

May 20, 2020

South Kitsap School District Board Meeting

Comments posted by Roger Gay on Informkitsap: <http://rogergay.com/south-kitsap-issues.html>

The [South Kitsap School District](#) meeting was well attended, at least remotely. I saw around 46 on Zoom and around 97 watching FaceBook Live at one point. Yes, I can follow a meeting on my computer, tablet and phone in a number of ways just to check comments. Considering the live versions I have attended have had only 2 or 3 public and 6-8 staff attending in person an audience of almost 150 is extraordinary. To go to the Agenda and supporting documents click on the Board Meetings on Quick Links, click on the Meeting for Wednesday, May 20, 2020, then click on View the Agenda. That gives you access to the agenda and the supporting documents and presentations.

The meeting started with the discussion on having 2 Public Comment periods. I love when this happens as it gives the public two opportunities to bring up discussion topics or ask questions. The Chair made his standard statement regarding public comments and again mentioned the need for a name and an address. At that point the Superintendent said since they were on FaceBook Live they should not require an commenters address. I think the requirement for an address needs to be eliminated. At the most an e-mail or phone number to receive a response to a question may be needed, but it should not be part of a requirement to make a public comment. As far as I can remember the South Kitsap School District is the only organization requiring an address for public comment in meetings I have attended for the last few years.

There were no public comments at the first opportunity. It seemed there were questions or comments on FaceBook Live comments, but the Board did not want those brought out at this point. My guess is like many entities SKSD will need to craft a policy on how to handle legitimate questions on FaceBook Live, if they are responded to at all.

The first item up was a discussion on the graduation of the South Kitsap High School. The Covid19 pandemic has put a damper on many possibilities. At first they seemed to migrate towards a delayed graduation but then students and parents objected as some had plans ranging from trips to entering military service. I know many decades ago when I graduated I went from graduating one day and being in bootcamp 16 days later so I emphasize. What will happen for graduation was two options were presented. One was a virtual graduation close to 9 June and the other was a drive-up graduation. A drive-up graduation would have the graduate stay in their vehicles and could result in a traffic jam which could have people leaving their vehicles and violating the governors edicts of social distancing. Another option being considered is having a group of 50 graduates separated and then 5 at a time would enter to be given their papers, have pictures taken and be included in a video. Since 5 is the limit for people, the stage would have the Superintendent, photographer & videographer and a graduate. Once the 50 were processed the next 50 would do the same 5

students at a time. I think this is not a one day process. It sounded like the final method will be a combination with video and pictures available for parents. It was a 4-1 vote for the first option with Daily abstaining as he did not really have a good feel for what the parents and students actually wanted. No survey was done and I think he wanted more solid numbers as to what the actual graduates wanted and what their parents wanted. Again when it comes to preparing for graduation the school district has been waiting on Olympia to come out with the requirements needed to meet the governors edicts and of course Olympia has been very slow and not very helpful at times as has been mentioned by numerous other entities. Director Daily asked how many parents and students would show up for graduation and I did not really hear a solid response. I may have missed that. Another Director asked about special needs students and I do not think a complete answer was received. It could be the district has not planned yet due to the slowness of Olympia distributing the new or continually changing edicts. The needs of any student who has issues needs addressed early in the discussions and planning.

The next presentation on the agenda was the [Discovery](#) and [Explorer](#) schools graduation plans. It seems the students and parents were ok with delaying graduation until July. Other options were a student only graduation at a specific location as drive-up live broadcast event or a virtual graduation on Zoom. The support was heavily pointing to the July graduation. If you are interested in more details on the Discovery, Explorer educational programs and the SKHS graduation the presentations are on the SKSD Board meeting page.

The Board Discussion was interesting. There was a Board Referral Request Form draft that has been discussed the last few months and 3 actual filled out forms. The first was regarding the monthly financial briefing. Director Daily has asked questions on this at every meeting I think. It is basically asking the Superintendent to modify the briefings and to use elements from North Kitsap, Central Kitsap and others to create a financial briefing that would be more informative and useful to not only the Directors but especially the general public. Director Berg was not happy with the broadness of the proposal and wanted it to go down to the specific document and page that needed to be cloned. On a vote it passed 4-1 with Berg as the only No vote. It seemed the Superintendent and staff has already been working on some changes and he was comfortable with meeting the goals. The second Board Referral Request forms topic was dealing with pay raises for 2020-2021. This was to have the Superintendent start discussing with the unions the canceling of all pay raises for the rest of 2020 and 2021 for all SKSD employees. The Superintendent would research the issues and give the Board of Directors the information and then the Board would decide how to proceed. It went into some discussion but that was quickly shutdown by Director Berg when he made a resolution to stop discussion on the subject. At the voting it was 4-1 with Daily the only yes vote.

