

Urbana School District #116 Board of Education Synopsis April 15, 2008

The Urbana School District #116 Board of Education Meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m., by board President Mark Netter. There were four citizen statements. Dr. Sandra Cato spoke to the board in support of the High School Restructuring. Reverend Doctor Evelyn Underwood spoke against the restructuring plan and she read a letter by Robert Lewis that was also critical of the plan. Tatiana Mayes read a letter to the board on behalf of her mother, Carol Arens, in support of the High School Restructuring Plan.

The board then heard a report from Tina Gunsales, President of the Urbana Alumni Association, as she announced the grant recipients for Spring 2008. The grant recipients are:

For UMS:

- \$1000 to purchase Smart Board Technology for the Multi Purpose Room. (Nancy Clinton)
- \$1125 to purchase replacement letters for the UHS / UMS score boards. (Jeremy Darnall and Greg Hall)
- \$195 to purchase theatre tickets for Reading Dimension students. (Leslie McClintock) (Half of request.)
- \$648 to purchase one Elmo HV110U Machine for the Endeavor Team. (Myrtle Followell) (Partial request, please apply again next year.)
- \$785.40 to purchase two Benchmark Education Reader's Theater Sets to use with Reading Dimension students. (Leslie McClintock)

For UHS:

- \$600 to purchase equipment for the Boy's Track Team. Submitted by Willie Taylor. (half of the cost.)
- \$696 to purchase free standing display panels for display purposes. Submitted by Matthew Murrey for the library and art departments.
- \$4600 to purchase computer equipment for the library. Submitted by Matthew Murrey.
- \$360 to pay International High School Video Conference Fees. Submitted by Carol Godoy and the UHS International High School Committee.
- \$180 to pay expenses for the Urbana FFA to attend a conference. Submitted by Mike Martin.
- \$2000 to pay expenses for fees for the Big 12 Golf Tournament at the Urbana Golf and Country Club. Submitted by Greg Hall.

The Urbana School Board then considered the Urbana High School Restructuring Plan. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Don Owen, and Principal Dr. Laura Taylor reviewed the plan that was originally presented April 1. This restructuring plan is mandated by the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. The restructuring plan includes:

- Modify the school day to include additional student support for those who need it
- Have teachers collaborate on ways to increase student achievement
- Survey staff, students, and parents about school climate and student support
- Provide for additional staff development
- Create a Director of Student Achievement and Accountability

There followed an extensive debate over the position of Director of Student Achievement and Accountability. Administrators estimate the salary of such a director would be paid \$70,000. Members Cope Cumpston, Ruth Ann Fisher, and Brenda Carter expressed opposition to the position. Members Mark Netter and John Dimit expressed support. Member Steve Summers expressed reluctant support. The motion to approve the High School Restructuring Plan as presented by District 116 failed on a 3-3 vote (member Benita Rollins-Gay was absent). The

board approved an alternate plan 4-1, with Summers abstaining, to adopt the Restructuring Plan without the position of Director of Student Achievement and Accountability. For more information about the High School Restructuring Plan, please contact Don Owen at Central Office.

The school district then gave options to the school board about the fate of the property at 116 Iowa Street. The options were to demolish the property or to refurbish it (at a cost of \$37,000 - \$40,000) and rent it out. The board indicated that it is not economically feasible to refurbish the property, and indicated that the district should demolish the property. Administrators will come back to the board at a later date with a resolution for demolition.

The Board of Education then discussed the possibility of a countywide sales tax that will generate revenue for building projects. The state law, passed in October of 2007, allows a county to levy up to a 1% sales tax (except for cars, boats, RVs, mobile homes, food, drugs, farm equipment, and farm parts). The revenue from the tax would be proportionally distributed to all public schools in the county to be used for school district land, buildings, structures, and durable equipment. If a 1% sales tax is levied, District 116 could see \$3.1 million per year. The money could be used for "pay as you go" projects, to leverage revenue for current needs, to retire existing debt, or for any combination of the former. The County School Facility Sales Tax would have to be approved in a referendum by county voters and it would require cooperation between all county public school districts. The school board indicated that it would support asking the Champaign County Board to put a referendum on the ballot asking for a referendum on this November's ballot. The school board will formally consider and vote on such a resolution to deliver to the county board at a future meeting.

Board members then approved the consent agenda that consisted of:

- Minutes of previous meetings
- March bills and checks
- April bills and checks
- Interfund loans
- Personnel items
- Appointment of Michael Cain as School Treasurer
- Appointment of BKD, LLP as School Auditor
- Summer School dates of June 11, 2008 to July 22, 2008
- The District-wide cleaning contract extension
- Life safety amendment for King Library Asbestos Removal
- Life safety asbestos removal bid recommendation
- Track resurfacing bid recommendation

The board then gratefully accepted the following gifts:

Anthony Bailey, Hubertus, Wisconsin, donated a variety of photographic equipment to the Urbana High School photo classroom. This donation has an \$800 value.

Buffalo Wild Wings, Champaign, donated \$100 worth of Buffalo Wild Wings to Washington Early Childhood for NAAPID.

Meijer, Champaign, donated a \$100 gift card to Washington Early Childhood to use for NAAPID food purchases.

The following individuals are responsible for the new baseball infield at Prairie Park for the Urbana High School Baseball Program:
Marty Kirby: funded the purchase of the new infield surface (Pro Surface);
Dennis McTaggart – Farmers Ag Service: provided a semi-tractor trailer to haul the material from Northern Illinois, including the driver and fuel;

Tim Ingram – Ingram Nurseries: time and labor for installation. (\$8,000 - 9,000 value)

Administrators asked the board to postpone action on the transportation bid recommendation until a further date.

Ota Dossett, Director of Facilities Services presented to the board the 2008 list of summer work and building improvements at a cost of 1.4 million. The board voted to approve the work.

The board did not make a motion to approve a monetary contribution to the Urbana High School Honors Choir for a trip to the Choral Music Festival in Sandusky, Ohio. Board members stated that they do not want to act on requests for funding piecemeal or on a case-by-case basis. Superintendent Preston Williams suggested that the board allocate funds to schools that will support extra-curricular activities and the decision to spend the money will be made by building administrators.

In the Superintendent's Report, Carol Baker, Director of Finance, reported that the Illinois State Board of Education has placed District 116 into the Financial Recognition range – the highest designation for a school district. ISBE praised District 116 for achieving "excellent financial results."

The school board adjourned at 11:30 p.m. The next meeting of the Urbana School District #116 Board of Education will be Tuesday, May 6, 2008 at 7:30 p.m., at 205 N. Race Street, Urbana.