

AITKIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- MEDIA CENTER

306 SECOND STREET NW

AITKIN MINNESOTA 56431

SPECIAL SCHOOL

BOARD MEETING

MONDAY, AUGUST 9, 2021

7:00 PM

Minutes

1. Call meeting to order by the chairperson.

Chairman Dennis Hasskamp called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll call by the clerk.

In attendance were Dennis Hasskamp, Noel Bailey, Jeremy Janzen, Kevin Hoge, Joe Ryan, Dawn Houser and Cindi Hills. All members in attendance.

3. Pledge of Allegiance.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4. Approval of agenda - revise or remove as needed.

Mr. Ryan made the motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Hoge seconded the motion. All members were in favor, motion passed.

5. *Comments from visitors.

5.A. Comments from visitors must be informational in nature and not exceed five (5) minutes per issue. The Board cannot engage in a discussion or debate in this five minutes but will take the information and find answers if that is appropriate. As part of board protocol, it is unacceptable for any speaker to slander or engage in character assassination at a public board meeting.

Jennifer Cummings and Mike Olson both shared their opinions on Critical Race Theory and to not teach it. Dani Owen shared her disappointment in not having the meeting recorded last week and that CRT is being discussed at the wrong time with a Capital Projects Levy to be passed in November. Do not lose the focus!

5. Scheduled presentations: (Max. 10 Minutes)

There were no scheduled presentations.

7. New business:

7.A. Discuss Critical Race Theory

Mr. Stifter wished to make it clear that Critical Race Theory is not being taught at Aitkin Public Schools. CRT is becoming mostly politicized. We do not teach it. He went on to say that we need to look at what unites us and work on our commonalities. He does not want to lose the community and focus right now.

Mr. Ryan asked for courtesy for full transparency on the issue. CRT is coming to all schools unless we decide to not allow that. Good teachers challenge students to think critically. He went on to say that this needs to be discussed. It is coming to public education. It needs to be answered.

Ms. Hills agreed with what had been discussed and wanted to reiterate that this is not a part of our standards. She would like to table any discussions until after the Capitol Projects Levy.

She addressed that this does not come out until 2024. It is still in the Review and comment stage. It's in the 2nd reading.

Ms. Houser stated that what CRT was and what it is she can't wrap her arms around it. It is based on fear. We need to teach accurate history. She suggested we have a board member on a state committee for this.

Mr. Bailey stated we are all equal in this room and shared his history on being discriminated against.

Mr. Hasskamp said we are not teaching and it is not in our standards. That is where the emphasis should be.

Mr. Hoge asked for a link for review and comment on our website.

Ms. Hills made a motion to table it until after the November Capital Projects Levy is done. Ms. Houser seconded the motion.

Mr. Ryan stated again that transparency matters. Questioning Ms. Hills "don't we deserve to know how we will take the district forward? CRT? Will it be taught? We are all behind the Capital Projects levy. Mr. Hoge encouraged that if something big changes, Mr. Stifter will bring it to the Board and the principals. Ms. Houser added that if something comes up with curriculum in the meantime, we will talk about it.

Mr. Hasskamp called for roll call on this. Voting yes: Cindi Hills, Dawn Houser, Kevin Hoge, Noel Bailey, Dennis Hasskamp. Voting No: Joe Ryan, Jeremy Janzen. 5/2 vote to table until after November's Capital Projects Levy passes.

7.B. Add informational educational website links to the school website.

Ms. Hills shared that to include a link to the MDE (Minnesota Department of Education) site would be fine with her, but not including links that are political in nature. Politics should not be in the schools. Mr. Ryan thought that was bias. This would be educational news: Advocacy, NEA, EDmn, American Federation of Teachers. It would all be informational organizations. This would not be a site for chat.

Ms. Hills announced that Mr. Ryan sends daily news from Alpha News to the whole board. Board members have requested him to stop. As a school board it is not appropriate. It is not appropriate to share on a school website and is not appropriate at the Board table. People can research themselves at home. The Board is receiving emails and forwarded cartoons from Mr. Ryan. She wants to be non-partisan. Ms. Houser agreed that the website and information would need to be controlled by Administration. What one person considers credible is not for another. Let's send this to the Policy Committee to determine if we need a policy or not. Ms. Hills added that people will think the school supports these links. If school board members want to start an individual blog and post to it, that would be best for board members.

Mr. Ryan motioned that the district develop a tab on the school's website for educational links and Educational Advocacy and news. Mr. Janzen seconded the motion. Ms. Hills stated that if we pass this it is just the beginning of the fight that is coming - politics. Ms. Hills stated to Mr. Ryan that if we do not agree with you, you shove it down our throats. We don't want emails and politics. Mr. Hasskamp agreed that someone would need to be in charge of it. Ms. Houser added we cannot do this without a policy. Mr. Ryan agreed to amend his original motion. Mr.

Janzen seconded it. Mr. Ryan made the motion to have ISD 1 adopt and develop a policy to create an educational news and advocacy site for "links only" tab on website. Mr. Janzen seconded the motion.

Mr. Hasskamp called for roll call: to approve the motion the following members voted in favor: Joe Ryan, Jeremy Janzen, Dennis Hasskamp. The following voted against it: Dawn Houser, Cindi Hills, Kevin Hoge, Noel Bailey. Motion fails 4/3.

8. Adjourn.

Mr. Hasskamp asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Houser made the motion to adjourn. Ms. Hills seconded it. All members were in favor. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Aulie,

Administrative Assistant

Cindi Hills,

Board Clerk

Published in the

Aitkin Independent Age

October 13, 2021

1173685