The third Board Referral Request form was to Open Union Negotiations to the Public. It had a Desired Resolution Date of 3 June and Director Berg wanted a change to August, It was decided to change it to 15 July as the Superintendent does have quite a bit on his plate with graduation and the Covid19 issues. Director Sebren wanted to delay it even longer, late this year or early next year. If I remember correctly she was a teacher for 27 years in South Kitsap. It will be interesting to see her input to opening union negotiations to the public. Only one union is in negotiations at this point with others not until the spring of 2021. This passed 5-0, yes, the full SKSD Board of Directors agreed on something.

The next item up was Director Sebren and her issues with public comment. She does not want the public to ask questions of a specific Director during the meetings. She seemed to think how it was done in the past based on the Boards own standards has not been followed. The example she gave is from the Jurassic Parliament, Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules of Order. The document shows the Port of Kennewick in a picture. Certain paragraphs were emphasized by Director Sebren. The following is taken from the document that is available in the Board Agenda materials online:

“WRITTEN GUIDELINES

5. Provide printed copies of the guidelines and expectations.
6. Review the guidelines at the beginning of each comment period if necessary, and explain that this is the time for citizens and residents to express their views in order to inform the council. Explain that the council will not engage in dialogue with the public during this time.
7. The council has the right to set limits on what subjects may be addressed, how long public comment will be, and how many times people may speak. All such limits must be viewpoint neutral: they must not favor one point of view over another.

DURING PUBLIC COMMENT

8. Check your state law as to whether you may require speakers to give their name and address.
9. Require all speakers to address their remarks to the chair.
10. Require all speakers to keep to the time limits. It is important to be consistent for the appearance of fairness. Some jurisdictions provide a visible public timer, so the speaker knows how much time is available.
11. The chair should thank each speaker, whether positive or negative.
12. In general, it is best not to respond at all to public comment. However, the chair may provide brief factual information, if appropriate. This must not degenerate into lecturing or criticism.
13. The chair must not under any circumstances enter into back and forth exchanges with the public. See our blog entry below for more information.
14. We recommend using surnames to address speakers. If you use first names for some speakers, use them for all.
15. Council members refrain from speaking during this portion of the meeting.
16. Have staff ready to note input or questions from the public and to provide responses at a later date. Do not call on staff to give public answers on the spot.”

The paragraphs of concern to Director Sebren were #5, #6, #7, #12, #15 & #16. It was decided that Director Berg would compare this with the existing documents the Board has and make a presentation at a future board meeting.

I understand I think what Director Sebren has issues with at times. But then I also hear and see how the public still has distrust of the actions of the SK School Board of Directors. I have heard at a number of events with the district how they need to better connect and communicate with the public and yet some on the board still give an impression that they want to restrict the publics ability to comment. I think at times the continually asking of questions and the general public not hearing an actual response has just built the barriers in communications higher each year. I did make a comment in the second Public Comment period regarding this. Basically the SKSD needs to answer the public questions in a public manner. If you just sit behind a podium or desk and do not respond or react the public will feel like you are not listening. Make it known upfront you will

typically not answer questions at that time, but will take questions and issues from the public and staff will answer them or respond in a timely manner and in a public way. That may mean an entry into the minutes, a discussion topic under Board Discussion or a briefing under the Superintendent Report. If one person has a question or even a general comment the odds are more have had the same question and just not asked it or had the same or similar comment but did not make it. Making the questions and answers public is another way of connecting with the general public. It also means an efficient way of taking questions, gaining access to commenters contact information or noting the questions will be answered in a future meetings agenda. It means you are interested in what the public has to say, good or bad. It means you are willing to answer questions, but after some research and not off the cuff. It means the SKSD Board of Directors are willing to show the full complement of voters, taxpayers, parents and students that they can engage in civil, informative and truthful communications.

The Consent Agenda had a few questions from Director Daily. Hiring practices was questioned regarding a staffing reboot. A lease on copiers was questioned, it is a 5 year lease which is expiring later this year.

New Business/Action Items had a presentation on the School Improvement Plans (SIP) for Explorer Academy and Discovery Alternative High School. The full presentations are on the SKSD 20 May Agenda. The SIP is a requirement from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). This seemingly started in late 2018 when Discovery and Explorer started receiving support from OSPI due to low graduation rates. One of the requirements was to submit yearly SIP's. Some quick basic information is the Discovery High School is the alternative school in South Kitsap. It was created in 1976 and has a child care center for 0-3 age children. It has usually between 180 and 200 students. The school does have on-site mental health and substance use services during the school day. The Explorer Academy is the on-line blended education model and it serves K-12 with the number of students varying with the majority in the 9-12 grades. There are 29 K-5 students, 51 6-8 students, 139 9-12 students and 28 GA students. In June 2020 they will have 86.4% of their Seniors graduate, 19 of 22.

It was obvious during the presentation that the leadership at the school alternative schools believes in the work being done at both facilities. It is a requirement of the OSPI to have the SK School Board approve the SIP in order for the district to receive funding grants. Director Daily seemed to think the two facilities were not fully part of the district as much of the writing in the documents came from the OSPI. It turns out if the school district does not follow how the OSPI wants the document to read precisely, the actual funding grants could be in jeopardy. My only suggestion to the presenter of this information is to not read the slides. I hope most of the audience can read at their own speed and the slide should be too prod or remind the presenter of key discussion points. That is one of my pet peeves, presenters just reading the slide on the screen. In the shipyard I was an instructor that helped train instructors and that was always an issue, instructors just reading the presented slide and not engaging the students. This Action Item passed 4-1 with Director Daily voting No.

