

Salida School District R-32-J

Board of Education

December 12, 2023

Crest Academy, 627 Oak Street

Work Session - Review CBT Recommendations, Review CBT MOU, and Outline Future Leave Policy Work

President Joe Smith began the work session at 5:18 p.m. to review CBT Recommendations, the CBT MOU, and outline future leave policy work. Superintendent Blackburn shared that staff voted to ratify the CBT recommendations to approve updates to policies GBB-N Staff Involvement in Decision Making, GBB-R-N CBT Handbook Salida School District, and BG-E-N Table of Contents - Negotiated Policies. He also shared comments submitted by staff. There was some frustration by the Board that all staff weren't receiving adequate information about the CBT process, and look for improvement in making sure staff are better informed about the process and implications. It was noted that the MOU was honored by all parties. An increase in steps and levels is already budgeted for the '24-'25 school year, and there has been interest expressed in adjusting salary negotiations to the spring. Requests for a sabbatical and long-term leave last year brought the Board's attention to the need to review leave policies as a whole to gain more clarity. The goal of the review process is to clarify policies to support the needs of staff, create more equity, create a system that is easier to implement, and mitigates financial risk to the District. Superintendent Blackburn has been tasked with bringing back redlines to the leave policies for Board review at the February meeting of the Board to begin the review process with CBT with a goal of having agreement on those policies by the May meeting. There was celebration about the positive outcomes of the CBT process. The Board took a short break.

Regular Board Meeting

President Joe Smith called the meeting to order at 6:04. The **Pledge of Allegiance** was recited.

In **attendance** were Directors Jodi Breckenridge Petit, Ben Hill, Matt Hobbs, Mandy Paschall, Jenn Schuchman, and Joe Smith, Superintendent David Blackburn, Secretary Kim LeTourneau, Assistant Superintendent Will Wooddell, and Business Managers Aaron Dobson and Shiela Moore. Director Karen Lundberg planned to call in, but had technology issues and was not able to do so. Also in attendance were Jen Lang, Kelly Hamilton, Darcy Harris, Evalyn Parks, Stacia Kriebel, Janee Martinez, Cory Scheffel, Theresa Gilson, and Rob Simpson.

President Smith shared the only **Board Member Comment** by thanking the Board, David, Kim, Will, and Aaron for attendance at the CASB conference. The activities and seminars were helpful and valuable to the Board.

The Board received the following **Written Messages to the Board**: Governor Polis - Property Taxes, Lorita Groover - Honoring Veteran Staff, and Crest PTO - Specials Teacher.

Evalyn Parks shared appreciation to the Board during **Public Comments** as part of her role as the employee appreciation committee. She thanked the Board for their work and dedication to the District and community.

Director Hobbs made a motion to **approve the agenda** with the following changes:

- Table all four policies in item 3g related to Service Animals to the January meeting.

Director Schuchman seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Said motion was voted on as follows: Dr. Breckenridge Petit, yes; Dr. Hill, yes; Mr. Hobbs, yes; Mrs. Paschall, yes; Ms. Schuchman, yes; Mr. Smith, yes; and was approved.

Reports

Salida School District R-32-J Board of Education

There were no Guest Reports. Longfellow Elementary School Principal Cory Scheffel opened the detailed **school report**, sharing a slide presentation with the Board, including the LES team's priority of creating a space of love and learning for all students. The school has the largest enrollment of the District, and the building operates near capacity, although not as dire as last year. He notes the staff are the key to the school's success, from the front office team, to teachers and support staff, and custodial and kitchen staff. He also noted the support of numerous community partners who support the kids and staff. Jen Lang and Kelly Hamilton both spoke during the presentation about the front office approach to meeting the goal of creating a sense of safety and belonging at LES and the Positive Behavior Support system, R.O.A.R. (Respectful, Ownership, Always Safe, Responsible), that guides all activities at the school. They both shared examples of what their day-to-day tasks look like and ways they support students and staff. Mr. Scheffel then reviewed CMAS test results and how the school uses that data to look for areas of growth and improvement. Nationwide attendance has become a more frequent concern, and LES is looking for ways to support families to make sure students are getting to school as legally required. He noted that budgeting for the research based PBS R.O.A.R system will be a priority as requests will be carefully reviewed through the budget process. Dr. Blackburn noted that LES continues to be one of the best elementary schools in the state, with proactive support for kids and teachers.

