

Seward Schools Site-Based Council
Meeting Minutes | December 13, 2012 | 6:30 PM
Seward High School, Seward Middle School, Seward Elementary



Present: Present: Julie Lindquist, David Kingsland, Jason Bickling, Trevan Walker, Leigh Ray, Linda Ferkinhoff, Alan Nickell, Amy Hankins, Mica Van Buskirk, Raylynn Zweifel, Myla Liljemark, Jerry Olive, Terri McKnight, Reuben Miranda, Basil Dougherty, Randi Tolson, Jenn Haugh, Bob Barnwell, Stephanie Mullaly, Mark Fraad, Allen McCarty, John O'Brien

Welcome: Welcome to everyone present!

Minutes: Approved.

Additions to the Agenda: none

Public comment: none

Middle School Student Report:

Randi Tolson, Basil Dougherty

- In the Borough tournament, boys came in 3rd and girls came in 4th
- January 7th, volleyball begins
- We're starting up a concession stand.
- On December 20th, there will be a school clean-up, a Christmas movie in the afternoon, and a card-signing event to send cards to troops overseas.

High School Student Report: none

Old Business:

- I. *Revision of the KPBSD Site Council Blue Book*

Julie Lindquist made a motion to amend the bylaws with these changes:

- Change the number of community members to eleven, with not more than 2 non-parent members.
- No decision about the voting status of principals until the KPBSD makes a decision on the topic.

This being a second read, a discussion ensued, and there was a consensus to approve these amendments. Bylaws will be changed to reflect this.

II. *Sixth-Grade Move* – now renamed the *Seward Middle School Enrollment/Staffing Discussion*.

Invited speaker: John O'Brien, Director of Secondary Education, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

- Jason Bickling opened the conversation. He said the PTSA discussed this topic at its recent meeting, and then he introduced the speaker, pointing out that Mr. O'Brien will talk about the process Nikiski went through and relate that to Seward's situation.
- Mr. O'Brien's key points about the Nikiski move were as follows:
 - Invitations to a community meeting were sent home with students, and approximately 80 people came to the meeting.
 - During the meeting, break-out groups discussed the pros and cons and aired fears and concerns.
 - Next, a small workgroup met to study the results of the community meeting. It reconvened 2 months later to share findings. Workgroup members presented research that covered both sides of the issue.
 - In general, a quality program for secondary students became the motivating factor in the move.
 - A sixth grade transition committee dealt with the logistics, basing decisions on a move set to happen the following year. No rushing allowed.
 - Mr. O'Brien closed by recommending that the topic is "opened up" in Seward. He said, "A survey isn't the only thing your community needs. Give everybody who wants input the ability to express their concerns." He suggested creating workgroups and letting the community make the final decision.
- Jason added the following comments to highlight why he feels this move is important to our community and its schools:
 - Low enrollment means our students have fewer opportunities.
 - There should be consistency across the grades, meaning that students do not lose opportunities when they enter the middle school. They should have as many options as elementary and high school students have.
 - This year, because of low numbers, soccer forfeited and the middle school did not have a ski team. More of this can be expected—given the low enrollment projections.
 - Everyone needs to put their heads together to discover and implement a sustainable solution that is best for all Seward students.
 - Only 25% of the people present at November's site council meeting responded to his request for comments on his proposed survey. He asks that more people respond this time. (E-mail him for the link to the survey at jbickling@kpbsd.k12.ak.us)
 - Finally, after hearing the concerns of some of the teachers present at the meeting, Jason stated that he agreed with everything that was said. "Yes, we need to change things, and that's the point," he said. "The best solution is what we're looking for."

- Concerns brought up by people at the meeting are as follows:
 - Terri McKnight said she heard that this move would impact the elementary school, and David Kingsland responded that it would mean a loss of a .5 specialist position. The elementary school specialists teach library, PE, and music.
 - Mark Fraad stated that the proposed move would mean that the elementary school would lose .5 of a position, which is a “big thing.” It could negatively impact the schools P.E. program, for example. He wondered about the lack of consistency such a move would create in the elementary school. He said, “I feel like we’re robbing one to give to the other.” It means middle school numbers go up, but the elementary school’s go down. He added, “It’s a beautiful thing how the 6th graders move within this school.” The dynamics in the school depend upon the 6th graders, who buddy with Kindergartners and first graders. “It’s part of the beauty of this school,” he said.
 - Trevan Walker commented that he shares high school staff with the middle school, which allows the middle school to avoid combining classes. If that happened, non-qualified teachers would be teaching content out of their area of expertise.
 - Bob Barnwell referred to comparisons made in the news between American schools and Finnish schools, saying that up to 4th grade, we compare to any country in the world, but by 8th grade, “we’ve lost them.” He suggested that a K-8 or K-12 is a better model, but acknowledged that that model couldn’t happen in Seward. Block scheduling may be a better option to look at.
 - Mica Van Buskirk said she wasn’t convinced that a survey should be the next step. A town hall meeting should occur in February, she said.
 - Jenn Haugh said she was relieved after hearing the process. She said that the community needs to know about this.
 - Amy Hankins suggested that the Young Entrepreneurs of Seward (Y.E.S.) should learn about this.
 - Trevan Walker suggested that the upcoming budget meeting would be a good place to express opinions relating to this situation.

