

**BETHLEHEM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES  
MONDAY, AUGUST 9, 2010**

Members of the Board Human Resources Committee met on Monday, August 9, 2010, in the Dining Room, at the Education Center. Present were the following school board members: William Burkhardt, Michele Cann, Judith Dexter, Irene Follweiler, Loretta Leeson, Aurea Ortiz, and Eugene McKeon. Also in attendance were Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources Thomas K. Washington, and Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Thomas E. Persing.

The meeting of the Board Human Resources Committee was called to order by Mrs. Irene Follweiler at 10:01 p.m.

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR** – Migdalia DeJesus, 626 Evans Street, Bethlehem. Is a parent of Donegan Elementary School and has always been involved in the school. She stated this past year she became more involved because of what she saw happening at Donegan. She said, “Everyone was working so much to help the children do better, and I wanted to be a part of that. I worked closely with Ms. Vazquez to help make all the changes at happen at Donegan. All the kids, parents, and teachers became excited about everything that was happening. The local communities gave us everything we asked for because it was for our kids. We all worked late nights and even weekends. There were not many parents, but we did not mind because the teachers and the principal were working with us. Ms. Vazquez would say that this would help our students do better, and she was right. I do not have to tell you how well our students did, but I do need to tell you how proud we as parents, teachers, and the community are for our children. We ask you to allow the school to continue the way it was last year. It is going to be hard enough without seven teachers. Let us raise the scores so that we can continue to be proud of our school when they pass the PSSAs.”

**DONEGAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL DISCUSSION** – This item was placed on the agenda by Mrs. Ortiz for discussion. Mr. Washington confirmed that as of Friday the numbers he has for Donegan are accurate as best as possible with as many kids that he knows of that are being pulled out for the dual language charter school. His understanding is the kids are being invited, but that does not necessarily mean that they are going, so what he can go by is the number of children enrolled at the dual language charter school and remove them off BASD rolls. He added Donegan originally was at 406 and when he removed the students that enrolled at the dual language Donegan is now at 384. Mrs. Follweiler wanted clarification that until the first day of school we would not know exactly the number of students, but as of right now the enrollment at Donegan is at 384. Mr. Washington agreed and said it is correct with the students that actually withdrew from Donegan. He stated he uses that number with caution with a school like Donegan since typically in the first two days there are a number of kids who walk in the door to register. He also stated that historically it has been Donegan’s pattern that on the first two days they will get between 25-30 kids walking through the door. Mrs. Follweiler asked if that was the average. Mr. Washington replied yes, on the first day usually 20-25 kids and on the second day 15-16 kids. Mr. Washington is requesting that the board keep that open at this time and continue to watch the numbers.

Mrs. Ortiz said, “The last time it was discussed it was being said that Donegan has come along way because of the extra help. Ms. Vazquez did a good job going to the community, and she will continue to do so and getting the support from the parents. But it is very difficult to do...the assistant principal was helping her with other matters. If we have this particular school that is going out and trying and has some progress, we should at least give them another year with the assistant principal and see how the numbers go because just to compare the school to other schools’ enrollment numbers, our goal is to try and see the needs of each individual school. In this particular school, we will not be doing a service to these students by taking away the extra help. If we see Marvine, we are comparing them to Marvine because they have 400 students, but Marvine is in need of help so we are comparing them to the wrong school. We need to also do something there. So if we have a school that has done such a great job and has struggled and is

getting out of the woods, why are we going to say thank you but no thank you; you did a good job, but it does not matter now we have to take this person and take it somewhere else. So I urge the board to (we are not talking about a person; we are talking about a position) reexamine what monetary value goes with that position. To take away that extra help to that school at this moment, I think is going to be devastating for this school.”

Mr. Washington asked before the board reacts he wanted to add that he just learned but has not confirmed that because of the personnel item he wants to be sensitive here. He said the school counselor might not be there at the beginning of the school year. He said, “It is an issue we can talk during executive session. I think with that additional personnel not being available, again we are talking about position, but that person was dynamic in helping establish the culture of that building. She was a go to person and very important in meeting the needs of the students, not only that, but she was a big community person as well. That information came to the Human Resources Office on Friday when I was out. That concerns me about that person not being there, so now you are losing an assistant principal and a very valuable school counselor and so I think we have to take that into the mix. What Mrs. Leeson is saying is correct regarding replacement of the school counselor, but I think it is not that easy because we are talking about the dynamics of that individual as well.”

Mr. McKeon commented that from the business perspective he does not see putting an assistant administrator or secondary administrator in. He said, “I think we are still trying to figure out what Washington did last week or will do this week if they pass that funding issue. Harrisburg will have to see the Washington numbers when they finally get approved to figure out what has to be cut at the education level. I do not know what those dollars are. I support Mr. Burkhardt’s original suggestion to keep this item open, and I agree with you that if suppose the dual language does not take off and has to wait a year then we are looking at adding those twenty (20) some children plus the fluctuation of thirty (30) or forty (40) and then we are going to say it makes a lot of sense.” Mr. Washington said, “I just want to clarify the funds you are referring to from Washington the flow through money the \$250 million dollars that we are short in, is that what you are talking about.” Mr. McKeon replied, “Yes the accountability block grants and Medicaid funds.” Mr. Washington said there is a bill in Washington and that fund will go the salaries of teachers as well. Mr. McKeon asked how long will this take. Mr. Washington understands that this will go to the House, and we should have this by September or October.

