

MARLETTE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY
Friday, October 28, 2016 – 5:00 PM

President, Mike Hall called the special meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jay Burton, Mike Hall, Mark Huggett, Gina Kraft, Janet Mutch, Steve Quade, Nik Woods

ADMINISTRATORS: Sarah Barratt, Cheryl Bruff, Jason Vislosky

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President, Mike Hall.

1. Motion by Steve Quade, support by Mark Huggett to approve the agenda as presented.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Motion Carried

President Hall asked that everyone be respectful during the meeting and indicated that he would stay after the meeting to answer questions and address any concerns.

Superintendent Barratt presented the Board with a resignation letter from Mr. Kyle Wood, Jr/Sr High School Principal.

2. Motion by Steve Quade, support by Janet Mutch accept the resignation of Mr. Kyle Wood, Jr/Sr High School Principal.

Ayes: 5
Nays: Burton, Woods
Motion Carried

Superintendent Barratt explained that as soon as she learned that Mr. Wood would be leaving, she started thinking of ideas to fill the position. One option would be to fill the position with a current teacher. However, this would leave that position open and would be a disservice to our students and would leave the Superintendent to perform teacher evaluations. She didn't think that would be a good idea with the ongoing contract negotiations. She also thought about having either the Elementary Principal and/or herself cover the position. However, this would still leave her completing teacher evaluations and she feared that all three of the positions would then not be performed as well as they should be. Superintendent Barratt then started to look for names to fill the position as an interim principal. Supt. Barratt explained that hiring an interim principal has several advantages. It will give the District time to search for a full time principal either at the end of the semester or the end of the year when there will be a better chance of finding someone to fill

the position. The interim will also be hired as an at-will employee and will be paid on a daily basis. This will give the Board the flexibility to keep the interim or let him/her go at any time. The interim will also have this option. Supt. Barratt explained that she made many phone calls to find someone. Her recommendation is Mrs. Ann Wood. Mrs. Wood has over 20 years of administrative experience and she lives in the Marlette School District. She was a principal in North Branch for several years and then a curriculum director and operations director for Croswell-Lexington Schools.

Trustee Burton asked if there was a teacher in the District who could fill in as principal. Mrs. Barratt explained that she does not believe it would be in the best interest of the students.

Mrs. Wood introduced herself and informed the Board that she would be willing to answer any questions that the board or the audience had.

President Hall thanked Mrs. Wood for coming to the meeting. He told her that he had read the independent review that was prepared by Fletcher, Fealko, Shoudy & Francis P.C. The only action he saw that Mrs. Wood had been questioned about was editing an employee job title. Mrs. Wood explained that she did change a job title, but it was done based on the recommendation from the Michigan Department of Education and that the document in question was never used.

Vice President, Huggett asked Mrs. Wood if she was truly interested in this job. Mrs. Wood answered with a yes. She has lived in Marlette for over 20 years, she enjoys living in Marlette and she started her career as a teacher in Marlette High School. She described herself as very loyal and dedicated and explained that she will work very hard for this school district. Mr. Huggett then asked if she thought she could be an effective leader. Mrs. Wood's reply was yes, she will do whatever it takes to get the job done.

At this time the Board opened the floor to questions from the audience.

Mrs. Carmen Blatt asked Mrs. Wood about discipline. She explained that she feels discipline has improved over the past few years and would like to see that trend continue. Mrs. Wood replied that discipline is one of her strengths, a top priority for her. She added however, that good relationships with students are equally as important.

Mr. Neal Bishop asked Mrs. Wood if she thought Marlette Schools could maintain stability with an interim principal, because this would be important when heading into the second count day of the year. Mrs. Wood answered that Marlette has pride in its schools, and that Marlette Schools are well respected. She will establish good relationships with staff and community. She feels that good communication, answering questions and getting things done when they need to be done will help maintain its stability.

Mrs. Amy Howe informed the public that she had spoken with all of the board members and thanked them for speaking with her. She said that there is so much going on in the District right now and the high school secretary position is open. She stated that the past secretary was the "glue" that held that office together. She asked Mrs. Wood how she would handle teachers that would've liked the interim position themselves and how she'll handle getting the "glue" back into the office. Mrs. Wood responded that establishing relationships and working hard will be key. She said she is a fair, honest person and she gets along with people. She said she has

experience and is willing to work hard. She reminded Mrs. Howe that if at any time things aren't working out, that she can be asked to leave and she will understand if she is asked to do so.

Mrs. Sue Huggett explained that she had heard a story of action taken against a 4th grade teacher in North Branch. She told Mrs. Wood she would like to hear her side of the story and asked if she could explain what happened in this incident. Mrs. Wood explained that it was not a 4th grade teacher, but that she witnessed an incident that she felt could've been considered child abuse. As a mandated reporter she is obligated to report the incident. At that time the school investigated the report and made their decision as to how to proceed.

Mr. Nathan Hager asked Mrs. Wood if she had ever been a High School principal. Mrs. Wood answered, "no", she was a high school curriculum director and operations director at Cros-Lex High School.

Mrs. Jane Ross stated that she had read the Times Herald Newspaper about the alleged misconduct of Mrs. Wood and it stated that it involved backdating a contract not just changing a person's title. Mrs. Wood replied that that was not correct. She stated that she did not sign or backdate anything.

