



**LITTLEFIELD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #9
GOVERNING BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING
EXECUTIVE SESSION
Administrative Services Site
3490 East Rio Virgin Road
Beaver Dam, Arizona 86432
Thursday, June 22, 2023
8:45 A.M.**

Mission Statement

The Littlefield Unified School District is committed to excellence. Therefore, we are committed to providing opportunities for all students to learn and develop socially, emotionally, and academically. We are committed to providing resources to our students, parents and teachers in an ongoing effort to help students transition from childhood to adulthood.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Board President Graham called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. There were three (3) members of the public that attended the meeting.

2. ROLL CALL:

Sonny Graham, Board President
John Reyes, Board Secretary
Susan Burch, Board Member
Patricia Schoppmann, Board Member
Michael Fagnan, Board Member

Sheree Goessman, District Secretary

CEREMONIAL ITEMS

3. Pledge of Allegiance: By invitation of Board President.

AGENDA

4. Consideration of approval of the June 22, 2023 LUSD9 Special Board Meeting agenda.

Board Member Fagnan made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Board Member Burch. The motion passed unanimously.

**Board Member Burch: Yes
Board Member Fagnan: Yes
Board President Graham: Yes
Board Secretary Reyes: Yes**



Board Member Schoppmann: Yes

PUBLIC COMMENT

This is the time for the public to comment. Members of the Board may not discuss items that are not specifically **identified on the agenda**. Therefore, pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.01(H), action taken as a result of public comment will be limited to directing staff to study the matter, responding to any criticism or scheduling the matter for further consideration and decision at a later date. (Limited to 3 minutes per person.)

5. Public Comment.

Sean Hogan said he's new to this school stuff. He found some information on the shade structure needed for the buses and the kid's playground. He expressed his opinion that it is important to serve the community and take care of the community. He said he would like to possibly run for the Governing Board to help serve the community and kids.

ACTION ITEMS AND/OR DISCUSSION

6. The Arizona School Boards Association will discuss with the Governing Board the interview process and schedule for District Superintendent/Secondary Principal interviews.

Dr. Clement thanked the Governing Board for inviting him back. He said the plan is to interview the finalists. He noted one of the finalists has requested the interview and discussion be done in open session which was received in writing. Dr. Clement said after the executive session and interviews the Governing Board will deliberate and possibly make a decision in open session on a finalist to enter into negotiations with. The board will have options to consider after the interviews. There has also been a community tour scheduled for each finalist. Dr. Clement thanked Mrs. Goessman for working with him. He noted there are a lot of logistics that happen with this process. He said without Mrs. Goessman things could have fallen apart fast. Dr. Clement said once they get to the interview he will talk about the questions the Governing Board has given him guidance on.

Board President Graham made a motion to go into executive session to interview Mr. Heaton, seconded by Board Member Burch. The motion passed unanimously.

**Board Member Burch: Yes
Board Member Fagnan: Yes
Board President Graham: Yes
Board Secretary Reyes: Yes
Board Member Schoppmann: Yes**

The Governing Board went into executive session at 8:52 a.m.

7. The Governing Board may consider convening an Executive Session pursuant to ARS 38-431.03(A)(1) to interview and discuss candidates related to the employment of a District Superintendent/Secondary Principal.

Board Secretary Reyes made a motion to reconvene the regular meeting, seconded by Board



Member Fagnan. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Member Burch: Yes
Board Member Fagnan: Yes
Board President Graham: Yes
Board Secretary Reyes: Yes
Board Member Schoppmann: Yes

The Governing Board reconvened the regular meeting at 10:03 a.m.

Dr. Clement said the Governing Board has allotted one hour for the interview and he will be the timekeeper. He noted there are 10 questions and then the Governing Board will have some time for follow up questions. He noted the applicant will also have the opportunity to ask the Governing Board questions.

The Governing Board introduced themselves to Dr. Becenti.

Question #1 – Why are you applying for the Littlefield School District Superintendent position, and what do you perceive as your strengths and weaknesses as a leader?

