

**MONROE COUNTY COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION**  
**BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES**  
**Work Session, June 25, 2008**

**MEMORANDA**

The Board of School Trustees of the Monroe County Community School Corporation met in work session, for which proper notice had been given, at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 25, 2008, at the School Administration Center, 315 E. North Drive, Bloomington, Indiana.

**Board members present:** Jeannine Butler, Teresa Grossi, Valerie Merriam, Lois Sabo-Skelton and Sue Wanzer

**Board member absent:** Jim Muehling

**Also present:** Beverly Elkins, Secretary/Recorder; and Mercedes Rodriguez, Reporter for *The Herald-Times*. Todd Lare and Vicki Streiff, applicants for the vacant School Board seat, were also present.

President of the Board, Teresa Grossi, called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Dr. Grossi noted that the purpose of this meeting was for the Board to interview applicants for the School Board to complete the term vacated by Susan Daniels.

Members of the Board introduced themselves to the two prospective candidates.

**Question and Answer Session –**

A copy of the questions is attached to this report.

*In reference to question #1 regarding personal information, the candidates responded in the following manner:*

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff stated that she was raised by parents who were a teacher and a doctor. She is married and has three children, two of which are school age. Ms. Streiff said that because her children are in public schools, she is committed to public education. She has previously served on the board of directors for Beth Shalom. She also stated that because of her past experience with public service she feels that she has the background experience that a Board (of Directors) requires. She also emphasized that she is a person who would be dedicated.

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare stated that he moved to Bloomington five years ago. He said that he has had a life-long interest in education. He was the first in his family to graduate from college, and he became a teacher. He feels that he is able to relate to the community because he has been trained in education. He is currently the executive director of the South Central Community Action Program, and was a former deputy district director for Rep. Baron Hill's office.

*In reference to question #3: "What do you think is expected of you as a school board member?" the candidates responded in the following manner:*

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare answered by saying that he feels that he would be expected to fully understand opportunities provided by the Corporation both in terms of staff and students and be able to help in analyzing problem areas to help solve those problems. He said that he also feels that the School Board needs someone who could be

available on short notice. He said that his schedule gives him that kind of flexibility. He also stated that he feels that a Board member should be able to communicate openly and honestly with the public.

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff answered by saying that she feels that it is important to use the expertise that comes from past experience, and to keep the children very much in mind with their varied needs. She emphasized that she has experience with different kinds of children, i.e., special needs, on a parental level. Because of this, she has an understanding of the Special Education Department within the school corporation.

**Code of Ethics**

Dr. Butler gave each of the candidates a copy of the Code of Ethics and asked them to review it. After reviewing the Code, she asked each of them to state whether they would, or would not, be able to abide by that Code.

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff stated that nothing struck her as inappropriate, and that she feels she can follow the guidelines as set forth, adding that she was impressed with the Code.

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare stated that he feels that this is a policy-making, non-administrative board, and the board has its function. He feels that the role of the Board is not to micro manage but to analyze facts. He whole heartedly endorses the Code of Ethics.

*In reference to question #10 regarding the time commitment that must be given as a board member, the candidates responded in the following manner:*

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare stated that the time commitment issue was his number one concern because he does not like to do anything in less than a superior manner. He realizes that a great deal of time will be required; however, his current position will allow him flexibility whereby he can adjust his schedule on short notice.

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff stated that she feels that she can make the time commitment to the Board, as she does not see other things getting in the way of that commitment.

*In reference to question #2: "Why do you think you would be a good Board member?" the candidates responded as follows:*

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff stated she feels that she would be a good Board member because of the experience she has had by being involved in the public schools since her oldest child was age 3. She said that she has also had experience being a coordinator, having served on several boards in the past.

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare feels that he would be a good Board member because he has the ability to take in a lot of information at one time and understand and process it. He considers himself a decision maker and his experience of being on a number of boards in the past, and currently, will be an advantage. He said that he is able to take criticism from other people and not be easily intimidated. He feels that he easily relates to people on a one-to-one basis.

*Ms. Merriam asked the two candidates how they would handle conflict within the Board.*

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare stated that he would be objective about any conflict. He said that in the past he has tried to practice not “firing back” when he has been criticized publicly. He feels that most criticism is an attack on “opinion” rather than a personal attack.

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff said she feels that when there is conflict, the Board should refer back to the Code of Ethics and come to a compromise. She also feels that the public wants to be heard and know that their opinion is respected.

*Dr. Grossi asked each candidate to elaborate on how he/she sees the role of a School Board member as it relates to the relationship with the Superintendent, other Board members, and staff.*

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff said that she sees her role of a School Board member taking a role in local government and making the best possible decisions. She feels that she would put forth her personal opinions, but always respect the professional opinions of others.