Mrs. Sarah Kady commented that she believes that Mrs. Wood is educated and knows her stuff, but asked that she remember that the District is still healing and morale is down, that's why she feels the community is scared to hire Mrs. Wood. Mrs. Wood replied that she understands.

Mrs. Lou Ann Sauder stated that she has taught in the District for 32 years and worked with Ann. She wanted to let Mrs. Wood know that this is not about her. She just doesn't want the controversy to follow her to Marlette. Mrs. Wood replied that there are things in life that are unfair. She has learned that you just have to keep moving on and keep working hard. She feels that this is an opportunity for her as well, a chance to get in and prove she can and will work hard. She understands the concerns but she knows that she can do the job.

Mrs. Amy Howe asked if the choice will save the district money, and what the compensation would be for Mrs. Wood. The Board answered that although they did not know the exact amount she would be paid yet, that it would be comparable to Mr. Wood's daily compensation. They explained however, that she would not receive benefits, etc.

Trustee Jay Burton asked why her resume stated she was a principal/teacher in North Branch. Mrs. Wood answered that she stated her title as such because she taught one class while acting as the principal and was very proud of that.

Mr. Neal Bishop asked the Board how they could offer Mrs. Wood a position without knowing what the compensation would be. President Hall explained that the Board would vote to give authorization to offer the contract to Mrs. Wood. They would approve the contract after the contract has been offered.

Ms. Penny Kasdorf asked Mrs. Wood how she would build morale in the District. Mrs. Wood responded that she would be supportive of teachers, that it would not be her job to come in and hurt but to help. She would meet with staff to find out their needs and would try to do little things to show her appreciation.

Mrs. Jill Thomas asked the Board if they thought the public was aware of the fact that the Board was paying their attorney to help negotiate the teacher contract. President Hall indicated that it has been discussed at several board meetings and explained that when the MEA brought in the Uniserve Director to help them with negotiations, who is also an attorney, the Board decided to bring in their attorney.

Mr. Luke Reynolds asked Mrs. Wood if she would apply to be the full time principal if she was successful as the interim. Mrs. Wood replied that at this time she was not sure, it would depend on if it's a good fit.

Mrs. Teri Deering stated that it's important to develop relationship with staff. She asked Mrs. Wood how she would go about doing that. Mrs. Wood answered that she would do it by providing support, and listening to the staff. She would see what's working and make sure we keep doing the good things.

Student Amelia Summersett stated that the students are worried about the teachers because they (the teachers) have concerns about Mrs. Wood coming in as the principal. She asked Mrs. Wood how she would handle criticism from the teachers. Mrs. Wood replied that she has had her share of criticism. She will work with the teachers to get through it by working hard, listening, talking and answering questions. Amelia went on to ask if Mrs. Wood would be calm and respectful of the teachers' opinions when they ask Mrs. Wood questions. Mrs. Wood responded, "yes, I don't mind questions", she went on to say that she feels she is approachable and she hopes she can ease people's fears.

Mrs. Angie Rye introduced herself and then asked Mrs. Wood how she interacts with parents. She explained that she wants to be involved and wants to know what's going on, but would like more information from the school. Mrs. Wood answered that parents are a very important part of education. She stated she would have to get in and see what our current procedures are and will then assess the situation to see what needs to be changed.

Ms. Gail Denton stated that Mrs. Wood comes with a lot of "baggage". She went on to say that although Mrs. Wood eloquently explained her situation at Cros-Lex, she would like to know how she plans to build trust. Mrs. Wood answered that she plans to work hard and to do the job she is being asked to do. She reminded her that she would be hired as an interim and therefore if it doesn't look like it's working, the school district can end her contract at any time.

Mrs. Barb Woods asked Mrs. Wood how she would handle a parent/board member going to the school board or Superintendent instead of talking to a teacher first if there is an issue with that teacher. Mrs. Wood said she would have to see what our policy is first, then direct them to follow the policy. Mrs. Woods also asked if the Board plans to post for a full-time principal immediately. The Board responded that they would like to wait to post for the principal position to get the most qualified candidates possible. They will look at the possibility of posting to have someone in for the second semester but more likely will wait until the end of the year.

Trustee, Nik Woods stated that he isn't sure that he can justify bringing in someone that people don't want in that position. He asked Mrs. Wood how we move forward. Mrs. Wood responded that she lives in this community so it is in her best interest to make this situation work.

Trustee, Janet Mutch stated that she doesn't think that replacing the principal with a teacher at this times makes sense, it will upset the students' schedules and that doesn't seem like the right thing to do.

Vice President Huggett stated that he is disappointed in the information that teachers are sharing with the students.

Trustee Gina Kraft informed everyone that she contacted many of Mrs. Wood's references. The information she received was good. She was told that Mrs. Wood was fair across the board when it came to discipline.

Student Aerik McCormick stated that the students look up to the teachers, and they are worried about the choices the board is making.

3. Motion by Mark Huggett, support by Steve Quade to hire Mrs. Ann Wood as the Jr/Sr High School Interim Principal on a day to day basis.

Ayes: 5
Nays: Burton, Woods
Motion Carried

4. Motion by Janet Mutch, support by Mark Huggett to adjourn the meeting at 6:44 p.m.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Motion Carried

President, Mike Hall adjourned the special meeting at 6:44 p.m.