



Community Unit School District 308

SERVING ALL OR PARTS OF THE COMMUNITIES OF
AURORA, JOLIET, MONTGOMERY, OSWEGO, PLAINFIELD, AND YORKVILLE

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

East View Kindergarten Center – Room 30

Monday, October 26, 2015

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

I. Roll Call

*Meeting called to order at 5:40 p.m. by Board of Education Member and Committee Chair
Mr. Greg O'Neil*

The attendance sheet was used in place of an official roll call

Members in Attendance:

Alexa Backus, Tracy Collander, Anne Elwood, Jamil Nichols, Brian Valek, Natalie Winkfield
Dr. Matthew Wendt, Superintendent
Board Member: Brad Banks
Board Member: Greg O'Neil

Guests in Attendance: Senator Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, Betsy Wycislak

Members Absent: Michael Blaylock, Kevin Harris, Amanda Mancke, Melissa Woolever

Recording Secretary: Ursula Coan

II. Approval of Minutes from September 21, 2015 Meeting

A motion was made by Mr. O'Neil to approve the minutes from the September 21, 2015 meeting. All members in attendance agreed unanimously to approve the minutes as presented.

III. Guest Speaker – State Senator Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant

- The Senator was asked to give the committee an update of where the legislation for SB 1 stands and where we are going with that bill.

SB 16/1 is on hold. Senator Manar has been working behind the scenes with it, but there is no new type of legislation yet.

The house was doing it's own research with the funding. There were a couple of meetings, but then it fizzled out. We will be hearing more about it in the next couple of years. It is a very difficult process because we are not funding education at 100% . With the diversity of our State, we are finding that no matter what we are doing, there are winners and losers. We are trying to take away that piece. We are also trying to relieve property taxes so it is not such a burden on our local tax payers. Overall, we found over the last two years that it is not easy at all. It is becoming a bigger and bigger problem. Basically nobody is willing to tackle it and that's why it is staying the same for now. In the Senate, about 3 or 4 month ago, we voted on a property tax freeze and that within 2 years, we would have an education committee come up with a funding solution to alleviate dollars that are being frozen. As is, SB 1 is halted, but the Senator stated, that nothing ever dies in Springfield.

Senator Manar has not said that the bill will be re-introduced as is.

We need that discussion on education funding. Basically, you are just shifting money, taking it from one district to give to another. The Chicago Public Schools were going to lose with the new bill.

- The Senator was asked to update the committee on the unfunded mandate puzzle

The committee received an updated list of Unfunded Mandates from the Senators office.

The Senator explained that there is a tier system from the least resistant to the most resistant in regards to mandates. With some of the least resistant mandates, you are not going to have big dollar savings. The big savings come with prevailing wage and third party contracts, PE and Drivers Ed. You will have people fight tooth and nail not to have that taken away. Everybody has their pet project or issue. Whatever your job is, there is a lobbyist for you. The intentions are good, but the reality is that we are not going to be able to think of every situation that could occur. My staff and I are taking baby steps. We have looked again at the minimal unfunded mandate that may give you some curriculum relief. We are doing this with the Regional Superintendent's checklist in regards to curriculum. The focus is on giving schools more flexibility. Personally, I am not willing to touch prevailing wage or third party contracts, but I have looked at PE and Drivers Education. I am not a proponent of taking away drivers ed. I am looking to see how other states do it, some kind of modification maybe. The focus is not on getting rid of teachers, nor trying to reduce classrooms, but looking at different formats that schools can use and to give schools more flexibility.

The Senator stated, that she believes there has been more caution used in adding new responsibilities. If there is a mandate that is not funded in a school that can't afford it, you can petition with the Regional Superintendent to not have to do it. With some of them it is really hard to put a dollar amount on it, it is just time used.

- Greg O'Neil asked the Senator about our 49 million construction grant that is owed to us and whether she supported our bill.

The Senator stated yes, she would have supported it and that one can write a bill on anything, but at this point it does not mean that it would get us our money. The interesting part about the bill is, that part of the money would have been used to abate bonds which would have given the community a tax relief. The bill passed the House, but it was not called in the Senate. It is possible that it could come back around.

- Greg O’Neil asked the Senator about the relationship between Legislators and the Governor.

The relationship with the Governor is not very good and it is unfortunate. The leaders have not met since May, the budget has been vetoed, but there is not an alternative. It is pretty bad, since some issues that the Governor wants addressed, are too big to be tied to a budget. Those issues can take years. It is a tough situation.

- Is there anything the voters can do?

We have a stubborn Governor and he is used to operating like this. There were about six people that voted no every time on the budget, but he never reached out to them to find out why. Most of us Legislators are willing to work with people, but we are not given the opportunity. You can call the Governor’s office and your Legislators, but I think they will tell you the same thing, we can’t do anything and I really don’t have any answers as to what you can do. You are doing the right thing as far as asking questions and educating yourselves.

- Did they pass some temporary budget?

The Governor has vetoed everything except for education, but obviously we are still spending, things have not shut down. Technically he should not be spending it because he said no to how legislation appropriated it.

He gets to choose where the money goes. He shut some things down and agencies are very slow to get the money, therefore they are struggling.

The gap is getting bigger and everything is at the very least staying stagnant.

Technically they are getting what they received last year. The payments are on time, at least with education.

It makes you wonder what the tipping point is. If it was a school, you would put the children in a classroom and tell them to work it out.

There are truly philosophical differences. Are there no checks and balances for the Governor? Who does he answer to? How long can this go on?

There are no answers because we have never seen this before.

There was some discussion about where the State is going with the ACT. It would be a risk if we go over to SAT. Too many unknowns with the version of this test. There are some changes with the ACT, but not like the SAT, it is completely revamped. Alexa Backus stated that she thinks those changes are going to be dangerous. Huntington Learning Center is advocating the ACT right now.

The Senator stated that when ISBE makes changes to anything, there are no Legislators involved. Actually, you can have zero knowledge on a bill and still vote.

It was brought up, that it would be damaging to Illinois students if we convert to SAT. Our children are not going to be prepared for that.

Dr. Wendt stated that we are going to move forward. Last year the district paid for every sophomore and junior to take the ACT test and we made the decision to do that again this year. This district has not had a conversation as to what the SAT composite should be, but they have had conversation where we need to continue to go with the ACT. Until colleges make that switch, we have to prepare our students. There are no schools that just look at the SAT score.

IV. Discussion: Upcoming Meeting Dates and Times

The committee suggested to invite Senator Holmes and Representative Wheeler to our next meeting

V. Public Comment (3 minutes each)

There were no individuals present for public comment.

VI. Adjourn

A motion was made by Mr. Greg O'Neil to adjourn. All present were in favor to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Next Meeting: November 30, 2015