



**UMATILLA COUNTY
SPECIAL LIBRARY
DISTRICT**

Strengthening our community libraries

PO Box 1689
425 S Main Street
Pendleton, OR 97801

Phone (541) 276-6449

Minutes

Special Board of Directors Meeting

November 12, 2024, at 6:30 pm

District Office (425 S. Main St., Pendleton Oregon) & via Zoom

ATTENDANCE BOARD

Judy Bracher (via Zoom)

Nick Nash

John Thomas (via Zoom)

Caty Clifton, President (via Zoom)

Kathy Thew, Vice President

ATTENDANCE STAFF

Heather Estrada, District Director

Dea Nowell, Technical Services Manager (via Zoom)

ATTENDANCE - VISITORS

Mark Rose, Hermiston PL Director (via Zoom)

CALL TO ORDER

Board President Caty Clifton called the special Board Meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

CALL THE ROLL & ESTABLISH QUORUM

Heather Estrada stated we have Board Members Kathy Thew and Nick Nash in the office, with Caty Clifton, John Thomas, and Judy Bracher via Zoom, thus we have a quorum.

NEW BUSINESS

BOARD RESPONSE TO THE CITY OF HERMISTON'S AGREEMENT WITH UCSLD

Board President Caty Clifton opened with the statement that we are here "considering Byron Smith's email of November 5th". Caty asked Heather if she had sent out a revision copy? Caty noted that this agreement is a new time frame only, the agreement hasn't changed except for some clean-up and/or clarification language, and only includes population updates for the tax distribution formula.

Mark Rose was asked if he had any comments. Mark said that Byron's concern is that there has been no negotiation this round. Heather Estrada stated that from a 30,000-foot view, the Board's intention was not to do a full review every three (3) years, only to update the population numbers in the tax distribution formula. Mark stated that he did not agree with that. Heather noted that she has heard Mark's comments regarding the agreement and understands. She also noted that Byron has not reached out to us in the last three (3) years. She also stated that it is the Board's right to do this; and that they have been as transparent and fair as they can make it. Mark commented that he understands what Heather is saying, however he doesn't believe this end is in agreement. Heather asked to meet with Mark before meeting with Byron, maybe tomorrow.

Caty stated she felt it was a good idea for Heather and Mark to talk, as this email came out of the blue, and our options are limited. She stated that the Board thought through this very thoroughly four (4) years ago. The options are: keep the agreement as it is now, redo the formula moving to base numbers rather than population based numbers, or do a straight contract with a per capita amount. John Thomas added that the issue is that the District has been around for almost forty (40) years and Hermiston incorporated area chose not to participate in the District; the rural area are the taxpayers who pay into the District and are the ones who we are supporting. In 2020 the Board decided to do a full review of the tax distribution formula with input requested from everyone. Caty noted that we want

County residents to be able to go to any of the libraries for service. Mark commented that he doesn't understand why the rural citizens aren't accounted for the same way as all other residents in other areas of the County. Heather stated this Board is charged with equitably supporting all, not equally supporting all. Mark stated he differs on this point, and it will stay that way. He commented that the District wanted a livable wage for all employees - in his mind this is overreaching and trying to correct injustices, if that is what you want to call it; this is not the charge of the District, that is the cities' charge. Nick Nash stated that Mark doesn't know all the things that occur in the background. John commented that we wouldn't have the service to citizens in all the communities if it were not for the District. Heather commented that this is why she has been trying to come to Hermiston's City Council for the last two (2) years, to meet with them and talk about the District when it was not in contract signing times.

Caty asked if it is because there are no numbers on the left side of the formula for Hermiston that this is a problem? Mark stated, yes, he believes so. Caty then asked if there were numbers on the left side, would it ease the problem, as a fundamental flaw? Mark responded, yes. Caty asked if there were zeroes on the population side? Mark responded it would be seen as a manipulation. Mark stated that because we were not satisfied last time, we thought we would have a opportunity for negotiation and are not satisfied with this.

Caty noted another option is to take Hermiston rural out of the funding formula and do a straight contract. She asked Mark if he thought Byron understands the District, and Mark responded, yes, he believes so. Caty noted that she was glad to see the recent in-service was held in Hermiston and reads the monthly reports from the early literacy program and the services provided in Hermiston daycares, etc. She noted this is a mechanical problem.

The Board then held some conversation regarding the situation. There was the question about the amount set aside for Hermiston rural being changed, and the response was not a lot, as it can't be with the way it is calculated. It was also stated that it doesn't make any sense to go back and change the work we put into it, as it disrespects the work we put into it in good faith. There was no suggestion of changing the formula at all, only how the numbers were laid out - this was a way to provide service the rural citizens. We need to find a way to reconcile with the City of Hermiston. It was brought up that by one Board Member that it is a question of whether Hermiston is going to sign the agreement, or not sign the agreement - the rest is very frustrating to them. This is the question.

Heather asked the newest Board Members who were not a part of the previous tax distribution review process what comments or questions they had. It was noted that they understand the formula, that the past Board did a lot of work, and they respect the work that has been done. One noted that she hates to see everything torn apart and hopes there is a solution to this to make amends.

In recapping the conversation, the three (3) options remain. Some of the Board Members noted that they didn't like the idea of a straight contract. In simple language, it comes down to take it or leave it. The Board is asking for understanding of what the District is and what Hermiston's role is - that all Hermiston area citizens get the same benefit. Heather stated she appreciates that all want to work with Hermiston and feels this has been helpful - it is probably coming down to as Mark said, a difference of opinion, and what the Board is willing to do. The Board consensus seemed to be sign the proposed agreement as is, or not. The Board thanked Mark for joining the call and providing perspective.

In closing, Heather and Caty will be meeting with Mark and Byron on Friday at 9am. Nick applauded the fact that we can have this meeting in a public forum, as it should be, and have a respectful conversation. Additionally, Caty noted that the funds were never intended to fully fund the libraries.

NEXT DISTRICT BOARD MEETING

The next Board Meeting will be on November 26, 2024, at 5:30 pm.

ADJOURN

John Thomas left the meeting, as he had another meeting to attend. Judy Bracher moved to adjourn the meeting. [Connection to the office was lost briefly.] Caty Clifton seconded the motion. [Judy & Caty left the meeting, as the connection to the office was restored.] Kathy Thew and Nick Nash said “aye” to the motion to adjourn the meeting, thus the meeting was adjourned at 7:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Dea Nowell

DRAFT