STEAMBOAT SPRINGS EDUCATION FUND BOARD GRANT COMMISSION MEETING March 18, 2015; 6:00 PM Human Service Center Board Room

Grant Commission members present included Chairman Stuart Handloff, Cristina Magill, Beth Wilhelm, , Mark Clark, Paul Berry, Kathy Wichelhaus, Dean Massey, Susan Heckel, Barb Winternitz, Kevin Lind and Tina Kyprios. Sarah Katherman recorded the meeting and prepared the minutes.

Also in attendance were: Brad Meeks (SSSD), Tim Miles (SSSD & Soroco IT Director), Shane Antyr (Hayden IT Director), Jen Huffman (Soroco), Teresa Ristow (*Steamboat Pilot &* Today), Eric Dose, Byron Radcliff, Cory Truelove, Jenny Krentz, Robin Saputo, Amanda Montgomery, Grady Turner, Deirdre Mewborn, Chris Sias, Amy Bohmer, Hadley Nylen, Tracy Stoddard, Brandon LaChance (NRCCS), and Carol Harris.

**Call to Order:**

Chairman Stuart Handloff called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**Public Comment:**

Parents Chris Sias and Amanda Montgomery, and kindergarten teachers Carol Harris, Hadley Nylen, Grady Turner and Deirdre Mewborn all expressed support for funding for all-day kindergarten. They cited the long-term benefits of early childhood learning and intervention, the disparity between kids who went to all-day kindergarten and those who attended half-day, the importance for all children to have the opportunity to attend all-day kindergarten, the difference between what kindergarten is now and what it used to be and the particular importance of this for kids with special needs. In response to a question from Stuart, virtually all members of the public attending the meeting stated that they were there to support all-day kindergarten.

**Commission Member Reports:**

There were no reports.

**Minutes:**

**MOTION - Approval of Meeting Minutes for Grant Commission**

* **Meeting of February 25, 2015**

*Cristina moved to approve the meeting minutes listed above, as written. Susan seconded;* ***the motion carried unanimously.***

**SSSD Technology Audit**

Tim reviewed that in response to a difficult year last year, SSSD had hired an independent technology auditor to evaluate the district. He said that the auditor’s report was in, but that the EFB had not yet seen it. Tim reviewed the recommendations included in the report. They included:

* Increase community alliances to facilitate shared resources
* Add staff, particularly to assist with day-to-day operations
* Add support of Infinite Campus
* Improve technology integration at the secondary level, perhaps through the mentoring program
* Upgrade the website and improve the presence of the district on the web
* Increase professional development re: technology for all staff
* Improve security
* Implement a policy regarding the retention of data
* Implement software policies
* Establish a protocol, actions and checklists for recovery
* Improve communications and the management of expectations re: pilot programs and the distribution of technology
* Set expectations for each grade level, including staff training and skills tracking
* Ensure that all students have access to internet at home through working with partners in the community

Tim said many of the points in the audit were what he expected. He said the district will continue to work with the consultant. In response to a question from Mark, Tim acknowledged that most of the recommendations were directed toward the management of technology. The only recommendation regarding particular technologies that were lacking had to do with the finance side of the district.

**Capital Reserve Fund Discussion**

Dean reviewed that at the last GC meeting there had been a discussion of the possibility of contributing a portion of the Ed Fund revenues toward a new school. He said that at the EFB meeting that discussion had led to a broader discussion of the management of the capital reserve. Dean noted that the current $500,000 reserve is maintained to manage cash flow; it is not an actual capital reserve. He reviewed the history of the capital reserve, noting that prior to the last renewal of the sales tax that supports the Ed Fund, a reserve had been built up to allow for a “soft landing” if the tax was not renewed. When the renewal was successful, the reserve was spent down. Following this, the current reserve system was established to adequately manage cash flow. Dean said that the EFB is looking for feedback from the GC regarding whether it would be appropriate to contribute funds toward a capital reserve, either for a future capital project, or for a cushion in the event the tax is not renewed in 2019.

