SPRING SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Newville, Pennsylvania**

## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2015**

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### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Committee of the Whole of the Board of School Directors for the Big Spring School District met in the Big Spring High School Large Group Room, Room 140, at 7:02 P.M. with President Wilbur Wolf, Jr., presiding. Six (6) directors present: Wilbur Wolf, Jr., President; William Swanson, Vice President; Robert Lee Barrick, Secretary; Richard Norris; William Piper; and Richard Roush.

Kingsley Blasco joined the meeting in progress at 7:07 P.M.

David Gutshall, Treasurer, and John McCrea were absent.

Others in attendance: Richard W. Fry, Superintendent; Kevin C. Roberts, Jr., Assistant Superintendent; Brandie Shatto, Director of Educational Technology and Public Relations (via Internet from Rhode Island); Richard E. Kerr, Jr., Business Manager; Rick Gilliam, Supervisor of Transportation and Buildings and Grounds; Mr. William Gillet, Director of Pupil Services; Ms. Abigail Leonard, Assistant Supervisor of Special Education; Curtis Garland, The Valley Times-Star; and Brenda Line, Board Minutes.

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**II. PRESENTATIONS**

**A. Chromebook Purchase Overview -**

**Ms. Brandie Shatto, Director of Educational Technology and Public Relations**

Ms. Shatto appeared live via Internet from Rhode Island and offered a presentation regarding reasons why the early Chromebook purchase is important to the District. Please refer to the attached presentation.

The following additional items were noted:

1. Teachers are using the Chromebooks to improve instruction, and elementary teachers are ready for the devices now.
2. Chromebooks from Grade 8 as well as the Chromebooks from seniors who have chosen not to take keep devices after graduation would be placed at the elementary level.
3. Early purchase avoids the summer rush on device purchases for schools. Delivery is now seven to ten days; however, last fall it was the middle of September before the devices were received because of backorders during the summer rush.
4. The devices will be ready to present at orientation night so that parents and students learn care instructions with the devices in hand.
5. Dell is offering the newest model at last year's price, \$142,165 for 600 Chromebooks and management licenses.
6. Mr. Kerr explained that there is no corresponding revenue to go against the purchase, so the Chromebooks would be purchased using fund balance that was designated for technology.
7. Mr. Fry noted that this is the first step in putting a Chromebook cart in every grade. The next step would be to address 1:1 initiative in Grades 3 through 5.

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**II. PRESENTATIONS (Continued)**

**B. Special Education Monitoring Report**

Mr. William Gillet, Director of Pupil Services

Ms. Abigail Leonard, Assistant Supervisor of Special Education

Mr. Gillet and Ms. Leonard offered a "state of the department" presentation for special education using a computer-generated presentation. Please refer to the attached document.

Mr. Gillet and Ms. Leonard reviewed the slides and answered questions. The following items were noted in response to questions from the members of the Board of School Directors:

1. There is a large decline in students identified with learning disabilities; however, there is an increase in students diagnosed with autism, which may be the result of delayed identification of those autistic students. Most special education numbers have remained the same over the last five years. However, the following autistic fluctuation is expected in the next year: This year there are 4 autistic students at the high school; next year there will be 8 autistic students; the following year there will be 16 autistic students. This year there are 9 autistic students at the middle school; next year there will be 16 autistic students. The autistic student enrollment is expected to continue to increase.
2. Only eight autistic students are permitted in one classroom. Many autistic students are in mainstream classes as well. The IEP team determines if students must be placed in an autism program exclusively or if they can be mainstreamed.
3. The consortium has saved the District more than \$900,000 in special education costs (refer to Slide 4).
4. New Story is a program that is intensive for autism.
5. Some special education and mental health placements at Big Spring are the result of court appointments.
6. Big Spring has earned a reputation for having a good and solid special education program.
7. The Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY) federal and state investigations of River Rock and Big Spring went well, although results are not expected for months. River Rock was chosen for review because it is considered an exemplary program. Investigators were individuals from the federal and state departments of education.
8. Big Spring pays approximately \$7 million for special education in a \$45 million budget, the equivalent of 12 to 15 percent of the budget to support 18 to 20 percent of the students. The consortium is critical to providing affordable programs that the students deserve.
9. Big Spring's achievement level for special education is virtually unparalleled locally. Big Spring's special needs students perform wonderfully. Ms. Kay Gillet supervises the transition programs that help students achieve some level of employability to help with sustaining wages for a life.

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**II. PRESENTATIONS (Continued)**

**B. Special Education Monitoring Report (Continued)**

Mr. Gillet thanked the Board for the opportunity offer an update on Big Spring's special education programs.

President Wolf thanked Mr. Gillet and Ms. Leonard for their presentation.

**III. PREVIEW OF THE AGENDA**

**A. Combine and Address**

President Wolf requested that the Board address XI., NEW BUSINESS, A., PERSONNEL CONCERNS, Items A-1 through A-12, as a single action item.

**B. XI., NEW BUSINESS, B., Business Items, 5., Accept Paving Bid**

President Wolf indicated that the agenda should be revised to reflect that the administration recommended that the Board accept a 1.5-inch overlay at a reduced cost of \$317,132 in the XI., NEW BUSINESS, B., Business Items, Accept Paving Bid item (Oak Flat).

**C. XI., NEW BUSINESS, B., Business Items, 2., Approval of Chromebook Purchase**

In response to a question from Director Blasco, Mr. Fry indicated that because of feedback from the elementary schoolteachers, the opportunity to buy the Chromebooks at last year's prices, and the availability, the administration recommends purchasing the laptops early. Mr. Fry added that this expedited purchase wasn't considered months ago because the inspiration was formed only recently. The purchase plan was already in place for 2015-2016. Early purchase will speed the delivery time and enhance the implementation of the devices.

**IV. BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE**

Please refer to this evening's Buildings and Property Committee meeting minutes.

**V. FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The next meeting of the Finance Committee is on April 9, 2015, at 7:00 p.m. in the District Office Conference Room.

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**VI. DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE**

No discussion.

**VII. BOARD POLICY REVIEW**

No discussion.

**VIII. ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR**

No discussion.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Norris, seconded by Swanson to adjourn. Roll call vote: Voting Yes: Blasco, Norris, Piper, Roush, Barrick, Swanson, and Wolf. Motion carried unanimously. 7 - 0

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 P.M.



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Robert Lee Barrick, Secretary