

MINUTES

Jefferson High School Dist. 1  
Regular Meeting

May 24, 2011  
JHS Library

Board members present:

**Diane Lorenzen**  
**Kathy Jackson**

**Stan Senechal**  
**Sabrina Stekete**

**Lynne Bryant**  
**Pat Lewis**

Administrators present:

James Whealon, Superintendent

Lorie Carey, Business Manager

Visitors: Maria Pace, Fritz Bieler, Barb Reiter, Colleen Llewellyn, Laura Llewellyn, Terry Minow, Kessie Strausser, Cathy Carey, Carol Christenen, Karen Davidson, Steve Olson, Leah Compton, Trudy Dawson, Jack Dawson, Samantha Humphrey, Tresa Smith, Brud Smith, Shaelie Palmer, Chantel Palmer, Nicole Palmer, Jan Anderson, Laura Butler, Gene Compton, Brian Ehli, Darren Wood, Brian Hattersley

**CALL BOARD TO ORDER** Ms. Jackson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The pledge was said.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Stekete read a statement outlining the factors that lead to the decision to reduce the art position ½ time. It is included with these minutes.

The chair stated that the levy that the board ran for \$60,000 didn't pass and enrollment is declining.

Ms. Dawson was given the opportunity to respond. She stated that art is a huge drawing card for the school. She went on to describe the impact art has on all the students and the school as a whole. She did mention that at least one student intends to go to Helena if the art program is reduced. Ms. Dawson continued presenting several pieces of media in defense of her program, including letters from former students.

Darren Wood and Brian Hattersley both spoke in support of the art program and Brian said that they were well prepared for the art classes taken. He continued that it was important for this to be available for high school students and expressed his appreciation for the education received from JHS. Andy Giulio added that art has contributed to his income every month during and since high school.

Ms. Dawson had previously asked for suggestions from her students to fund art. Reduction of art supplies, sell art, pay-as-you-go, spend less on the art room were some of the ideas presented.

Ms. Stekete asked Ms. Dawson if the number of disciplines offered affected the outcome of students in their career choices. That data wasn't available.

Ms. Lorenzen stated that other part-time arts programs have survived – music, film, drama, etc.

Mr. Senechal asserted that the decision didn't come lightly. He felt that the failure of the mill levy was a deciding factor.

**Terry Minow** spoke for her family in support of a full-time art program and Ms. Dawson as that teacher. She submitted a letter from herself, one from her daughter Brady, one from her daughter Darby and one from Michael Haiken (a judge for the art show). Ms. Minow felt that cutting the art program would cut the quality of JHS.

**Leah Compton** felt that the flexibility offered by the art program was invaluable. Working for the Forest Service, she has had to use the skills she gained from Ms. Dawson's class for preparing pamphlets to teach others about noxious weeds.

**Brian Hattersley** felt that each art class (discipline) had its own special contribution to the program and to cut any one of them would be detrimental.

**Karen Davidson** submitted her letter in support of the art program remaining at full-time. She has been a judge at the art shows.

**Tresa Smith** supported the levy and gave her comments supporting the program.

**Chantel Palmer** said that art is the reason she gets up in the morning and comes to school.

**Brud Smith**, JHS graduate and former board member, felt that cutting the program was like throwing Ms. Dawson halfway under the bus. Cutting the art program sends a message to students that are coming up that our school is losing quality. He felt that the hard rock money was for a rainy day and this was it.

**Colleen Llewellyn**, after listening to what the people had said, asked that the board revisit options to finance the program.

**Barb Reiter** has judged the art show and has been very impressed by the students and their work.

**Nicole Palmer**, mother of Chantel and Shaelie, stated that even though her daughters have natural talent for art, Ms. Dawson has developed those talents and helped the girls. Social constructivism is the new buzz word in education and art will contribute greatly to that.

**Brian Ely**, MEA/MFT, was asked by Bruce Dyer (BAT president) to address the board. He submitted the RIF letter that was given RaeCille occurred before the levy failed. He added that the district has about \$750,000 in hard rock funds to be used for this. In addition, Ms. Dawson has additional endorsements in which she has seniority – business. A complication with this is that the May 15 deadline has passed and thus the “bumped” teacher wouldn’t have the opportunity to receive proper notification. He addressed the procedural issue that notification to the teacher supposedly wasn’t followed.