Dr. Becenti said she believes the students deserve the best education. She said she is dedicated to working with staff and cares about students and wants them to have better lives. Now is the time to make sure our students are well taken care of. There are several approaches to direct children with a variety of learning styles. Looking at data which is one of her strengths. Her dream has to be an A school. We need to look at the target areas and look at the EL programs. All students deserve that and need to be shown where their strengths are and where their weaknesses are. She noted her weakness is that she talks too much. She likes to cover all areas and make sure she gets to say everything she needs to say.

Question #2 – Describe and discuss some innovative initiatives you would initiate to improve student outcomes, including academic achievement in Littlefield District Schools.

Dr. Becenti said a lot of that is in her 90 day plan. She said they need to take a look at data to look at student outcomes. Student achievement would be #1. Then #2 working with the board to ensure we work together. When she does her reports she better speak about data and what type of assessment they have done. We may not be at the proficiency level but data and student achievement is important. In all the places she has been, proficiency has been a problem and it is so important. She noted she has been a college professor. She said she has seen when students get out of high school they still take remedial courses. She noted she was also an EL student noting her father was a Spaniard. She noted with Azella testing they can determine where the students are with EL. She said they would do a 5 year success plan and once the student is stable enough they can get out of EL. Dr. Becenti said she has seen the EL students excel most of the time. A lot of teachers have only known English all their lives and never spoke another language. We also need to push further for the gifted and talented. She said they need to make sure our students get an associate's degree along with their high school diploma.

Question #3 – As you know, the Littlefield Superintendent also serves as the Secondary Principal. Explain how you would balance and deal with these dual roles?

Dr. Becenti said with the many years she's been superintendent she's had to step down and be a principal when her principals were out. She was even doing substitute teaching. Superintendents need to be able to go back down to see and review what is happening. She has taught for 40 years and has



done quite a bit in rural areas where they had EL students. She noted she would prioritize her position. She noted if you communicate and do things through email everyone will understand you. You have to know where you are going. She likes to give feedback as soon as possible. She likes to treat people the way she likes to be treated.

Question #4 – If you are selected as our next Superintendent, what items would be included in your 90 day transition plan and how would you measure your success?

Dr. Becenti reviewed her 90 day plan.

- Goal #1 – Ensure effective district governance through positive and productive Board-Superintendent relations.
- Goal #2 – Accelerate student achievement by building upon the work of the school district while expanding professional learning communities (PLC).
- Goal #3 – Expand the current level of public trust and confidence through open, honest communication and positive relationships among parents, staff, students, and community members.
- Goal #4 – Establish a supportive district climate and culture to build on the work of the board of education and previous administration.
- Goal #5 – Examine the current organizational structure and functions to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

Dr. Becenti noted the 90 day plan is a working document. She noted we need to graduate all students at the same time and not through credit recovery.

Question #5 – Tell us how you have attracted and retained qualified staff in the past and how you would utilize that experience to assist our District in attracting and retaining qualified staff?

Dr. Becenti said each staff should have a professional plan that includes where they are and where they need to go. She said we want to make sure we grow our own leaders. She noted some of the employees have dual roles and are qualified in two areas. She said she would hope they don't get burnt out and she would assist them. She noted she also recognizes the employees and said we need to make sure we thank them for what they are doing. Also to do an end of year recognition for employees and have a sunshine club.

Question #6 – Describe your leadership style and give some examples of how you will work collaboratively with the Governing Board and staff to promote and improve the Littlefield Unified School District?

Dr. Becenti said she is a transformational leader that sees possibilities and solutions. She noted she has one of the best mentors. She listens and is a servant leader. She puts her people before her and leads by example.

Question #7 – Fiscal responsibility and accountability remain a high priority. Share your experience in budget management grants, bonds and overrides.

Dr. Becenti said fiscal responsibility is a high priority. The title programs have specifics and all have a deadline. She noted each grant has its own spending plan. You could do a playground with bonds but the taxpayers need to pay for that. Sometimes we don't have enough money and need to go out and look for grants.

Question #8 – Discuss your previous experience developing/implementing school safety plans?