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare said that he feels that the role of a School Board member is to help the school corporation to help others and not to expect that this is a “cookie cutter” operation. He said that the Board Member should play an active part in the selection of a new superintendent and allow the superintendent and faculty to be creative. He also feels that the Board Member should be open minded and pay particular attention to what is going on in the classrooms. He feels that the Board Member should be a support person, give praise when it is warranted and call out errors when they are warranted.

*Ms. Merriam asked the candidates if they were familiar with the Ophelia Project.*

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare said that he was not familiar with the project.

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff said that she had heard of the Ophelia Project but that she was not familiar with it.

*In reference to question # 7 “major issues facing the MCCSC”, the candidates responded as follows:*

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff stated that she has heard satisfactory comments about redistricting and pros and cons regarding the Project School. She stated her concern about the elementary math curriculum and the fact that parents cannot help their children with homework. She would like for parents to get more help in that area.

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare commented that he sees a conflict at the State level with legislators and the support of public education. He sees a need to prepare students for jobs in the future, and therefore feels that New Tech will address this. He feels that the dropout rate is a serious issue and should be addressed. He also said that the No Child Left Behind is a major issue. He stated that the Project School was not addressed publicly as it should have been. He has no problem with the Project School, but has a problem with how the legislation handled the funding. He also feels that the area of searching for a new superintendent is a priority.

*Ms. Merriam asked the candidates how they felt about redistricting.*

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare stated that he feels that to redistrict the Fairview area would better serve the community.

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff stated that she believes that if the Fairview area was redistricted that people would move and that the plan would backfire.

*Dr. Butler asked the candidates what qualifications they would expect in a new superintendent.*

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff said she would rely on the suggestions and opinions of others.

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare said that he would want the new superintendent to have “big ears” and be willing to listen. He would also want that person to have a vision for MCCSC and feels that they should have experience on the “front line” of education. He would also want the superintendent to be respected so that he/she could build mutual respect and be able to relate to employees at all levels.

*Ms. Wanzer asked the candidates what is the scariest thing they see.*

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare stated that the scariest thing he sees is the prospect of change.

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff said that she would like to see the whole picture fit together, but feels that the hardest thing would be facing disappointments when it came to decision making.

*Ms. Merriam asked if it makes a difference if no Board Member has children in school.*

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff stated that she feels that it does make a difference because if the member has children in school, it gives the individual, and the Board, a different perspective. As a parent with children in school and as a Board Member, she would have access to other parental opinions.

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare feels that it is important to have connections within the community. He feels that a School Board member needs to be accessible and be willing to listen to parents.

*Dr. Butler asked the candidates how they would handle "special interest" groups that had one agenda that would come to the Board for support.*

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare stated that sometimes your opinion differs, but he would value the other opinion. He would communicate what he feels is in the best interest of the Board.

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff said that she feels that people need to be heard and that when they come before the Board, the Board needs to make them feel that their opinion is important.

*Dr. Sabo-Skelton addressed the subject of curriculum and asked the candidates to give their opinion on New Tech and Aurora.*

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff stated that she has never visited Aurora but has a friend whose daughter graduated from there. Ms. Streiff was told that the student felt included in the school and that her grades were good. She feels that Aurora is a great alternative.

Ms. Streiff feels that New Tech offers vocational/technical programs for "free" (as opposed to Ivy Tech which charges tuition) and students are able to graduate with skills that allow them to get jobs within the community.

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare stated that he feels that it is the district's responsibility to provide opportunities for all students and that the school district should constantly be looking for ways to serve all students. He feels that New Tech

offers opportunities for students that are not college bound and will make them feel connected to the community.

*Dr. Sabo-Skelton asked the candidates if they would be prepared to work with budget cuts and what do they know about school budgets.*

**Mr. Lare**

Mr. Lare stated that he has followed this closely. He knows that some communities will be affected greater than other with budget cuts. It is a dire situation. In some communities teacher positions are cut. He supports keeping property taxes low but wants to keep education at the highest quality level possible.

**Ms. Streiff**

Ms. Streiff responded by saying that she thinks there is nothing more difficult than budget cuts, but that she is prepared to work with the Board and the State in this area. She also stated that she would not expect making budget cuts to be an easy task.

There being no further questions, Dr. Grossi thanked the candidates for their time. She announced that the Board would meet in special session at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, June 30, 2008.

The work session adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

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Teresa Grossi, President

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Jeannine Butler, Vice President

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Valerie Merriam, Secretary

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Susan P. Wanzer, Assistant Secretary

ABSENT

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Jim Muehling, Member

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Lois Sabo-Skelton, Member