The next Action Item was an Emergency Waiver of School days and Instruction Hours. This gives the Superintendent the task of creating a continuous learning plan for students and extends the 2019-2020 school year by 3 days. The agenda material includes the information for the remote

learning guides for the district. Read those documents if you want more details on grading, report cards, special education remote learning and the other various documents. The actual resolution was created by someone not in the school district so the wording was created to fit the needs of the legal issues. This passed with yes votes from all board members, 5-0.

The next Action Item was a contract to upgrade the intercom systems at some of the schools. This is a \$376,044.38 contract for Marcus Whitman, John Sedgwick, Cedar Heights, East Port Orchard, Orchard Heights, Burley Glenwood, Olalla and South Colby schools intercom systems. The funding is part of the expenses from the Capital Levy that was approved by voters. The priority was given to schools that had no intercom system or had failing or close to failing systems. This passed 5-0. It did have a Total Project Cost of \$409,470.45 in an accompanying document. The next Action Item was a contract for security cameras. This is a \$189,816.99 (per the resolution) contract and is using Capital Levy funds. This particular project needed more funding than originally determined. It seems this is targeted at the middle schools and will add 86 cameras to Cedar Heights, Marcus Whitman and John Sedgwick middle schools. Of course the cost is more than expected with the project allocation going from \$143,750 to \$275,000 and the number of cameras going from around 47 to 86. The extra funding came from moving funds from Transportation Facility security cameras to the middle school camera funding. The district ties this security camera expense to the Capital Levy by highlighting the part of the Board Resolution 1271 that says:

“The District shall modernize and expand its school facilities...providing for enhanced safety and security and improvements to technology equipment, support, and training.

The District will meet the requirements of the audit conducted by the United States Office of Civil Rights...

Shall also modernize its educational facilities through the acquisition and installation, implementation, and management of computer technology and technology systems, facilities and projects, including but not limited to enhancing infrastructure, acquiring hardware, licensing software, and implementing online applications and training related to installation of the foregoing...”

As part of the Safety & Security part of the Capital Levy, \$1,479,602.20 has been spent so far from the \$2,030,325 allocated Safety & Security Capital Levy funding. No, the cameras are not monitored. As the Superintendent has said before, they are great for finding out later what happened but they have little effect on things as they are happening. This passed 5-0.

The last Action Item was the Emergency Suspension of Policy. This was specifically targeted to March Whitman Middle School because of the recent burglary and arson incident. This allows the school district to get work started on the cleanup and repairs without going through the normal procurement process. If the normal method was followed, the odds are the school would not open on time in the fall. By fast tracking the work Marcus Whitman would be available at the start of the school year. At this point it estimated to be a \$900,000 expense that will be reimbursed by insurance. This passed 5-0.

In the Superintendents Report he said they are working on an opening plan for the fall. It looks like

3 options, depending on how the Covid19 recovery process works out. The options are a normal start, starting just like we are operating now or a combination of the two. It looks like a group of stakeholders will be tasked with working on the various issues like social distancing, discussing the potential for shifts for students, adding more on-line options and other potential paths to follow. It looks like this latest stakeholder group could be 60-80 people strong. It should be interesting and I hope the general public is kept up to date on the discussions. I do not know if the meetings, discussions or interactions of this group will be public. I would expect and hope for a few Zoom meetings in the next few months.

I did comment at the second Public Comment period. I said I was happy to see that questions that had been asked over the last few months had actually been answered via the Board Referral Request form. I also stated that it is important that the questions from the public be answered in a public way. Odds are if one person has a question, others also have the same question. I think this is very important for any public agency that receives questions from the public. The school district has for years had issues with public support and has given the impression that they do not want questions from the public. Taking the questions from live meetings, Zoom meetings and even FaceBook Live and answering them in a public format is vital to gain the trust and support of the public. It shows that the district is involved, listens, cares and is willing to engage the public in professional discourse. I also commented that the district may need to look at using an Artificial Intelligence (AI) program to monitor the numerous security cameras the district has and will be getting. I said that because it could be an option and would allow the existing SKSD security team a way to monitor the district. I doubt this would evolve into a facial recognition security system that would identify each person on school district property but at a lower level of investment it could use the security camera system as an early warning system vice it being more of an after the fact investigative tool. It could even result in savings in insurance over time.

Overall this was an interesting meeting. Director Daily is getting his questions and concerns answered by using the Board Referral Request form. I hope to see the other Directors also become engaged and not be seen as just bobbleheads for the district. These meetings are when the elected get to directly influence the public with their engagement with the school district. They were elected to represent us, the taxpayers and voters, and I think at times in the past the public has not seen that representation being apparent at the meetings.