Dr. Becenti said school safety plans are important. She noted her 90 day plan includes reviewing the school safety plan. She noted it has to be a plan that is to the point and well planned out. We are dealing with the young people here and their lives are important. We all need to come together.

Question #9 – Share some ideas for increasing our graduation rate and our efforts to develop career and college ready students?

Dr. Becenti said we need to get the students to graduate at the same time. Maybe give them an early alert. Also to develop college and career readiness.

Question #10 – Describe your experience developing/revising and implementing a District Strategic Plan?

Dr. Becenti said she would take a look at it and see what was completed or succeeded. It has to be doable and is measured.

Board Secretary Reyes said he would like more clarification on the first question. He asked her why move out here from New Mexico. Dr. Becenti said she raised 7 children and they are all grown up. She said not one of her children lives with her and she hardly hears from them. She said she's been to other areas and they are not as peaceful as here. She said she likes to accomplish things and feels when she retires from here it will look good on her. She said you don't just come here to be here you have to give back to the district. She has a friend in Mesquite that told her she would make a big difference in this school district and she was looking for a small school. She came to Littlefield because it's a small unique school.

When asked if she has any questions, she replied no. She said she has talked to several people, including our Business Manager.

Dr. Becenti gave her summary statement. She said she will learn about what is important to staff and stakeholders. Also to setup for the upcoming year. She will create a strategic plan with new initiatives and benchmarks. She will have realistic goals that will benefit the school. Also that students deserve the best education.

Dr. Clement advised that the Governing Board is going to take a break and then they will reconvene and deliberate. They have an open agenda item where they may invite a finalist to enter into negotiation or take some other option regarding the search. He will be in contact with the finalists to give updates and let them know where they are in the process.

A break began at 11:03 a.m.

The regular meeting was reconvened at 11:25 a.m.

Dr. Clement said the Governing Board has the option to go back into executive session to discuss Mr. Heaton but they cannot discuss Dr. Becenti during the Executive Session.

Board Member Burch made a motion to go into executive session to discuss Mr. Heaton, seconded by Board Secretary Reyes. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Member Burch: Yes

Board Member Fagnan: Yes

Board President Graham: Yes

Board Secretary Reyes: Yes

Board Member Schoppmann: Yes



The Governing Board went into executive session at 11:27 a.m.

Board President Graham made a motion to reconvene the regular meeting, seconded by Board Member Burch. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Member Burch: Yes
Board Member Fagnan: Yes
Board President Graham: Yes
Board Secretary Reyes: Yes
Board Member Schoppmann: Yes

The regular meeting was reconvened at 11:45 a.m.

Board Member Burch said Dr. Becenti is a very polished interviewer and she feels she is overqualified for the position.

Board Secretary Reyes said he's glad he asked the follow up question regarding why she wants to come to Littlefield. He was impressed as to why she is coming here. She basically said she wants to end her career here and she sees Littlefield as a place where she can make a difference. Her 90 day plan was very comprehensive. She sees the value of being hands on and learned from that. Board Secretary Reyes said he thinks she will thrive doing the dual roles.

Board Member Schoppmann said everything she talked about was for the students. Board Secretary Reyes said Dr. Becenti had very comprehensive and realistic goals. Board Member Schoppmann said she thinks Dr. Becenti will keep us going up on letter grade. Board Secretary Reyes said she recognized ELL and SPED students. Also engaging students once they meet the goal and want them to exceed. Board Member Schoppmann said Dr. Becenti is very competent and she liked her answers.

Board President Graham said he appreciates her coming but expressed his opinion that she is long winded. He said he doesn't want the turnover rate. Board Secretary Reyes said he thinks her greatest weakness is with her communication skills.

Board Member Fagnan noted Dr. Becenti told them her weakness is that she talks too much. Board Secretary Reyes said he is concerned with how long professional development and Governing Board Meetings will be. Board Member Fagnan said he is wondering how long she plans to be here.