Directors didn't have any questions regarding **District Reports**. Dr. Blackburn noted that the District finished the 1st semester very strong. He has immense gratitude for the hard work of staff and is proud of the teams and what they have accomplished, which is reflected in the success of students. He is excited about the District level work being done to prepare for future growth and success of Salida Schools' students.

Director Hobbs made a motion to approve the **Consent Agenda Items** to include items:

- a) Approval of Minutes of Regular Board Meeting on November 14, 2023
- b) Claims Payable – All Funds
- c) Claims Payable – Bills over \$20,000
- d) Personnel Items
- e) Acknowledge and Approve Exhibits and Regulations as Recommended by the Superintendent
 - i) ~~EJ-R - Service Animals~~ (Tabled to January Meeting)
 - ii) ~~EJ-E-1 - Service Animals~~ (Tabled to January Meeting)
 - iii) ~~EJ-E-2 - Service Animals~~ (Tabled to January Meeting)
 - iv) ~~EJ-E-3 - Service Animals~~ (Tabled to January Meeting)
- f) Approve on 1st Reading Policies - None
- g) Approve on 3rd Reading Policies
 - i) KEC - Curriculum Complaints
 - ii) Revoke: CHB - School Board Review of Regulations
 - iii) DB - Annual Budget
 - iv) DJE - Bidding Procedures
 - v) CF - School Building Administration
 - vi) Revoke: DK - Payment Procedures
 - vii) Revoke: CCA - Organizational Handbook
 - viii) ADF - School Wellness
- h) Approve DAC Members and Leadership
- i) Approve Update to Guidestone MOU
- j) Approve the Fourth Amendment to Real Property Lease with City of Salida for the Dog Park
- k) Approve BOCES Special Education Operating Agreement for 2023-24 School Year

Salida School District R-32-J

Board of Education

l) Approve Salary Schedules for 2023-2024 School Year

Director Schuchman seconded the motion. Business Manager Moore clarified some questions about toddler teacher pay, coaching and extra duty schedules from Director Paschall. Said motion was voted on as follows: Dr. Breckenridge Petit, yes; Dr. Hill, yes; Mr. Hobbs, yes; Mrs. Paschall, yes; Ms. Schuchman, yes; Mr. Smith, yes; and was approved.

Discussion Items

Following the afternoon's work session which included review of the work done to date to identify **Leave Plans** as an area of focus for the Board and CBT in the spring of 2024, Superintendent Blackburn was directed to create a plan similar to the process used to review the other Negotiated policies. Director Hobbs shared his goal of having leave policies reflect more clarity and equity in the policies that are as generous and respectful to staff as possible while still focusing on the goal of education and helping students grow into the best version of themselves. He feels that the current leave policy set is dated and inconsistent. Director Paschall looked back to the increase in sabbatical/personal leave requests last year that brought to light the lack of clear guidelines and guardrails when reviewing such requests. The Board would like to see what other districts provide to their staff, and realize that with a 4-day school week it is tricky to compare similar systems. Superintendent Blackburn will work with Business Manager Dobbs for a February 1 deadline to have redlines available for review by the Board and CBT.

President Smith shared the process being worked through to create a **Strategic Financial Plan Draft** for the District which will outline the District's budgeting philosophy moving forward. Business Manager Dobbs has surveyed a variety of stakeholders including CBT, the Board, and administrative staff about their thoughts on allocating funds to help guide the discussion. At this point in the '23-'24 budget year, there is more money coming in than initially anticipated, however there are still some significant unknowns including those related to the Universal Preschool and Healthy School Meals for all programs. The Board is also aware of anticipated growth and potential impacts to the District. However, the community growth this year didn't impact Salida School District, as the ~20 new students in the District were realized at Salida Montessori School. Establishing some guidelines on determining what percentage of the budget should be allocated to staffing, overhead costs, and transfers for future capital expenditures. Business Manager Dobbs will create a draft document that outlines the philosophy and values in the "Strategic Financial Plan" with a goal of creating a guideline for a 100% budget. This year, for example, the budget is currently at 111%. Because of a shift in the budget process to move more money to staff and reduce the fund balance, this approach is no longer fiscally responsible. Dobbs noted that the District already runs on a very trim budget, and inflation is impacting a number of line items. There is agreement in the importance of a primary investment in people while maintaining fiscal responsibility to the taxpayers in the District, and having a plan for future needs and growth. Director Hobbs recognized that last year the Board knew that significant increase in staff pay and the investment in the turf at the stadium would impact the budget for several years creating tight margins and hard discussions. Director Schuchman recalled the conversation a year ago that the Board had fear about pushing the limits of the budget to meet the requested pay increases, which was stated clearly by the Board at the time. President Smith requested a draft of the Strategic Financial Plan to be presented at the Board retreat/work session on January 20, 2024.