Asked whether SSSD would prefer that the Ed Fund use current money to support current needs, or whether it supports building reserves in a capital fund for a future project, Brad suggested that if the payment schedule could be altered such that the cash flow could be more efficiently managed, it might be appropriate to set aside those additional funds for a future project.

Mark stated his support for building up a reserve for a soft landing in the event the tax is not renewed. Barb stated that it would be wise to set aside funds above the current funding level while the economy and tax base are growing, noting that the reserve could be used for a soft landing and/or a future capital project. Paul said that current collections should be spent on current needs. He added that it might be preferable to seek capital funding in the bond market anyway, and that supporting capital projects with Ed Fund grants goes against the current policy.

Brad said that SSSD was working on a master facilities plan and would be presenting three to the public for input. He said that they hope to identify the preferred alternative by June.

Barb said that she would feel better about making the decision regarding a contribution to a capital fund on an annual basis than making a commitment toward a specific amount. Kevin and Mark stated that the soft landing was a more important consideration than a contribution toward a future capital project. Dean said that although there was no consensus, he had sufficient input to take back to the board.

**School District Grant Applications – First Readings**

Hayden

Shane Antyr stated that the highest priority is the fiber back haul. He explained that due to vendor problems this project was not completed in the fall, as anticipated. He said that the internal infrastructure funded by the Ed Fund last year is not being utilized because the external connection is not there. The external connection was not included in the Ed Fund grant last year. Shane discussed the importance of increasing bandwidth. Tim Miles added that the fiber back haul would also enable the Hayden, Soroco and Steamboat districts to all be connected. It would promote future collaboration between the districts. Shane stated that that Hayden wants to be brought up to the same level as Soroco in terms of internet connectivity.

Mark asked that Hayden provide more information in its application regarding goals prior to the second readings. In response to a question regarding priorities, Shane stated that the priorities were set by the technology committee, based on his needs assessment. He said that the systems specialist and the interventionists were ranked at the same level.

**MOTION**

*Barb moved to approve the first reading of the Hayden School District grant request and forward it on to the EF, as presented. Paul seconded the motion.* ***The motion carried unanimously.***

There was discussion of the process through which the budget is set, noting that last year the districts were asked to trim their requests prior to the second reading. Dean suggested that a target amount for each district could be 5 – 10% more than last year’s awards. Shane noted the disparity between the historical grant funding received by Soroco and that received by Hayden, despite the equivalent size of the two districts. He stated that the request represents authentic needs, as the infrastructure cannot support the existing technology. Shane said that the lowest priority items would be the smartboards, software costs and Chrome books.

Soroco

Tim Miles stated that the staff computers and the computer lab requests will complete the replenishment cycle discussed last year. He reviewed the different elements of the technology request and the plan for collaborative services between Soroco and SSSD. Tim stated that the security system upgrade (phone system) is needed to address intercom and paging problems. He reviewed the pilot program for this system that was done at Soda Creek. He stated that the system would be acquired through a five-year lease-purchase agreement. Tim acknowledged that phone systems are not glamorous, but are really necessary. He added that there is also a request for professional staff development for technology.

Jen Huffman reviewed that last year’s Ed Fund grant provided funding for a half-time science teacher. She said that that this position has allowed Soroco to expand its science offerings and to offer both physics and chemistry every year. She stated that Soroco is asking that the funding for this position be renewed, along with a half-time English teacher that would enable Soroco to offer more upper-level English classes and an on-campus senior English class for college credit. She said that they would like to offer a technical writing class and a business communications class. Jen stated that the third staff request is for a half-time middle school CTE agriculture teacher to build interest in the program prior to high school. She said that at the high school approximately 50% of the students participate in the agriculture science/agricultural business program.

Mark asked that Soroco provide goals in its application, stressing the importance of using SMART goals. In response to a question from Beth, Jen said that she would discuss priorities at the district and get back to the GC prior to second reading.

**MOTION**

*Barb moved to approve the first reading of the SOROCO School District request, and forward it on the EFB as presented. Mark seconded the motion.* ***The motion carried unanimously.***

Dean stated that the funding for the half-time science teacher included in the Soroco request is not for and does not affect his position, although that position does allow him to expand his offerings.