Board President Graham said he felt Dr. Becenti was presenting to them as a Superintendent role and noted this is a dual role. Mrs. Goessman noted she did a background check on the applicants and advised that minutes from Dr. Becenti's last employer had an executive session in April of 2022 regarding performance. They then had an interim Superintendent in place. Dr. Clement noted Dr. Becenti had that she ended employment in December of 2022 and the reason was she resigned/moved. Her previous position she was at Pine Hill in New Mexico and was superintendent/principal from 8/20-8/21. Prior to that She was at Cheyenne Eagle and resigned to return home to New Mexico for emergency covid reasons. Dr. Clement reviewed Dr. Becenti's previous employment and the date of employment. Board Member Burch said she would like to see stability. Board Member Fagnan said as a manager in the private sector, if he's looking at an application where a person switches jobs each year he would not hire them. He said when a person jumps around it puts a seed in his head that they would not stay. Board President Graham noted Dr. Becenti told the Governing Board she is data driven and noted if you aren't staying at a job very long how you would know. Board Member Burch said based on how long she stays at each job she wants somebody that will be here longer. Board Secretary Reyes said in his career at this district the average length of



employment was 2.6 years.

He said he feels the comprehensive 90 day plan aligns very well with our academic goals of student achievement. Board Member Fagnan said he agreed with Board Member Schoppmann that Dr. Becenti talked a lot about the importance of students. He said the data is important but to rule strictly from date is not personable. Board Secretary Reyes noted that is how our educational system is run now a days is by data. He noted she said she's a servant leader and leads by example. She also said all students are her children. Board President Graham said when you are in administration he thinks they forget the works in the classroom. Board Member Burch said she did say she stepped in the classroom when someone was out. Board Member Schoppmann said she feels Dr. Becenti is very well qualified and would probably stay as long as anyone else. Board Member Burch said she has concerns with the work history. Board President Graham said with this combination position you are with 13-18 year olds and that has to be stressful. Board Secretary Reyes said he doesn't see her as a very effective and strict discipline.

- 8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** The Governing Board to meet in Executive Session pursuant to ARS 38-431.03(A)(1) to interview and discuss candidates for the position of District Superintendent/Secondary Principal.

- 9. The Governing Board may discuss and consider offering to enter into contract negotiations with a specific candidate for the position of District Superintendent/Secondary Principal.

Board President Graham asked the board if they want to offer a contract and start negotiations or start the process over. Board Member Fagnan said he would prefer offering a contract to one of the two people they interviewed.

Board Member Fagnan made a motion to enter into negotiations with Troy Heaton for the Superintendent/Secondary Principal position, seconded by Board President Graham. The motion passed with 4 ayes and 1 nay.

- Board Member Burch: Yes**
- Board Member Fagnan: Yes**
- Board President Graham: Yes**
- Board Secretary Reyes: Yes**
- Board Member Schoppmann: No**

- 10. The Governing board may discuss and consider possible next steps in the process of searching for a new District Superintendent/Secondary Principal which may include scheduling a second interview with specific candidates, having additional discussion related to candidates at a future Board meeting, or reopening the position.

Dr. Clement said he will contact Mr. Heaton and let him know a legal representative with the district will contact him. Also that the contract will be on the next agenda for approval. Mrs. Goessman advised she will email the information to legal counsel.

Dr. Clement said one scenario is they will come to an agreement and they will have a signed contract. Another scenario is there's some back and forth and an agreement is agreed upon. Third scenario is you cannot agree on the contract. If that happens the board will need to decide on some options. If



the third scenario happens, then they will need to let Mrs. Goessman know so she can reach out to ASBA.

Dr. Clement advised there is a mentoring program at no cost to the district through Grand Canyon University and ASA. This program is available to first year superintendents at no cost. Board Secretary Reyes said he would like to make a not if it is a deal breaker that the person have a Superintendent Certification that they not enforce that.

ADJOURNMENT

Board Member Burch made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Board President Graham. The motion passed unanimously.

**Board Member Burch: Yes
Board Member Fagnan: Yes
Board President Graham: Yes
Board Secretary Reyes: Yes
Board Member Schoppmann: Yes**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:18 p.m.

Sonny Graham, Board President

Respectfully Submitted by:

Sheree Goessman