Alicia Kirkpatrick

School Board Meeting

There was some disagreement between members of the Stillwater Board of EducationTuesday evening.  When it came to discussing what action to take regarding the funding for the Larry Dickerson Education Flexible Benefit Allowance, board members took some time to debate their options.

            As Board President Kevin Clark explained, the Oklahoma State Board of Education is responsible for funding the flexible benefit allowance of employees, mainly teachers, as required by law.  However, for the 2010-2011 school year, the board did not pay employees for the full 12 months.  Stillwater Superintendent Ann Caine proposed action to join Schools United for Funded Health Insurance.

According to a report from The Tulsa World, Schools United for Funded Health Insurance is an organization established to raise funds for potential litigation against the state Board of Education in case a resolution wasn’t reached on the benefit funding.

            Members took some time to discuss different options, and some members even seemed confused about what was at stake.  Mike Dicks, school board vice president, made a motion to join the other schools, but to withhold funding until the legislation makes a decision.  There was no second to this, and Clark killed the motion.  Caine explained that over 300 schools have already joined, but none of the board members seemed interested.

            For the last school year, teachers only got paid for ten months instead of the full 12. The Stillwater School Board contracts are effective each year from July 1 through June 30. For the last year, teachers did not get paid for July and August.  This was due to confusion between the legislation and the school boards on what fiscal year July and August should get paid.

            Clark explained why the board took the road they did, and what they hope will be the outcome.

            “We think it’s appropriate not to jump out of the shoot and sue the state,” Clark said. “It’s more appropriate to work with the state to solve the problem.”

            He hopes that the school board will be able to work with the state legislator instead of having to sue them.

            “That’s why we voted down the motion, which said join this thing and the purpose of the thing is to sue the state,” Clark said.

            He said that they would only sue as a last resort.

            “We’re taking the high road,” Clark said.

            Other items discussed at the meeting include the construction projects at Will Rogers and Highland Park elementary by Bob Shaefer, and a presentation by Director of Secondary Curriculum and District Test Coordinator Becky Szlichta.

            Szlichta’s presentation discussed the different required tests that students in the district have to take, and the outcomes of some of those tests over the past few years.  Last year, reading scores improved in every grade from third through eighth grade except for fourth, and there was only a slight decrease.  Math scores also saw an increase.

            The meeting ended with a motion by board member Eric Gudgel and a second by board member Debra Vincent.  President Clark adjourned the meeting.

Headline: Disagreement among Stillwater Board of Education Members

Sources: Kevin Clark- Board President

Stillwater Board of Education meeting agenda

Info Box:

What: Stillwater Board of Education Meeting

When: Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2011

Major Topic: Whether or not to join Schools United for Funded Health Insurance

Web link: <http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/article.aspx?subjectid=336&articleid=20110928_16_A1_OKLAHO449301&allcom=1>