Mrs. Leeson stated, “We approved the dual language charter school and put \$1.6 million dollars into our budget to cover the cost of the dual language charter school. We have to look at our budget and try and figure out. It is really nice to be able to say we would like to have an assistant at Marvine. We would like to have all these different things, stadium seats, and everything else, but one thing comes from another so in approving the dual language charter school does have an impact on other areas of our budget.

Mrs. Ortiz understands that the district is very tight on budget. She said, “I also understand that if we are going to make a difference we have to start thinking in a way that we cannot be comparing this school to this school. We have to be looking at the needs and try to cover those needs. Because if we are just going to say we are going to give a band aid to each school whenever we have the money, then we are never going to solve the problem. The problem is the school needs to get out of that corrective action, and we need to help that school do it because then we are helping this school be strong and then move to the next school that needs the most. We should not be comparing schools because they have different needs. Our jobs is to cover each individual need of every school, but say that we are not going to do something because the other school needs something, that for me is not acceptable.

Mrs. Follweiler stated she does not necessarily agree with Mrs. Ortiz on the assistant principal position; however, agrees with her point because we do assess the schools differently in the number of different items they have, for example, Donegan because of the issues they have with special needs does have 5.5 reading specialists which is a full-time person more than any other school, and they do have other services available there which are very well needed and deserved, so I am in favor while we are still influx with

enrollment of leaving the issue as an open ended item. She asked Mr. Washington from a human resources stand point is this a hard and fast yes or no issue or is this something that we can continue to monitor as the school enrollment gets closer. She asked, "As Mrs. Leeson pointed out if one of the things we are talking about is the number of students that have disenrolled from Donegan because it is their choice which they have, to go to the dual language charter school, those monies were moved out of the budget from our public system into the charter system, so if whatever reason those students change their choice and decide to go to Donegan, can we take those monies back and put it into that school?" Mr. Washington replied, "Absolutely the monies follow the students when it comes to that choice, so if a student does not go the money does not go, and Mrs. Leeson is absolutely correct; however, if we projected an amount of students to go and that is what we have put aside and that projection does not come to the number then we would have that difference in monies as well." Mrs. Follweiler asked again if it could be left as an open item. Mr. Washington answered, "Yes and no, and as we get closer it is easier to add than to take away; however, you know as a principal when you are trying to set something up this is nerve wracking. My first recommendation to the board is to at least try this for another year. We are going in the right direction, so let us do this for another year. My immediate recommendation is, and I understand the position the board is in, that we take a look at the numbers and as we go if we can come to the numbers the board seem acceptable that they feel like yes we should add something we can make the decision at that time, but I would not like to see it closed out at this point."

Mrs. Leeson stated, "We took assistant principals from our middle schools. We did not close out those positions. I certainly hope there comes a time when we feel that we can afford it that we might be putting back some of those assistant principals back. I just want to clarify that."

Mr. Burkhardt said, "Just a reminder that Donegan is one of the schools that parents are given the choice to leave the school if they so desire because it is still in corrective action. There are too many variables for me to firm up that second position until we know how many kids are going to show up at the door. We can add that position back. I would like to see something firmer with the variables that impact that school."

Mrs. Dexter added, "I understand the logic and theory behind supporting Donegan's progress and keeping in tact whatever was in place, but I disagree wholeheartedly with the thought that we have to go school by school and assess schools' needs and wants in a vacuum. We cannot do that, we do not do that, and I do not think any of us has done that with any school I can think of across the board. If we did that, it would be my role to advocate for Nitschmann because I have been aware of more problems than I would like to even make public about Nitschmann as a school facility. I have made some of them public, but I do not do that because I realize that overall we have to look at the overall health of the district. The financial health does not permit us to go out and refinance or put a whole new air conditioning system in or fix the roof properly or do any other number of things. We need to look not just at what Donegan wants or needs, but also look at other schools, which is what we have been doing. We ask Mr. Washington for information to enable that kind of analysis, and I think that is the right kind of analysis because it takes the emotion out of it. It helps us look at the facts and the data, and that is what we should be doing in so many cases. When I look at the facts and the data overall if I look at it in an elementary component, I see a number of schools that could justify an extra administrator. When I look at the data over the continuum of K-12, I am looking at the ratio that we have for Liberty one (1) administrator to six hundred (600) students. Am I right about that?" Mrs. Follweiler stated, "We took care of that. It was 1-684 then 1-500." Mrs. Dexter continued, "I cannot say that a high school with the multiple complicated problems that it has can survive on 1-500 when an elementary must have 1-200 ratio. It does not make sense to me, and I realize that Donegan might do better with the different allocation of resources. I also realize the same for so many of our other schools. We have to look globally at everybody's needs. I believe nobody's needs have been ignored in any way. We have jumped through hoops to meet Donegan's needs. In this particular situation there may be an impact, but I heard tonight that there is a school improvement grant and Donegan gets \$109,000. I do not know what they intend to spend it on, but if the principal of Donegan thinks that another set of hands is what she should be spend that money on, I would encourage her to have that

discussion with the administration so a recommendation could be brought forth to the board.”

