

ISD ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY
September 11, 2015

Present: Paula Chance; Gwenn Eyer; Jerry Covell; Angela Botz; Susan Dramin-Weiss; John Miller; Sheri Cook; Ben Lachman; Juan Bernal; Sheila Stephens, HS Principal; Angie Kuhn, PK-8 Principal; Kathryn Surbeck, Evaluation Center Director.

Visitors: Charlene Hicks, ISD graduate; Corey Axelrod, IAD President; Amy Richards, ISBE; Eloise Davies, representing the Springfield Deaf Club; Deb Gossrow, parent of ISD student; DeDe Summers, ISD graduate; Ed Hoyt, ISD Athletic Director; Kitty Aubry, Interpreter; Debbie Siebert, Interpreter; Janet Hamm, CART reporter;

Paula Chance opened the meeting with a moment of silence in remembrance of 9/11.

Paula announced that Dr. Beth Purvis would be joining the meeting in the afternoon and that Kris Smith planned to arrive later that morning. Sheila stated that Kris had recently accepted an additional position as the Acting Director of the Department of Ageing and probably would not be available to attend the meeting.

A discussion ensued regarding the availability of an ethics officer. The council was informed by John Heyer that ISD does not have an ethics officer on campus, but uses the ethics officer from DHS. Angela Leavell, the Personnel Director at ISD, sends out the training announcements and makes sure that everyone is trained.

A motion was made to approve the meeting summaries from three previous meetings, one regular meeting and two special meetings. The motion passed.

Paula summarized her report as chairperson. She listed three goals: 1) To cultivate and encourage trust in our school; 2) Engage the deaf community to get involved so that everyone can be on the same page as to what is best for the school, and 3) To pursue higher aspirations for the school. Paula stated that she thought the council has worked hard and has done a good job in the three years she was chairperson and she thanked everyone for their efforts.

Discussion continued regarding the bylaws and changing the categories that make up the council. It was determined that the bylaws are in compliance with the administrative code and that the categories can't be changed without going through JCAR (Joint Commission on Administrative Rules). Gwenn reported that there were two open slots on the council, a parent or guardian and an expertise in a field related to deaf education.

There was some discussion regarding Dr. Beverly Trezek's research and cued speech. Angie explained that Dr. Trezek's research is literacy based. She also explained that the data the principals look at (student scores, learning environment, etc.) is part of their jobs and not a research project. Angie further explained that the ISD educators talk to Dr. Trezek about what they are seeing with their students and she advises them. She said that they have also talked with Dr. Connie Mayer from Canada. Dr. Mayer works with Dr. Trezek and focused more on language comprehension. She said they were finding that students were learning new words and could express the words, but they were not understanding the language. Angie talked about a signed English approach being taken where the teachers would talk and practice through sign language before asking the

students to read and write. Then they started trying cued speech. The cueing began as a small pilot group and then expanded.

Paula asked the principals about the progress of hiring educators. They informed her that applications were turned into the ISD personnel office. Once they are gathered they are sent to CMS for approval and then sent back to ISD. This process is taking about a month. Sheila stated that there were still two vacant teaching positions in the high school and that she expects them to be filled soon.

Discussion turned to the ISD governance legislation. It was determined that because the governance legislation is politically charged, it is an ethics violation to use state time and resources to discuss it. Jerry and Paula were hoping to meet with ISD Administrative Council to get their input on the governance and discussed the possibility of meeting outside of ISD business hours at a neutral location, such as the public library or JCCD.

Gwenn suggested the council seek answers to this issue. Gwenn said they should find out whether or not the council can legally act as a political body. She said her other advisory councils can only act as grassroots private citizens. The other questioned to be answered would be whether or not ex officio members are permitted to participate in off-hours, off-campus private meetings, which would still be published as open meetings.

The council voted in two new members. There were four applicants and two open membership positions. The council voted in Deborah Beranek as someone who represents expertise in a field related to deaf education. They also voted in Deb Gossrow as a parent of an ISD student.

A debate ensued concerning rather or not the newly voted in members were allowed to vote in the election of officers.

Following lunch, the election of officers was held. Gwenn Eyer was voted in as the new chairperson, Ben Lachman as the vice chair, and Susan Dramin-Weiss as the secretary. However, after some consideration about time and travel, Susan decided to withdrawal her name as a nominee for secretary and nominated Paula Chance to that position. Paula accepted the position as secretary.

The council than set the meeting dates for the remainder of the school year. Those dates are December 11th, March 11th, and May 13th.

Paula asked about Gwenn's current position of membership coordinator now that she is the chairperson. Gwenn stated that she would appoint a committee based on interest and willingness.

Susan asked about the future of the ISD football program. She stated that there are rumors about there not being a football program after this year. Ed Hoyt, ISD's Athletic Director, stated that ISD's enrollment numbers have declined and this has led to limited numbers in the football program. He said the program is year to year and as long as it's possible to safely field a team they will continue to do so.