Ms. Steketee asked Mr. Ely if there was a ruling about the superintendent not being a representative of the board to accomplish the 20-4-204 (2) requirement “...the trustees shall notify the teacher of the recommendation for termination and of the teacher’s right to a hearing on the recommendation.”

Mr. Whealon stated that the board needed to discuss finances.

Ms. Lorenzen asserted that the hard rock fund has been established for the time when the mine closes. That time is now. But to commit money to an on-going expense from a one-time-only pot of money is irresponsible. JHS currently has non-collections of some of our mine revenues and thus are experiencing shortfalls in our cash. Boards make decisions based on the best information that they have at the time. Not always is it good information and may not even be right, but it’s the information that they have at the time. There are many subjective judgment calls that can be made. After this year, this is no way to avoid reductions in staff. As enrollment continues to drop this exacerbates the problem.

Ms Steketee added that the board has had a roof assessment which indicated that many portions of the roof are in need of the repair. Nearly all of the flat roofs will need replacement soon and the pitched roofs are in the waning years of their lives as well. She asked if the state has ways to provide for the funds for repairs. The answer was no.

Ms. Jackson and Mr. Senechal stated that the salaries aren’t sustainable.

Ms. Bryant clarified that the amount of the increase offered to the staff cost the district was about \$55,000. The staff negotiators, exclusive of 1, were clear that the increase would require a staff cut if the levy didn’t pass.

Ms. Jackson stated that the Board would continue to be very conservative.

**Terry Minow**, as a lobby for MEA/MFT, stated that the school, in holding hard rock funds, is putting them at risk. She and **Leah Compton** have been talking about working together to campaign for a mill levy in the coming year. She asked that the board consider using money this year as a stop-gap measure. **Ms. Davidson** stated that she felt that there wasn’t enough pre-levy information given the public concerning the levy.

Mr. Senechal felt that a mail ballot would assist in response and support.

Ms. Bryant addressed the lack of information issue. She felt that somehow community involvement has been lost as indicated by the lack of interest in the board position from Montana City.

Ms. Lorenzen felt that Clancy and Jefferson City voters were looking toward the loss of the mine as a taxpayer. She felt that voters are experiencing hard times.

**Carole Christianson**, judge for the art show, asked what the options were for increasing funds for the school – Is there an option for a levy next year? Is there any way that we can go one more year and try a levy again next year?

Ms. Lorenzen stated that next year the amount of funds available would most likely be down an initial \$100,000.

Reductions have occurred across the board – counseling, library, English, PE, Vo-Tech, Business and Administration.

**Brian Ehli** asked if the board were to reduce RaeCille’s position then does she have the right to “bump” someone who is less tenured. Ms. Lorenzen stated that the staff member needed to initiate the “bumping” of another staff member. Mr. Whealon added that this would produce a ripple effect that causes hard feelings throughout the staff. He added that the board may reconsider new information concerning finances.

**Bruce Smith** asked if decisions could be made in August.

Mr. Senechal moved to adhere to the original decision to reduce the art position to ½-time and that the budget committee meets to reconsider any changes that have occurred since the previous regular board meeting. Ms. Steketee seconded the motion which passed unanimously by the six members present.

**Steve Olson** asked if previously undiscovered funds were found would they be used for art.

**Carol Christianson** asked if other programs were able to be cut. She supported academia rather than sports.

**Ms. Anderson** cautioned the board to avoid e-mail discussions in response to Mr. Senechal’s comment that e-mails were received daily on updated information. The board clarified that these e-mails were from outside sources – OPI, MTSBA, and the like. They were not between board members.

BAT - Ms. Lorenzen moved to approve the BAT contract as negotiated. Mr. Senechal seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

BACE – Ms. Lorenzen moved to approve the BACE contract as negotiated. Mr. Senechal seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Lewis moved to adjourn.

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Chair, Jefferson High School Board

Clerk, Jefferson High School Board

1. Negotiations/Personnel – A. Erickson, P. Lewis, S. Senechal
2. Policy/Handbook – P. Lewis, S. Steketee, L. Bryant
3. Budget/Insurance/Investments – D. Lorenzen, S. Senechal, K. Jackson
4. Building/Grounds/Transportation – K. Jackson, A. Erickson
5. Teaching/Learning – S. Steketee, D. Lorenzen, L. Bryant  
Math & English