Assistant Superintendent Wooddell said that the **Insurance** committee met for the first time on December 11 to discuss rough numbers and a variety of plans for the future. They also want to make sure that staff know how to best use their benefits and make proactive choices to maintain their health and wellness. They will likely meet again in early January to discuss the anticipated increase in costs and how the District can continue to support and invest in staff and maintain a 100% budget plan.

Salida School District R-32-J Board of Education

There was discussion about a **Transfers Analysis** related to a report from DLR supported by RSMMeans to determine the expected cost of repair or replacement of every item in every building in the District over the course of 100 years. This helps determine if the District is saving enough money to meet future costs. With other facility planning discussions in process about potentially selling some assets, and prioritizing staff salaries and benefits, it isn't reasonable to expect to meet the recommended totals for transfer amounts. The Board expressed a hope to do their due diligence to plan for appropriate set asides for capital projects, while still prioritizing staff. Business Manager Dobbs is happy to provide more details and talk through the budget with anyone who has questions.

There has been a high level of community interest in recent activity related to **Proposition HH**, which failed in the 2023 election, the legislature's move to change **Tax Law Change, and the letter from Governor Polis** to special districts. School funding in Colorado is confusing and recent increases in assessed property taxes are impacting many in the District. Superintendent Blackburn gave a brief overview of how property taxes are collected statewide and put into one fund that is then distributed to districts based on pupil count, so even though the property taxes collected in the District increase, school districts don't see that increase in their budgets. He also noted that the mill levy overrides currently in place for the Salida School District were passed by the voters to support staff and salaries and can't be changed without going back to the voters. Because the District is already working on a very tight budget, it is unlikely that the Board would take that option. Blackburn, Dobbs, and Moore are all happy to talk to the community to provide more information about school funding in the state and impacts to the budget for Salida Schools.

The Board took a brief break and returned to session at 7:43 p.m.

There was a brief discussion about the proposed **Oak Street Remodel and Annexation**. More detailed information is expected to be available before the January meeting with clarity and detail about the actual cost of the annexation process. Superintendent Blackburn hopes to have the details needed for final review and approval of annexation at the January meeting. He will also continue working towards next steps on the 627 Oak Street remodel proposal.

Superintendent Blackburn asked for guidance with the **Negotiation with the County for Land Lease/Purchase** in Poncha Springs, a process that was started 4 years ago and derailed by the pandemic. The master facility plan reflecting the demographic studies suggests current needs, the next 5 years, and 20 years. The 20 acres in Poncha Springs could provide a location for a future pre-K through 8th grade campus. The Board directed Blackburn to continue to pursue the acquisition, taking into consideration what is a standard between two tax supported organizations, best use of school impact fees, and with legal counsel from the District's lawyers. The Board is also interested in gathering community input.

President Smith opened the discussion about **Negotiating a Lease/Purchase agreement with CMC for the Kesner facility**. CMC Salida has been an excellent partner and their location next to SHS is very convenient for concurrent enrollment opportunities for Salida Schools' students. He noted that part of a master facility plan helps identify the right assets in the right locations, and there appears to be significant community support for maintaining CMC's presence at the Kesner building. SHS was built with room to expand the facility, with an additional 12 classrooms, which would be an additional cost to the community. However, having CMC next door to the high school helps with capacity limitations at SHS, which helps increase the lifespan of the current facility. CMC is interested in staying in the location, however they want long-term stability before they make any significant investments in the facility. Rob Simpson, CMC Salida's Associate Dean of Academics and Student Affairs, shared a list of some of the upgrades CMC would like to make to the building to enhance current learning initiatives, and expressed the need for stability in the space first. The Board asked Superintendent Blackburn to work towards more clarity in what approach will work best for all involved. Blackburn noted

Salida School District R-32-J

Board of Education

that the building has deed restrictions that prevent it from being turned into apartments and it must remain an education facility, and it is a unique building which adds difficulty to determining a market value. Blackburn expressed his excitement about working with partners to use assets for the public to enhance the community as a whole in a collaborative conversation.