Discussion then turned to various rumors and gossip concerning the school. Juan stated that many of the students he has talked to, including his daughter, do not feel that they are being forced to communicate a certain way and they are upset at what people are saying about ISD. Many of the students like cued speech, but he wonders if they are hiding those feelings from their deaf parents who oppose it.

Susan asked about ISD having a public relations office. Sheila said that any PR has to go through Springfield. Sheila explained about a video that was put on ISD's website of Dr. Warshaw-Smith talking about ASL and cueing. It was approved through Springfield and it was felt that this explanation by Dr. Warshaw-Smith would be helpful, but it backfired and became worse. Because of all the negativity, the video was removed from the website.

Sheila explained that ISD promotes many positive aspects of the schools and students. She mentioned the ASL-based drama group, and the students involved in the school recently winning the 3-D printer competition.

Ed Hoyt and Deb Gossrow both complimented the school and commented on the positive successes of their children who attend here. Deb says that she always tells everyone how great it has been at ISD for her son and that anyone that she has talked to in her community has only had good things to say about ISD.

Gwenn suggested creating some committees within the council. She said the membership committee would continue, but also maybe add a legislative committee and a public relations committee.

The council discussed the various social media outlets and the comments that are being presented on them. They discussed the negative comments that are being put out there that are unfounded and how the council could best approach these comments.

Dr. Beth Purvis, Secretary of Education for the State of Illinois, arrived at the meeting and after introductions of the council members, she told them a little about herself. Beth stated that the concerns and needs of ISD and ISVI are on her mind as well as the minds of all of the staff in the Governor's Office. Beth explained the collection of applicants and the interview process for the hiring a new superintendent at ISD.

Corey Axelrod pointed out that the location of ISD may have a negative effect on the number of applicants. He stated that Wisconsin's recent yielded no qualified applicants.

Beth stated that they are struggling with superintendent search for every vacant superintendent position within the state. She said this is partially due to the rules the state has and also the state not being an attractive place for people to relocate. She pointed out that competition throughout the country also plays a part in the struggle.

Beth said she would like to first find qualified candidates. Then have them visit ISD and the community and see how they interact with the students, staff, and the community. She feels this process would be a positive step towards finding someone who truly wants to be here rather than someone who wants to leave their current location.

Gwenn asked about the council developing questions for the interview process. Beth thought that was a good idea and said the council could come up with questions and send them to her. She would see what could be done about those questions being added to the other interview questions.

Gwenn asked about consent decrees that provide protection regarding the budget. Beth said that what is protecting ISD is that a large sum of the money comes from IDEA. This is federal money so she doesn't really have too many concerns regarding the programs that affect the needs of the ISD students. Her concerns are directed more at the infrastructure. ISD is an old campus and requires a lot of upkeep to stay in working order.

Gwenn suggested creating a short video that showed what the state and the community of Jacksonville has to offer. She said this might help promote the area and the school. Beth agreed that that would be a good tool to use. Corey suggested that the ISD website be redesigned and the use of ASL to be more prevalent on the website. Sheila said that they have recently revised the website, but that it's not finished yet. They are working on updates that promote the positive aspects of the school. She said there is currently no IT person on campus that can work on it. It's being worked on at night by a contractual person who has another full-time job during the day.

Sheila talked about the idea of creating a Facebook page for ISD. She said many people use social network sites rather than looking at the website. Beth asked to be sent an email regarding this and she would see what could be done about getting it started. Beth also suggested having a college class work on the website as part of their training. She asked the principals to send her the information and she would see what she could do.

Some of the council member expressed their frustration with DHS and how hard it is to get things done or changed at the school. Beth said that she understands their frustration. She said that there are 15 agencies that oversee educational programming. That is a lot more than what you would find in most states. She said the feelings at ISD aren't unique to them. There are a lot of agencies are feeling the same way and the Governor's Office is trying to work through the agencies to make them more efficient and productive.

Many council members thanked Beth for coming. They expressed their appreciation of her taking time out of her busy schedule to talk with them and answer their questions.

Susan Dramin-Weiss announced that the alumni association would be having a board meeting on Sunday, September 13th, in Springfield.

Corey Axelrod announced that the IAD board meeting will be on October 11th in Jacksonville. He also announced that December 4th would be the first annual youth holiday party in a Chicago suburb. He said information would be sent to students who live in that area or who want to go to the event. He expects 75 youth to participate and that IAD is partnering with ISD on this event.

Ed Hoyt announced that October 10 is ISD's homecoming. One change this year is that there will be a volleyball game on 11:00 a.m., not at 9:30 a.m. as in the past. The football game is scheduled for 2:00 p.m.

Paula mentioned that 15 ISD Deaf Olympians would be honored at a Hall of Fame banquet.

Jerry made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Juan. The meeting was adjourned.