III. Open/Closed Campus

Discussion led by Trevan Walker, who pointed out the following items about this issue:

- This is the third time during his tenure that this issue has been brought up.
- He suggested that resolution already occurred when block scheduling ended and Friday’s lunch period was shortened to 30 minutes.
- Barriers to an open campus include the fact that there are 11 certified staff for 180 students, and that teachers’ contracts allow for a 30-minute, duty free lunch every day. Therefore,

staffing lunch in the event of a closed campus would be extremely difficult. Trevan could mandate supervision if he created 2 separate lunch periods or pulled sections out of the master schedule—but both of those solutions short-change educational opportunities for students.

- Mica Van Buskirk asked if parents could be door monitors during lunch, and Trevan replied that a process or policy that is dependent upon non-district employees is hard to implement and count on.
- An option that Trevan has already used is leveraging parents as partners. So if a parent requests that his or her child not be allowed to leave campus during lunch, that student must check in with the principal during lunch. If a student fails to check in, Trevan calls the parents. Trevan stated that he will announce this option in his upcoming newsletter.

New Business:

High School Football (Trevan Walker)

- The season began with 22 players but ended with 16. This number is less than the amount required by KPSAA for a stipend to be paid.
- The peninsula’s referees disbanded. For Seward’s football program, this means that games would have to be played mid-week in order to have referees.
- Both of the above are a significant blow to the football program, and the team may go “on hold.”
- Community support might help. Perhaps a local could become a certified referee?
- State-wide scheduling occurs in January, and Seward H.S. needs to be able to say whether or not to include them on the schedule.
- A formal discussion about this will occur in January 2013.

Reports from Administrators, School Board Representative, PTSA Representative

I. PTSA Report on the Land Trust

Given by Al McCarty

- Public schools have trust funds (as land) that stem from 1915 surveys, which gave 2 sections of land for every township. Mineral rights are included.
- Historically, Alaska’s legislators gave away our rights to this land.
- A class action suit will be filed against the state and federal governments to reclaim our rights. The goal is to have it filed by the end of February 2013.
- No case has ever lost that filed to reclaim the lands.
- The goal after winning the case is to create an advisory group to decide how the money gets spent (instead of having it lumped into a general fund).

- Our local PTSA has taken the initiative in this situation.
- Legislators have not responded positively to this, even though the funds will benefit the state.

II. Seward Elementary School Report

Given by David Kingsland

- Basketball ended.
- Elks Hoop Shoot is coming up.
- Boys & Girls Club have a fabulous art show in the school foyer.
- 55 folks showed up for Muffins for Mom, Donuts for Dad
- Our winter Band Concert is coming up.
- Riley Von Borstel won the spelling bee and will be going to the next level in Anchorage.
- A lock-down drill will happen Tuesday, with police presence.
- We have a new full-time employee for the remainder of the year. Federal government money is funding a Title 1 teacher for us.
- December 21st will be a teacher in-service (no school).

III. Seward Middle School Report

Given by Jason Bickling

- Attended a transportation meeting in Soldotna to discuss activity busing (field trips, athletics, choir trips). There is a shortage of bus drivers. The buses are getting old. In 75 days, there were 68 trips taken by students (from all Seward schools).
- Not enough students for a Nordic ski team, so it has been canceled.
- We are looking for a volleyball coach. The position has been posted for a month.
- Wrestling coaches are Ron Hemstock and Chad Hinders.
- Nurse Yoly applied for an arts grant, which enabled our students to take a trip to Anchorage to the Body Worlds Vital display at the Anchorage Museum.
- Tuesday is our Geography Bee.

IV. Seward High School Report

Given by Trevan Walker

- Season basketball openers are tonight at Lumen Christi (J.V.) and Service Cougars.
- Drama club is presenting the Night of Living Horror, a Shakespearean tragedy with zombies, lots of screaming, and everybody dying.
- Nordic Ski opener is this weekend at Homer.
- Debate has had two competitions to date.
- February 7-9 schedule is packed: Seahawk Classic, Ocean Science Bowl, Winter Formal, and parent/teacher conferences.

Round Table:

- Jason Bickling welcomed Mica Van Buskirk as she presided over her first meeting as president.

Meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm.

Next meeting will be on January 10, 2013, at 6:30 p.m., in the Seward Elementary School library.