May 18, 2016

A special meeting of the Sidney Public Schools Board of Trustees was held Wednesday, May 18, 2016 at 7:00 PM in the Central School gymnasium on posted notice by the clerk for the purpose of reconsideration of a 2016-2017 employment contract for current Activities Director, Ross Hall. Present were Trustees Kelly Dey, Craig Steinbeisser, Luke Savage, Ben Thogersen and Melissa Sanders. Dennis Lorenz attended via speaker phone. Also in attendance were Superintendent- Daniel Farr, Clerk- Nicole Beyer, Ross Hall, Renee Jean with the Sidney Herald and 132 visitors.

At 7:03 Chairman Savage called the meeting to order.

At 7:03 PM Chairman Savage announced that the next matter to come before the Board was a personal matter and that he had determined as follows: 1) that the matter of the individual’s privacy is involved; 2) that such privacy demands protection of the individual for the sake of reputation, and otherwise, little, if anything, could be gained by publicly disclosing the information to be discussed; and 3) that the demand for privacy in this matter clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure. Therefore, he called for an executive session for the purpose of a personnel issue.

Chairman Savage asked Mr. Hall if he wished the meeting to remain closed and Mr. Hall requested it be an open meeting. Chairman Savage reconvened the meeting.

Chairman Savage explained the meeting was called as per Board policy allowing two or more Trustees to request a special meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to consider offering a 2016-17 employment contract to Ross Hall for Activities Director. Chairman Savage emphasized this was not a termination hearing but consideration of a contract renewal for the 2016-2017 year. He explained the process for addressing the Trustees: Fill out an Audience Participation Form and present it to the Clerk.

Ms. Dey moved to renew the Activities Director contract for 2016-17 for Ross Hall. Mr. Lorenz provided the second. Discussion continued.

Ms. Dey explained her previous vote to renew Mr. Hall’s contract stating she was still in favor of renewal as he is responding to Board and Administrative recommendations and suggestions and continues to make strides to reach his goals.

Mr. Savage stated he would not change his position and legally could not go into the reasons behind his original vote, however, this was a difficult decision and, as with all of his votes as Trustee, he has taken into consideration the interests of Sidney Public Schools and its students.

Mrs. Sanders commented on the great attendance for this issue and the attributes the community sees in Mr. Hall with his involvement and big heart. However, she has done her research on this subject and there are issues that cannot be discussed in an open meeting that led to her voting against his renewal at the last meeting of the Trustees. She reminded the public in attendance that 30 people attended the previous meeting where Mr. Hall’s contract was discussed and only one person spoke in favor of renewing his contract.

At this time, those members of the audience who had completed the Audience Participation Form would be invited to speak in alphabetical order following Serina Everett, former Trustee, who asked to be first to explain why she voted to renew Mr. Hall at the previous meeting. Each person was asked to keep their statement to two minutes or less and to be respectful of the Board and all in attendance.

Mrs. Everett stated she had made the original motion to support the recommendation of the administration to renew Mr. Hall’s contract. She stated that employees need to have an opportunity to improve and did not think non-renewal was warranted in this case.

Students Luke Beenken, John Beyer, Matt Dey, Kasey Godfrey and Brianna Reid spoke in favor of renewing Mr. Hall’s contract speaking to his assistance in the classroom and filling in and supporting students’ through coaching/advisor vacancies in sports and activities.

Brad Faulhaber, Ted Fulgham, Yvonne Gebhardt, Shane Gorder, Ty Graves, Guy Melby, Steve O’Toole, Gail Staffanson, Danny Strasheim and Ryan Troxell as activity advisors/athletic coaches spoke in favor of renewing Mr. Hall’s contract speaking to his assistance with their programs and his devotion to promoting Sidney students and their acitvities in his representation at the state level. Mr. Gorder also read the list of responsibilities from the job description.

Lisa Gorder and Kristin Kennedy spoke in favor of renewing Mr. Hall’s contract explaining his community involvement on behalf of the students of Sidney as representative of the Chamber and Richland County Complex committee.

Parents Cathy Fischer, Cathy Wieferich and Amanda Skogan spoke in favor of renewing Mr. Hall’s contract citing Mr. Hall’s willingness to step in and coach the girls basketball program mid-season during 2014-15 and the Drill/Cheerleader Team during 2015-16 and the strides their daughters’ made with that program change.

Janelle Jensen, Troy Jensen, Jan Martineau, Lisa Morehouse, Jennifer Reid, Kent Simonis, Jessie Williams and Terry Williams spoke in favor of renewing Mr. Hall’s contract citing various positive dealings they have had with him over his tenure with Sidney Schools.

Todd Hermanson spoke to the difficulty of being a Trustee. He stated that if everything was perfect, we would not be at this meeting- improvements need to happen. He asked those in the room, “Why are we in this room and how are we going to fix it?” and asked the Board- “If you can’t fix it, what are you going to do?”

Mr. Hall was then asked if he wished to address the board. He addressed his belief of the causes for termination stating these are some of the issues he has faced in his position that he believes have led to his non-renewal involving claims of student bullying in certain programs and his support of coaches that are improving and working towards growing their programs rather than non-renewal. He also mentioned the state tournaments he has brought to Sidney and the other inroads he has made in various programs. He does not feel he has been told what he has done wrong so that he can fix it.

Mr. Savage again reiterated this was not a termination hearing but a contract non-renewal.

Mr. Lorenz told the Trustees you know where I stand and expressed overwhelming support of Mr. Hall.

Ted Fulgham asked for clarification on termination versus non-renewal. Dr. Farr explained there is no tenure for this position. It is considered a classified position with a contract from year to year. Non-renewal is simply not offering a contract for the following year.

Jessie Fisher spoke in favor of allowing Mr. Hall to keep his job with an opportunity to correct what is wrong.

Mary Beth Carda asked about the recommendation for contract renewal coming only from Dr. Farr. Dr. Farr explained that recommendations are made to him from the employee’s supervisor so his recommendation to the Trustees was made in consult with Mr. Hall’s two immediate supervisors.

Former Trustee, Luann Cooley, asked, if the contracts are renewed on a year to year basis, could the Trustees renew Mr. Hall’s contract for one year, allowing him a chance to address the areas that need improvement.

Chairman Savage called for the vote on the motion before the Trustees. Mr. Lorenz and Ms. Dey voted in favor of renewing Mr. Hall’s contract for 2016-2017. Mrs. Sanders, Mr. Steinbeiser, Mr. Thogersen and Mrs. Sanders voted against the motion. The motion failed 2 to 4.

With no further business to come before the Trustees, the meeting was adjourned at 8:52 PM.

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 Board Chair

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Attest:

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District Clerk