

**DOLORES SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-4A
BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
DISTRICT BOARD ROOM**

Thursday, April 28, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER – The Dolores School Board Special Meeting was called to order at 6:30pm on April 28, 2022.

ROLL CALL – Members present were: Maegan Crowley, Casey McClellan, Lori Raney, Lenetta Shull, Clay Tallmadge. QUORUM was present.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Lenetta Shull and seconded by Lori Raney to approve the agenda as written.

Votes: Crowley - aye; McClellan - aye; Raney - aye; Shull - aye; Tallmadge - aye.

Motion Passed.

III. ACTION ITEMS

A. Step Amounts for certified employees including consideration of Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA)

At the April 14 meeting, the Board tasked the Superintendent with setting up proposed annual steps for years 1-10, 11-20, and 21-beyond through researching the steps of other regional schools. The results of that research were provided to the Board by Dr. Blincoe on April 18th.

A motion was made by Lenetta Shull and seconded by Lori Raney to increase each step by \$50, so that they would be \$550, \$750, and \$950.

Discussion: Casey McClellan stated that he was thinking of a 10% increase, in which case these annual increases would be \$550, \$770, and \$990.

Maegan Crowley stated that it was made clear at the last meeting that these steps are arbitrary- they are set up arbitrarily with no real data, no reflection of inflation or actual costs to staff. She stated that they don't promote retention, because they are not rewarding our staff annually.

Clay Tallmadge stated that the Board has the discretion to also give cost of living increases and other stipends. Casey McClellan stated that these steps would be the minimum, and that the Board could give a cost of living raise on top of it. He stated that he doesn't feel comfortable financially with doing any more than this.

Maegan Crowley stated that she doesn't support this motion because this proposed amount doesn't promote retention. Lori Raney stated that the Finance Committee looked at steps in the area, and found that our district is at the very bottom. The Finance Committee proposed \$750 for the 1-10 year range, with 250 for each next level; this would place us in the middle of the pack.

Lenetta Shull stated that you can't compare Dove Creek, Mancos, and Dolores with other schools. Pagosa's mill levy is much higher. She stated that we may not have budget numbers until June, and we can't predict what we can sustain and keep. She stated that she thinks the Board has been very generous, and if there is extra money they give it to the staff.

Lori Raney stated that staff can't plan for their expenses based on a one-time stipend. She stated that she believes we do have the funds to do more, and that a \$50 increase is so small as to almost be an insult. She stated that talking with teachers at committee meetings and hearing public comment has made it clear to her that we need to do more.

Casey McClellan stated that this doesn't eliminate the option of further additional actions.

Maegan Crowley stated that the Board's strategic plan discussion emphasized retention. The \$2500 raise is good, as it raises the base, but does nothing for retention. She stated that it's important to show teachers that we understand that they are the cornerstone of the district and that we understand what they are struggling with.

Lenetta Shull stated that she doesn't want to get to August and have to tell teachers that the district can't afford to pay them what was contracted.

Casey McClellan stated that it comes down to what we can afford.

Dr. Blincoe stated that he and the Finance Director felt comfortable that the district could afford \$2500 plus the step. He stated that they still feel comfortable in that, and are anxious for the next month or two to see what the budget will be. The last number was \$240 per pupil increase, plus additional funds from the buydown of the BS factor. He stated that in June, we will feel much more comfortable knowing what funds we have to work with. It may be that at that point an additional 3% would be feasible.

Lori Raney stated that we can't keep putting this off.

Dr. Blincoe stated that there are other ways to put money in pockets. For example, for the next two years, we will be able to give a winter bonus. Additional stipends would also be an option.

Maegan Crowley stated that one-time bonuses that are not guaranteed every year, which are equal lump sums, do not encourage retention- they do nothing to convince a teacher that they should stay for five years.

Lenetta Shull stated that we have done so much this year in giving bonuses.