Mrs. Ortiz reiterated the progress and needs of Donegan and stated it is not based on emotion but facts. Our goal should be that every school is out of corrective action and make AYP. If we have the power to do so, we should.

Mrs. Follweiler commented that yes the board has the power to do everything, but if we are going to take the funds to put it there where does it come from that is the question this board has to answer. She stated what she is hearing from the majority of the board is to leave this item open, and at this time are not prepared to add a position to Donegan. She asked the board if she was correct. She also asked Mr. Washington to keep the board updated as he gets the enrollment numbers.

Mr. McKeon asked how does the enrollment process work. He knows the board gets the first 5 days, 15 days, then October 1 enrollment and the board will see most of the fluctuating of the in and outs excluding the charter school during the month of September, so between now and then the board should get some perspective on what is going on. Mr. Washington added that the first and second day of the influx of people might give an earlier indication then October 1.

#### **AGENDA ITEM FOR AUGUST 16, 2010, REGULAR BOARD MEETING:**

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS OF THE BETHLEHEM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE BETHLEHEM EDUCATION ASSOCIATION** – Mr. Burkhardt asked if this is the same as prior years. Mr. Washington said yes. Mrs. Leeson asked if we are looking to approve teacher performance appraisal. Mr. Washington said yes. He indicated the principals had a meeting, and he had a short discussion with Jolene Vitalos. He said, “We will need to have a deeper discussion in the fall in terms of that instrument getting us to what we really want it to do. This is the third year; it is time to reevaluate that instrument and also look at our goal, which is to improve instruction.” Mrs. Leeson wanted to know if they still needed block zero at Liberty. Mr. Washington said it would be for the seventh and eighth marking period at the end of the second semester. It is to accommodate the kids that are taking the AP class. Mrs. Leeson asked about SPARK. Mr. Washington stated it was totally in the district’s favor, and the union is allowing district to mix and match because of their schedule and day at SPARK. Mrs. Leeson asked if their day is equivalent to a full-time teacher. Mr. Washington replied yes. Mr. McKeon asked if these are brought up every year why are they just not part of the contract. Mr. Washington said they would when the contract is renewed. Mrs. Follweiler asked if the contract time left is three years, could a MOU be made for three years instead of yearly. Mr. Washington stated that past practice has been to look at those items on a yearly basis, but it could happen if an agreement is made.

#### **RECOMMENDATION OF THE BOARD – APPOINTMENT OF CONSULTANT** – Mr.

Washington said it is for Dr. Persing to assist Dr. Roy for up to ten (10) days in the transition period. Mrs. Follweiler stated, “We just renewed his consultant contract in June, so this would null and void that contract and enter into a no more then 10 days. “Yes,” Mr. Washington said, and he also added that the ten (10) days was an agreement between Dr. Roy and Dr. Persing. Mrs. Leeson thought that Dr. Roy was asking for twenty (20) days. Mr. Washington said that was the initial understanding but in the end he only wanted ten (10) days. Mrs. Dexter said, “I favored giving twenty (20) and then if he only uses ten (10) eight (8) fifteen (15) or whatever, because when we had the discussions about the superintendent, we realized that Dr. Persing had in his possession a lot of knowledge regarding procedures, events, issues, etc., and I do not want to limit Dr. Roy in any way to that access. Mr. McKeon agrees with Mrs. Dexter.

Mrs. Follweiler polled the board and asked if the board is suggesting it be changed to twenty (20):

Mrs. Dexter: Yes	Mrs. Cann: As long as it is okay with Dr. Persing	Mrs. Leeson: Yes
Mr. Burkhardt: Yes	Mrs. Follweiler: No	Mr. McKeon: Yes.
	Mrs. Ortiz: Yes	

Mr. Washington we will change it to twenty (20) days.

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR** – Steve Antalics, 767 Ridge Street, Bethlehem, spoke of quality of teaching, status of teaching scores, and also tenure. Wanted to make a suggestion, he asked if the district can start discussions with the union to see if a plan could be implemented where quality of teaching would replace tenure and the quantity of teaching would be repaid by merit raises, so the teachers could have an upward scale. He said this would do two things improve the teaching of the children and weed out the teachers that do not meet the standards. He said, “May I suggest the board give this serious thought and possibly make it easier for the new superintendent to have our high schools meet AYP.”

**OPEN FORUM** – Mrs. Follweiler commented that the board received the same article Mr. Antalics spoke of via email from another citizen.

Irene Follweiler adjourned the meeting at 10:37 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Nitza S. Yerger, Confidential Secretary to the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources