

## Minutes

*Special Meeting of the Board of Education*  
Unified School District No. 473, Chapman, KS

February 17, 2025

Betsy Edwards, School Board President, called the *Special* meeting of the Board of Education to order at 6:30 pm at the Education Center located at 822 N. Marshall, Chapman, KS.

Other Board Members Present: Kelly Kuntz, Brenda Edleston, Dana Obermeyer, Jessica Murphy, Adam Elliott and Jennifer Elliott

Also Present: Kevin Suther - Superintendent, Michele Sutter - Board Clerk

Lacey Sell, Allie Chestnut, Brandi Owen, Deb Heiman, Kevin Heiman, Megan Lewis, Ashley Stearns, Becky Willmann, Kate Thornton, Clint Thornton, Joseph Raat, Conni Suther, Erin Bell, Kyanna Kuntz, Debi Sweet, Mike Spohn, Amy Liebau, Judd Liebau, Tara Tiernan, Kevin Tiernan, Tim Gottschalk, Sarah Miller, Christal Ade, Michael Ade, Sarah Stalder, Rick Erickson, Sara Merritt, Clint Merritt, Mary B. Wright, Jim Weller, Nate Obermeyer, Lauren Moon, Lindsey Ascher, Megan Lovett, Megan Heller, Tori Heller, Dusty Heller, Danny Heller, Matt Haynes, Jacob Kelly, Kyle Sims, Brett Koster, Andrea Koster, Drew Kraxner, Angeline McGuffin, Jerry Wright, Stephanie Gfeller, Jason Grider, Tonya Grider, Jake Rutledge, Bob Meyer, Kevin Smiley, Valerie Boss, Shaun Winnie, Stacy Smiley, Sara Cook, Sawyer Havenstein, Mindy Krinhop, Shelly Picking, Elizabeth Brooks, Josh Abeldt, Kasey Fielder, Wyatt Rutherford, Mary Rutherford, Laurie Rutherford, Alex Canfield, Vanessa Canfield, Erin Hamilton, Nicole Howard, Jennifer Rogers, Jamie Scholz, Favio Garcia, Amanda Hackett, Kyle Cook, Kory Owen, Brian Sweet, Lori Abeldt, Kayla Kinser, Angie Messer, Katie Bunning, Tim Coles, Rebekah Thomas, Jorgan Beck, Brandi Lundgren and Nicole Karl

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After calling the meeting to order, Betsy Edwards stated that she would request USD 473 create a focused improvement plan for district activities and athletics containing measurable goals and clear benchmarks of achievement in activities and athletics, similar to the district's recent commitment to new curriculum and MTSS. Other board members were asked if they would like to speak or make a statement. Adam Elliott thanked the community for attending and for the ongoing dialogue over the past week.

Brenda Edleston made the motion to adopt the agenda. Jennifer Elliott seconded the motion; motion carried 7-0.

### NEW BUSINESS

#### Administrative Structure:

Betsy Edwards asked Superintendent Suther if he would like to lead and then Brenda Edleston stated she would like to comment first. Brenda Edleston started out with thanking all who were in the room. She invited them all back when we have students presenting which is pretty wonderful to see. We have great kids that are here every month proving what a wonderful district we have. Athletics is also part of what makes a district great. We have to keep an eye on the fact that we are here to produce the best human beings we possibly can. She said Mr. Suther, Mrs. Thornton and Mr. Merritt really stepped up when a change was made at the beginning of the fiscal year of 2021 when the Superintendency changed. She stated Mr. Suther was and is still the person who should be our Superintendent. Mrs. Thornton was the assistant principal and moved to the principal chair and Mr. Merritt was hit the hardest with having to do two jobs, and we simply moved forward.

We have great people in position to do great jobs. Then we stepped away...Brenda Edleston said 2, 3, 4 months later, the Board should have sat down with those three Administrators and asked them how it was working for them. Now we have the opportunity several years later to talk to the three and ask them if this is working and how do we measure the fact if it is. She is adamant about changes in our district, our kids deserve it. The community should be in this room every month being involved. It's all of us together. We got ourselves into a situation where we didn't go back and review it. Then our processes handcuffed us. We knew we needed to restructure, we just went about it wrong. She said if she had to do it over again, she would have tabled the vote on all administrators. It is not the Board against you, we screwed up. Now we have to go forward to make our structure better.

Superintendent Suther gave a brief history involving administrative structure in the past. Mr. Suther was the Assistant Principal/Athletic Director for seven years starting in 2001 but times have changed. The job did not include youth sports conversation and social media was not available to even worry about. There was also a separate athletic director half-time at the middle school to take care of that level. About 11 years ago, the decision was made to separate positions which included a District Athletic Director, CHS Assistant Principal and a Principal.

Mr. Suther stated that board members Jennifer Elliott and Dana Obermeyer have done some excellent research in what other schools are doing when it comes to administrative structure. Superintendent Suther said the budget has allowed the conversation to take place for an additional position with money saved from other restructuring at the Elementary level with administration and allowing for the last few years to keep extra money in the administrative salary line item. Brenda Edleston added the expectation is still there no matter if we have 1,000 or 10,000 students. Activities goes beyond sports. We have a lot of successes that are taking place. We are being used as an example academically, starting with thinking creatively with the MTSS Coordinator position.

Board Member Dana Obermeyer shared a proposal that takes a different angle for a solution. She pulled information from the league and other 4A schools. USD 473 is considerably understaffed when it comes to looking at the comparisons.

Mrs. Obermeyer sits on the Site Council at the High School and she is proposing an Athletic Site Council. If we do that, she is volunteering her time to serve on it. She explained how many schools have added assistant principals, communications positions, and athletic director



assistants. The idea would be to have a position that could be versatile enough help in the area of athletics, careers, mentoring, and a true liaison for the community members for sports and activities.

Jessica Murphy talked about changes with Abilene moving to a district wide Athletic Director concentrating on grades 3-12 while also coordinating with their Recreation Department. They will have an Assistant Principal at the High School and Middle School. They have modeled this after what Wamego and Rock Creek have been doing.

Jennifer Elliott said that Chapman is unique in one way which is a challenge with being a 4A district in a 1A town. She loves Dana's proposal of having an Athletic Site Council. We have too much on one person, and too much administrative duties. She proposed the idea of splitting the Assistant Principal and Athletic Director position. The amount of nights one person has to be at is far too much. Mrs. Elliott would also like to look at a different way of having seven administrator contracts evaluated at one time, which is a lot, and how that process can be changed.

Kelly Kuntz struggled coming up with a plan for restructuring but knows this should have been looked at sooner. Mr. Kuntz liked the idea of finding additional help with the proposal involving a position that can have multiple purposes to help the Principal, Athletic Director and Counselor.

Betsy Edwards said that in the structure to remember in the future the need for high school and middle school which can be a difficult transition. She would like specific roles assigned to the Assistant Principal and new position with a job description. The new position could start next year for the 2025-2026 school year.

Superintendent Suther has looked at the budget to see what we could do now with the administration. He gave the Board what he anticipates in new money for review. He feels like we can compete in what we give our teachers for raises which comes out of the General Fund and still maintain the support needed for administrators which is coming out of the Supplemental Fund. Betsy Edwards wants to know what he anticipates in having left over? It's a guessing game and we always need to have a reserve but Mr. Suther had a breakdown that not only includes the increase in salary but possible percentage increases for areas like insurance, gas, electricity, etc.

Adam Elliott likes the idea of supporting what we already have in place but how to enhance it. He wonders if what is needed is more of a Director position vs. an Administrative position.

A director or liaison position does open the possibility to hire a certified administrator, past teacher/coach and someone who definitely has a communications background. Some of the board members and administrators have thought about possible titles that include "Student Development" and "Community Liaison or Director".

An Athletic Director has changed so much in the last 24 years Superintendent Suther stated. With the additional sports and activities added over the years, for example Girls wrestling at the MS and HS level, an administrator could be needed five nights a week which is unrealistic. One task can be to relieve this especially at the middle school sports nights.

Brenda Edleston brought up possibly having a high school student as an intern who could help with posting stories if their interest is in the journalism classes. USD 473 is well known for the ability to have school run businesses to create help but also life experiences for our students.