Clay Tallmadge stated that it's important that for retention, this money should be adding to the base, not just as bonuses. He stated that the Board has increased spending for staff by almost half a million dollars, and is valuing our most important asset which is our staff.

Casey McClellan stated that we have to be financially responsible, and that the suggestion from the superintendent and finance director was a \$2500 increase plus step. Maegan Crowley stated that one of the recommendations from them was also to keep the original step and add a 2-3% COLA.

Clay Tallmadge asked how the COLA would work with a step. He stated that it's very important that the Board look at cost of living increases.

Lori Raney stated that her understanding was that the salary schedule and steps were separate from any COLA.

Lenetta Shull stated that she thinks it is great that our district has graduated steps for years of service with the district, and that she doesn't believe that other districts do this.

Maegan Crowley stated that she wonders whether the entire step system is archaic, and whether it should be replaced with a percentage.

Clay Tallmadge stated that establishing a step system is mainly about hiring, and the Board then determines annually whether we will do a base raise or a percentage raise. He stated that he liked the across the board dollar amount this year because it gave more to our newer teachers.

Lori Raney stated that she thought the salary schedule had already been established, and that what was being discussed here was the separate step.

Dr. Blincoe stated that the terminology is getting crossed, and that what is being discussed here is the annual increase- which has traditionally been the graduated \$500, \$700, \$900 depending on years of service. That has been in place for at least 10 years.

Maegan Crowley asked why we are continuing to use those dollar amounts just because it's what has always been done- is it really compensating fairly on an annual basis?

Lenetta Shull stated that we cannot guarantee what our per-pupil income will be per year.

Doreen Jones stated that the step is the basic “you know you will get that step no matter what.” In prior years, the Board has given an additional percentage on top of that step, if the budget allows. At the very least staff know that they will get that step. Every district does that.

Lenetta Shull stated that she is proud of the Board for making monumental strides this year, because of

Casey McClellan asked the superintendent and finance director whether this addition of \$50 to the step is doable. Dr. Blincoe said yes.

Lori Raney stated that these small dollar amounts do nothing for retention, and that the district has plenty of staff whose salaries are high, and a large number of teachers whose salaries are too low.

Clay Tallmadge stated that there are major things that the Board cannot control, such as the extremely low education funding in the state of Colorado and the high and rapidly rising housing market in Colorado and particularly in our area. Lori Raney and Maegan Crowley agreed that the goal cannot be for every teacher to be able to buy a house, because the housing market is not in our control, but stated that salaries cannot be so low that 60% or more goes to housing, as was the case with Mr. Witte who addressed the Board at the last meeting.

Lori Raney stated that elementary teacher Kevin Vaughn made the important point at the Finance Committee meeting that as long as Dolores salaries remain so low we will continue to be a training school- teachers will not stay very long.

Maegan Crowley stated that we are not giving anyone reason to stay, because they cannot project what that worth will be- one-time She stated that this is going to have to hurt a bit financially, but everyone is hurting- we need to build a budget around the most important thing- doing the right thing for our teachers, and shift things around as needed.

Lori Raney stated that based on the information provided by the Finance Director, we are spending \$200k on increasing everyone but teachers, and around \$300k on teachers. She said that we should be zeroing out carryover. The Board discussed that the carryover has varied from year to year, and that this year’s was half a million, but other years have been less.

Maegan Crowley stated that since we have done nothing for so long, we have to figure out how to begin to tackle this, and that we need to take some big strides in doing so.

Votes: Crowley - nay; McClellan - aye; Raney - nay; Shull - aye; Tallmadge - nay.

Motion Died.

A motion was made by Clay Tallmadge and seconded by Lenetta Shull to increase each step by \$100, so that they would be \$600 for 1-10 years of service, \$800 for 11-20 years of service, and \$1000 for over 20 years of service.

Discussion: Clay Tallmadge asked the superintendent whether this would be possible with the budget. Dr. Blincoe stated that he believed it was possible.

Votes: Crowley - nay; McClellan - aye; Raney - aye; Shull - aye; Tallmadge - aye.

