

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SOMERSET
BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL SESSION
MONDAY, JUNE 4, 2012, 7:00 PM
Learning Center Conference Room**

MINUTES

President Brian Moulton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were board members Brian Moulton, Robert Gunther, Marie Colbeth, Kelly Ott, and Tim Witzmann. Tom Walters arrived at 7:02 p.m. Mike Connor was absent.

Witzmann moved, with second by Colbeth, to approve the agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

Board Professional Development: Moulton introduced Mr. Paul Hardt, Governance Consultant with the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) and thanked him for coming tonight. Moulton then asked Superintendent Randy Rosburg to summarize the purpose of tonight's special board session. Rosburg stated the board was looking for an opportunity for professional development during their upcoming summer board retreat; Witzmann contacted Hardt to come out to talk with the board to help provide insight in this area before the retreat.

Hardt thanked the board for inviting him, and provided a brief background of his career where he started as a teacher in the Mounds View, MN School District, and then went on to business training and organizational development. Hardt started working with WASB three years ago, and has worked with dozens of school districts in Western WI including several CESA's. Hardt was also a New Brighton City Council Member for several years, so has been seated as a public official much like school board members. He then asked the board members to introduce themselves, and noted the Somerset School Board is made up of citizens with a fair amount of differences and experiences.

Hardt then asked board members what topics they would like to discuss at their retreat and gave them some topic examples. The first example was to have a board orientation session similar to the orientation WASB does each year for newly elected school board members.

Another example was a board assessment tool based on key works of high-performing school boards and looking at best practices. Hardt stated that approximately eight years ago the National School Board Association (NSBA) looked at best practices of high-performing school boards and came up with a model of eight competencies and sub behaviors that boards have that are representative of high-performing boards.

Hardt stated there may be some specific topics of three or four different approaches, or a combination of topics, that the board would like to discuss. He then asked board members what they would like to discuss at the board retreat. Answers from board members included:

- Provide a board orientation session for all board members.
- Celebrate differences of board members, while continuing to function well together as a board.
- Provide a board assessment tool before the retreat. Hardt said he will send the board members a link to this survey tool.
- Board transition and understanding and response to change. How does the board approach those transitions? Hardt said he can share best practices of other boards with this group.
- Board roles and responsibilities.

- Board etiquette topics and behaviors.
- Making Roberts Rules work for the board.
- Hardt asked if the board has ever considered a “committee of the whole” approach, stating this is a step or process that allows free board discussion without being nailed down to Robert’s Rules.
- Hardt asked if the board has published its board etiquette for the public. He stated many school boards post those rules so that the public is aware of what is expected during board meetings.
- Witzmann said he’s heard the difficulty that board members have in discussing non-action items. He said the board seems to be uncomfortable having a discussion during board meetings of issues that are not tied to actions, and would like to address this issue.
- Witzmann also indicated he believes the local media has a perception that board decisions are made before board meetings because of the role the committee plays, or because the rationale and research the administration team brings forward makes it easy for the board to support the topic. Hardt stated if the public is unaware of the structure of the board, including the role board committee’s play, this could be perceived as a problem; however, a solution may be discussed during the retreat.
- Hardt said the board may want to consider communicating more with the public about the role of the board and processes used. He stated the board may want to regularly visit or review their board processes as an outcome of the retreat.
- Hardt said the board needs to question what is healthy for a board in order for it to function well.

Hardt indicated the board retreat will be very interactive with open discussion among the board members. He stated it is a great opportunity to get on the same page with the Superintendent, and to review the differences between what the administrator does and what the board does. Hardt stated action items may come out of the retreat as well, though many boards may not feel comfortable opening up in a public format.

Hardt then asked how the board receives and/or discusses recommendations and topics. Tim summarized the board process, stating the board has five committees made up of three board members on each committee, so discussion is done at the committee level, not the board level. Recommendations or discussions from the committees are then brought forward to the full board each month for approval or further discussion. Moulton wondered how many other board committee methods Hardt has seen. Hardt said three or four typically dominate, and some boards don’t have committees, while other boards may have committees with public citizens as members of those committees.

Hardt ended by saying he will pull together an assessment survey and an agenda and send it to the BOE. A board retreat date is yet to be determined. Board discussed best dates to hold the retreat and decided upon Monday, July 23 from 5:00 p.m. through 9:00 p.m. Location is yet to be determined, though Hardt recommended a more informal setting which may serve the board better. He also minded the board the meeting will need to be posted. Computers will not be necessary at this meeting, only a flip chart, and Hardt will take notes on the flip chart. Board said they will discuss and decide on a location within the next month or so.

Colbeth moved, with second by Gunther, to adjourn at 7:57 p.m. Motion carried.

Brian Moulton, President

Marie Colbeth, Board Clerk