Action Items

Director Paschall made a motion to **Approve on 2nd Reading Policy CHCA - Handbook and Directives**. Director Hobbs seconded the motion. Hobbs opened discussion requesting some minor edits before final reading and approval at the next meeting. With no further discussion, said motion was voted on as follows: Dr. Breckenridge Petit, yes; Dr. Hill, yes; Mr. Hobbs, yes; Mrs. Paschall, yes; Ms. Schuchman, yes; Mr. Smith, yes; and was approved.

Director Hobbs made a motion to **Approve Resolution 202324-04 Authorizing Participation in the State of Colorado Department of Treasury Interest Free Cash Flow Loan**. Director Schuchman seconded the motion. Business Manager Dobbs detailed the need for the loan and how it works, and why the District is pursuing it this year. In past years the District would use the unassigned fund balance to cover the gap in monies coming in, but with changes in the budgeting and a reduced fund balance in order to meet payroll in the winter months, there is a need for this loan. It is likely this will become a normal practice going forward, and is common for many other districts across the state. With no further discussion, said motion was voted on as follows: Dr. Breckenridge Petit, yes; Dr. Hill, yes; Mr. Hobbs, yes; Mrs. Paschall, yes; Ms. Schuchman, yes; Mr. Smith, yes; and was approved.

Director Paschall made a motion to **Approve CBT Recommendations Ratified by Staff Including Changes to Policies:**

- i) GBB-N Staff Involvement in Decision Making
- ii) GBB-R-N CBT Handbook Salida School District
- iii) BG-E-N Table of Contents - Negotiated Policies

Director Schuchman seconded the motion. Director Hobbs thanked everyone for their hard work and commitment to building mutual trust. He noted the long hours of hard work that goes into the CBT process and thanked everyone who participated for their time and commitment. Said motion was voted on as follows: Dr. Breckenridge Petit, yes; Dr. Hill, yes; Mr. Hobbs, yes; Mrs. Paschall, yes; Ms. Schuchman, yes; Mr. Smith, yes; and was approved.

Board Communications and Committee Reports

Director Paschall shared an update from **BOCES**. The Special Education Operating Agreement was approved with the consent agenda earlier in the meeting, and the BOCES board remains mostly the same, with possible changes in Park and Lake counties. BOCES has been advising the District regarding a potential expense to the District related to a student who may need residential treatment that the District would be responsible for funding. This could be a \$100,000 annual expense until the student has completed the treatment, potentially a multi-year required cost to the District.

There was no additional update from the **Facilities Committee**.

Director Hobbs is interested in pursuing more proactive **Communications**, using tools like email and community listening sessions to gather more community input, and is happy to take a more active role. The annual report is coming along with a goal of having it mailed to all constituents during winter break. Superintendent Blackburn noted that there will

Salida School District R-32-J Board of Education

likely be opportunity for community involvement with the development of the master facility and financial plans in the coming months.

Director Schuchman reflected on the Annual **CASB** convention and the wealth of information shared and connections made.

Director Hill is connecting with the **DAC**, and the leadership of the group was approved in the Consent Agenda earlier in the meeting. They have been advising on facility planning, District assets, and looking for opportunities to enhance technology in the organization. Superintendent Blackburn will present the DAC with the strategic financial plan when the next draft is ready.

The Board is continuing through the **policy audit**. Director Hobbs will help review Section E and Director Lundberg will help with section F, both scheduled for the March meeting, and Director Breckenridge Petit will help with Section G which is scheduled for February.


Future Business and Calendar of Events

Director Paschall shared an interest in considering AI and how there may need to be updates to policy and handbooks to capture the new technology. Technology Director Josh Buckberg has been gaining knowledge about AI, and Blackburn has been working on building some edges to guide the process.

- i) **January 20, 2024**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., 627 Oak Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room, Annual Work Session
- ii) **February 13, 2024** - 627 Oak Street, The Crest Academy
6 p.m. Regular Meeting of the Board
Agenda Review -
- iii) May 14, 2024 Meeting to be held in 2nd Floor conference room because of scheduling conflict at The Crest

Director Hobbs made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Kim LeTourneau, Board Secretary


Joe Smith, Board President