Steamboat Springs School District

Brad Meeks noted that several of the staff positions included in the request are integral to the district’s operations and have been funded by the Ed Fund for many years. He said that the all-day kindergarten had been part of the Ed Fund request several years ago, and that they are bringing it back in response to increased demand as well as to research that has proven the importance of early childhood education. He emphasized the need to level the playing field for all families in terms of the opportunity for public education. Brad stated that the ELL request remains the same as last year. Regarding the request for a half-time French teacher to reinstate French at the middle school level, Brad stated that the world language task force had identified French as the language most in demand. He said that SSSD is asking for this position to be funded for three years, after which it would be reabsorbed into the district’s budget.

Brad stated that the STEM position would be for an elementary teacher at one school. The district would fund the STEM position for the other elementary school. This position would probably need to be funded for multiple years, until it could be integrated into the district budget. Brad said that the literacy coaches are part of a collaborative grant between SSSD and Soroco. He reviewed the value of the instructional coaches. He stated that the staff development request had increased. He said the program has been very successful and is in high demand.

Brandon stated that NRCCS is in its last year of a three-year grant to implement an experiential learning program. He said that the program is now being absorbed into the budget. Brandon said that academic growth is now the focus, as is reflected in the request for an instructional coach.

Tim stated that the technology request is higher than last year, but only $30,000 higher than what was granted in 2006. He said that the staff position funded last year and requested again this year was filled only half way through this year, so the benefits of it are just now being felt. The software request is the same as last year, but it is being managed more efficiently. He said the pilot program with Chrome books for testing was very successful. He said that he had met with most staff at the schools and had developed the technology proposal directly from their requests. Tim said that he hopes to introduce Chrome books for ½ a grade level for 6th – 8th grade, leaving the teachers to manage their use. He said that smartboards are needed for the elementary schools, where they are most in demand, and that it is time to replenish the high school laptops. Tim said he is developing a three-year plan for rolling purchases with the requested amount to remain the same.

Tim stated that the high school is the only school that does not have phones in the classroom. He said the new phone system would replace the PA, intercom and paging system. He added that the existing phone system is near the end of its life. The new system would cover many functions.

Regarding wireless, Tim said that the schools need higher density, particularly at the middle school and at Strawberry Park. He reviewed the requested items related to the network.

In response to a question from Susan, Tim said that the audit came in while he was developing his request, but noted that everything being requested had either been piloted or is part of a longer term plan. Brad added that many of the issues raised by the audit are being addressed through the SSSD budget.

Mark asked for a prioritization within the district’s request. Brad stated that a great deal of the SSSD request is operational, not project based. He said he was unwilling to rank programs such as ELL and GT as more or less important, and the same for class size versus staff training. Brad said that once the budget is set, it will be easier to adjust the priorities within the request. Dean noted that prioritization was added to the process at the request of the districts. Kathy suggested that the teaching positions could be ranked equally, but they might be more or less important than technology.

Beth asked about future funding for all-day kindergarten. Brad said that all-day kindergarten is a priority, and reviewed community efforts to provide scholarships. Dean asked why SSSD had not already incorporated all-day kindergarten into its budget as the other districts had done. Brad cited the difference in per student funding for the different districts. Dean asked Brad if SSSD would prioritize funding for all-day kindergarten over putting money aside toward a capital fund. Brad said he would always support investing in people before things.

**MOTION**

*Barb moved to approve the first reading of the SSSD request, and forward it on the EFB as presented. Cristina seconded the motion.* ***The motion carried unanimously.***

The GC urged SSSD to prioritize its request prior the second reading.

**Expiring GC terms**

Sarah reviewed the list of Grant Commissioners whose terms expire this year. Stuart asked those members to inform Kristi whether or not they intend to serve another term.

**Adjourn:**

**MOTION**

*Tina moved to adjourn the meeting of the Grant Commission. Stuart seconded.* ***The motion carried unanimously.***

The Education Fund Grant Commission meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.