# Trout Creek School District #6

# Special Meeting Minutes

2/5/2024

**In Attendance:** Scott Rasor, Carolyn Nesbitt, Marian Stonehocker, Michael Linderman, Zachary Hannum, Jennifer McPherson, Ruth Allen, Beth Loyd, Chris Loyd, Dan Stark, Tesha Stark, Jessica Robinson, Brian Krick, Kate Hardman, Steve Conley, Tracey Dean, Beckie Doyle, Madison Koonce, Sheryl Robinett, Karen Marquardt, Autumn Steinhoff, Mary Chaboya.

**I. Call to order**

Mr. Rasor called to order the special meeting of the Trout Creek School Board at 6:07 pm on 2/5/2024.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Rasor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. Recognition of Visitors/Public Comment**

Mr. Rasor asked for public comment:

Beth Loyd spoke of her concern regarding a certified teacher for K/1, the students socio-emotional well being, board meeting notifications, access to Board meeting minutes, and investing in local teachers that want to be at Trout Creek School. Mrs. Loyd praised Ms. Koonce for her communications with Mrs. Loyd. Mrs. Loyd wanted to know why the Board was hesitant to rehire a former teacher who had experience at TCS and with the grade levels that are being put with another class. Mr. Rasor stated that the Board has to respect individual privacy and will not comment on certain matters. Mr. Hannum then stated that Mr. Wenz never came to the Board with a formal recommendation on the agenda for a new teacher to be considered.

Tesha Stark spoke praise for teacher Ms. Koonce. She shared that her child has made great progress with Ms. Koonce. She shared her concern that she knows her child is not getting his IEP accommodations and will be filing a grievance. She stated she was informed that the school may not be open in the fall. Was greatly concerned when she discovered that the students were experiencing shifts in teachers and classrooms without hearing it from the school.

Dan Stark shared how he feels the teachers are a part of the kids’ lives and the teacher/classroom changes they have been experiencing are a hard adjustment for them, but that his grandsons have done well and he is appreciative.

Mr. Rasor stated that the Board is committed to the staff. He admits we are experiencing a staffing shortage, positions are posted, and the Board will continue to take recommendations when they come before the Board. Mr. Rasor also thanked the group for their comments, especially the teachers.

Mr. Linderman informed the room of the severe teacher shortage in Montana and many surrounding states. He encouraged everyone to make some noise in Helena so the state will better fund education.

Mr. Hannum mentioned that the Superintendent is the one who dictates how the District communicates with the parents, staff, and community.

Steven Conley shared that his child has made great strides here at TCS. He stated that with all the changes, he feels the staff are doing an amazing job. Mr. Conley praised Mrs. Doyle and thanked her for doing such a wonderful job with his child. Mrs Stark and Mr. Stark seconded Mr. Conley’s words regarding the teachers.

Brian Krick thanked the Board and Mrs. Doyle. Mr. Krick shared that he and Mrs. Krick are concerned about three grades being in one classroom. He feels that education may suffer. Mrs. Nesbitt shared that she wanted to clarify something: she shared that new research is showing that K-8, 1-room school houses are currently testing higher than traditional (one grade level in the class) schools. Mrs. Nesbitt also stated that parents like the Kricks are so supportive and the Board appreciates them sharing their concern, but that current research is not showing the results the Kricks are concerned about. She mentioned that with the number of students enrolled, there are still less students in the 3-grade level classrooms than in a traditional classroom elsewhere. She also shared that Trout Creek School has made sure that the curriculum being used is intertwined and consistent from one grade level to the next.

Mr. Linderman thanked Mr. Krick. Mr. Linderman shared how it's not only a personnel issue, but a giant financial cliff for the District, being able to keep the lights on and staff the school. Mr. Linderman further explained that when the Tri-District agreement that had been in place for multiple decades was discontinued, it hurt the District and was a tragedy for TCS. Mr. Linderman stated that the District’s hands were tied on this matter as it takes agreement from Thompson Falls and Noxon school districts as well. Mr. Linderman closed his statement by staying that finding teachers is one problem, paying them is another. And that if you want to see a community fold, close their school.

Mr. Krick, Mr. Conley, and Ms. Allen were discussing the dangers of the So. Hill Road bus stop and how to address it.

There was discussion on the current certifications, the difference between them, how certifications and accreditation may look in the near future, and the options for administration next year. There was also discussion on having planning meetings monthly through this transitional process. Mrs. Doyle thanked the staff and parents, stating they are equally important to the success of the students’ educational progress. She also stated that being a first-year teacher is overwhelming and that support needs to be given to everyone at the school, not just the teachers.

Kate Hardman, a home-school parent, shared that her children participate in extracurriculars here at TCS and that it is important to their family that the school remains open and welcoming. Mrs. Hardman stated that she is willing to work with the District to think outside of the box in terms of creative ways to accomplish goals.

Discussion was had regarding enrollment, the benefits of the Early Kinder program, the challenges of finding certified teachers, the reputation of the District, the background check requirements for volunteers, subs, and part-time paraprofessionals.

Tana Stops shared she has major concerns about the treatment of one of her children here and that the Board will be hearing from her.

**IV. Approval of the Agenda as Presented.**

Action Read By: Mr. Rasor; Motion By: Mr. Linderman ; 2nd: Mrs. Nesbitt

**On the poll of the Board, the motion carried unanimously.**

**V. Planning Session for School Year 2024-2025.**

Discussion was held in an open-forum manner. Topics of discussion included the condition of facilities and the needs of staff, students, and parents as we move forward. During a discussion on options for next year’s administrator (superintendent, principal, or lead teacher), and the feasibility of hiring these positions, there were multiple areas that participants wanted to discuss as important for the new administrator to address in FY25, such as communication with staff, communication with parents and the community, safety, emergency drills, meeting IEP accommodations, providing guidance, support, and quality training. Other needs that were mentioned include team-building, curriculum and continuity review, and future planning meetings. Some participants were not happy with the Board for not offering explanations and a plan of action about several topics due to the fact that they were personnel matters and would not be discussed publicly.

Mr. Rasor made the decision to add emergency drills to the next board meeting agenda.

The next planning meeting is TBA, but will most likely happen the first week of March.

**IX. Adjournmen**t – Meeting was adjourned by Mr. Rasor at 8:09 pm.

Next Meeting: Regular Board Meeting Tuesday, February 13, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jennifer McPherson, District Clerk Date

Approved on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, 2023.

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D. Scott Rasor, Board Chair Date