SYNOPSIS
URBANA SCHOOL DISTRICT 116
BOARD OF EDUCATION
BUSINESS MEETING
FEBRUARY 21, 2006

Urbana High School will have its first female principal, and we believe the first one to have been a product of Urbana schools as well. The board approved the administrative recommendation last night to name UHS Assistant Principal Laura Taylor to the post being vacated by retiring principal Dr. John Woodward. And the crowd in the room expressed their approval with a standing ovation.

In making the recommendation to the board, Superintendent Gene Amberg described Taylor as an "advocate for improvement." He said she has tremendous classroom sense, great rapport with students, and she is not a lone ranger, but a team player. He cited her tireless working ethic—she's often in the building before 6:30 a.m. and there well into the evening hours. He also said that few people want the job as an urban high school principal, and Taylor has the courage to take on this responsibility.

Taylor joined the Urbana High School staff almost three years ago, coming to us as a special education teacher from Champaign Unit 4.

Also last night, the board heard the most recent EEOC report from Human Resources Director Carmelita Thomas. Our hiring of minority candidates has decreased somewhat in relation to our own budget actions. However, Thomas said the "home grown" program is working and we have our first UHS student, recently graduated from Eastern Illinois University, working as a long-term substitute at Prairie School. Thomas noted though, that as the baby boomers age and retire, we are seeing our candidate pool of minorities dwindle as well.   Thomas's department has also funded minority education to the tune of $12,000 over the past few years to help support staff members pursue education degrees at Parkland, Eastern, and Illinois State University. She said that building relationships with potential candidates is truly the most effective means in hiring those candidates, and retaining them as district employees. Thomas also gave kudos to our staff, who are excellent recruiters.

Deputy Superintendent Preston Williams walked the board through its first reading on the proposed school calendars for 2006/07 and 2007/08. Williams said the committee tried to align the calendars with Unit 4 as much as possible, especially for teacher institute days. He also said the parameters the committee tried to retain throughout the process were to align parent/teacher conferences with early release dates as much as possible to avoid the very long day for teachers when they have conferences at night; include as many full weeks of teaching as possible surrounding winter and spring breaks and inservice training; and to balance the calendar in terms of 1st and 2nd semester in order to accommodate the teaching and exam needs at the middle and high school. The recommendations of the calendar committee, comprised of staff, parents, board members, PTA and PTSA reps, and UEA reps, needs approval at the March 7 board meeting in order to meet various state deadlines.

Members of the Urbana High School Alumni Association presented checks to the fall grant recipients. The association has awarded more than $528,000 in grants to middle and high school staff over the past nine years. (Grants go to these two schools because all the students in the district attend the middle and high schools.). Last night's awardees include: $2,875 to purchase track apparel for the UHS boys' and girls' track teams; $1,000 for the UHS 2006 Student Senate Thanksgiving dinner; $400 to assist four UHS Math Club students who have been invited to join the Rose Hulman Institute of Technology Team competition in the ARML mathematics 2006 spring contest; $8,000 to purchase an amplifier as part of a project improve the sound system in the UMS gymnasium; $1,470 to purchase a projector mount, projector screen, wall mount enclosure security cabinet, speakers wires, and equipment to complete the high-tech level electronic media set-up for the UMS multi-purpose room; and $1,400 for the UMS Robotics Tournament.