Motion Passed.

A motion was made by Maegan Crowley and seconded by Lori Raney to add a 2% COLA to certified staff for the 2022-2023 school year.

Discussion: Clay Tallmadge stated that he'd really like to wait until we see our state funding numbers before doing this. We just increased everyone's base by \$2500 and increased each step by \$100.

Maegan Crowley stated that for perspective, 2% would be \$68,167.

Lenetta Shull stated that on legislative committees, school funding is always the last thing that is discussed, and she is frustrated by that because it ties our hands. She stated that she also wasn't comfortable with this motion until we know the numbers.

Maegan Crowley stated that she feels this is the only thing we can offer toward real retention. When we think about \$68k, that could be cut from something else if it had to be. We've made a jump, but it's clear that we have some reserves and that our teachers are underpaid.

Lenetta Shull stated that that amount could be 2 beginning teachers that could be laid off. She stated that music, agriculture, woodshop teachers would be the first to be cut because they are specialty classes.

Clay Tallmadge stated that he wants to reinforce that cuts or layoffs are NOT under any consideration right now, that we are talking about increasing teacher pay.

Lori Raney stated that she believes we can't continue to be timid, and that she knows we are fiscally responsible, and that we have been putting away carryover to the point that we now have a reserve that is embarrassingly large. She said that more than 100k over or under budget is problematic, and that we should not be building and keeping such large reserves with no plan for how we will spend them.

Clay Tallmadge stated that the Board took action last month to increase base pay for every certified employee by \$2500, and that he thought this would be in lieu of a percentage increase this year. There is now a question on the floor of an additional 2% COLA.

**Votes: Crowley - aye; McClellan - nay; Raney - aye; Shull - nay; Tallmadge - nay.
Motion Died.**

A motion was made by Maegan Crowley and seconded by Lori Raney to reevaluate the step system and COLA for certified staff to consider percentage raises by December 2022.

Discussion: Casey McClellan asked for clarification that this is for the annual increases which were just changed to \$600, \$800, and \$1000. Maegan Crowley confirmed.

Lori Raney stated that we will always be in the dark trying to make these decisions this time of year, but bringing it back up later in the year would be good in order to better know the budget when making these decisions.

Lenetta Shull stated that this should just be an agenda item for discussion. Maegan Crowley agreed, but stated that she has proposed this as a motion to show commitment to staff.

Lenetta Shull asked why this would not include classified staff as well.

Casey McClellan stated that he likes these steps (annual increases) because it gives employees a known amount of what they are going to make, and that we will end up talking about COLAs anyway.

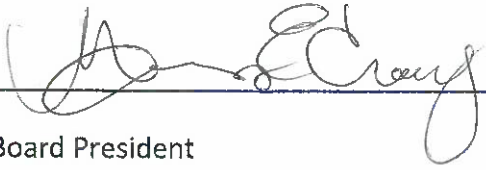
Clay Tallmadge stated that he agrees with Lenetta Shull that we have responsibility to look at the budget for all of the employees of the district and not just the certified staff- the district functions with all employees- so he hopes that when these budget discussions happen they will include all employees.

Dr. Blincoe stated that it's important to think in terms of December and June for budgets. Lenetta Shull stated that if this is discussed in December, we will not have final numbers from budget revisions in January.

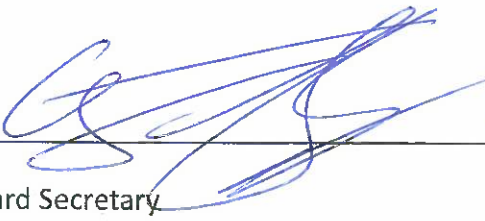
**Votes: Crowley - aye; McClellan - nay; Raney - aye; Shull - nay; Tallmadge - aye.
Motion Passed.**

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned by Maegan Crowley at 7:15 p.m.


Board President

5/12/22
Date


Board Secretary

5-12-22
Date