Board Member Adam Elliott wanted to make sure we do not forget the activities part of education along with sports. He asked if we could help blend in the K-6 students into this. Mr. Suther said when he first came, one administrator was in charge of all the outlying schools as Principal. This did decrease to only having two buildings but this year the Superintendent is proud to have a full time administrator at each building who is not traveling. This also occurred because of thinking creatively by having the multiple roles like at-risk teacher/administrator or new PreK teacher/administrator. This provides multiple ways for funding to make it possible with at risk, special education, preschool payments, etc.

Betsy Edwards asked which building did Superintendent Suther see this new Director be in? It would be like our MTSS coordinator where they can be seen in multiple buildings and meeting outside the district with a variety of organizations. There is a spare office at the High School that could be used. There are no open spots currently at the Education Center or CMS.

Jennifer Elliott asked what are we looking at? Betsy Edwards said a stand-alone AD. Adam Elliott likes a support position (Director). Mr. Suther said budget wise, we have to be careful. He sees a progression to make it happen this next year.

Jennifer Elliott wants to know will a new position help with athletics? Brenda Edleston said she sees it helps with the needs of all the students. She doesn't want to put all emphasis on athletics. Jennifer Elliott asked would this position be able to help out the High School when an Administrator had to be out for awhile? She thinks we are thin administratively. Betsy Edwards agrees. Superintendent Suther said we could use the word liaison and if we get some Administrator certified applicants that could be a priority.

Other ideas or comments for tonight?

Jessica Murphy wanted clarification on contract extensions which would be a vote for adding the 2026-27 school year.

Adam Elliott said we have a lot of work to do but working in the right direction with this first step for support is a great beginning.

The idea of a work session was brought up but then the thought was to allow for the administrative staff, HR director and counselor to develop the job description for Assistant Principal/Athletic Director and the new position so the board can look it over to help reflect on anything that is missing at the next board meeting on March 10, 2025.

#### Executive Session - Personnel

Brenda Edleston made the motion for the Board to go into Executive Session for (20) minutes after a (5) minute break beginning at 8:00 pm in order to discuss personnel items pursuant to non-elected personnel exception under KOMA and the open meeting will resume in the Board room at 8:20 pm. Superintendent Suther is invited into the session. Jessica Murphy seconded the motion; motion carried 7-0.

The Board returned to open session at 8:20 pm.

Jessica Murphy made the motion for the Board to go back into Executive Session for (20) additional minutes in order to discuss personnel items pursuant to non-elected personnel exception under KOMA and the open meeting will resume in the Board room at 8:42 pm. Superintendent Suther and Kate Thornton were invited into the session. Jennifer Elliott seconded the motion; motion carried 7-0.

The Board returned to open session at 8:42 pm.

Adam Elliott made the motion for the Board to go back into Executive Session for (20) additional minutes in order to discuss personnel items pursuant to non-elected personnel exception under KOMA and the open meeting will resume in the Board room at 9:05 pm. Superintendent Suther, Kate Thornton and Clint Merritt were invited into the session. Dana Obermeyer seconded the motion; motion carried 7-0.

The Board returned to open session at 9:05 pm.

Kelly Kuntz made the motion for the Board to go back into Executive Session for (10) additional minutes in order to discuss personnel items pursuant to non-elected personnel exception under KOMA and the open meeting will resume in the Board room at 9:17 pm. Superintendent Suther was invited into the session. Brenda Edleston seconded the motion; motion carried 7-0.

The Board returned to open session at 9:17 pm.

#### PERSONNEL:

Brenda Edleston said that on behalf of the Board of Education, they appreciate the contact that has been made with them this past week. The contact was a catalyst to move forward for the better of the District. The idea of the lack of support for the Administrators working in our District should have happened long before last week. They appreciate and thank them for their help moving forward.

Brenda Edleston made the motion to extend Clint Merritt's contract for the 2026-2027 school year for the Assistant High School Principal/Athletic Director. Jessica Murphy seconded the motion; motion carried 7-0.

Dana Obermeyer made the motion to authorize the creation of an Athletic and Activities Development Coordinator commencing for the 2025-2026 school year. Adam Elliott seconded the motion; motion carried 7-0.

#### ADJOURNED

Kelly Kuntz made the motion to adjourn. Jennifer Elliott seconded the motion; motion carried 7-0.

Meeting Adjourned - 9:21 pm



Betsy Edwards; Board President



Michèle Sutter; Clerk of the Board