

Did board members know about the \$60,000 bill for the Growth Coach for professional development this month in the district?

Answer

Dr. Stepp has been directed by the Board of Education in his yearly goals since the 2008/09 school year to present to focus on professional development of the staff.

Goals as follows:

- Energize the Team/Personnel – Continue to provide opportunities for professional growth and development
- Build Effective Relationships – Continue to evolve the Medina City Schools into a customer-centric organization to best serve students and their parents
- Academic – Maintain the Ohio Department of Education’s rating of Medina City Schools at Excellent
- Shape the Future – Enhance employee performance by continuing to upgrade the quality of MCS personnel through strategic new hires and professional growth of current employees.

Dr. Stepp informed the Board of his plans to provide an administrative professional development series that would assist the administrative team in overall leadership development on the following dates: February 11 and 25, 2013, March 25, 2013.

The goals of the series are to develop the team’s understanding of behaviors and motivators in oneself and others, as well as develop the depth of understanding of emotional intelligence. As a result of the professional development series, administrators will have a better understanding of those they lead and be better equipped to have meaningful conversations with staff about their overall performance.

With the new Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) and a more demanding assessment and accountability system being required by the state, the professional development series will help staff to be well prepared to hold everyone accountable for better results. The district wants to handle the transition to OTES in the most effective manner so as to reduce stress for teachers and promote a collaborative and strong professional relationship with the administration. The professional development series aligns to many of the standards contained in OTES and the Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES), and the knowledge gained will help the staff to work together to implement both the OTES and OPES evaluation systems.

The organization the district is using to accomplish the above is the Growth Coach. The cost to the district is \$59,220, which includes a discount. This discount is a result of the district

negotiating this fee. Currently there are approximately 30 administrators engaged in this professional development series. Administrators will also be provided one-on-one coaching within the scope of this series. Similar professional development will be provided at the building level by trained administrators. The Growth Coach has also offered to provide additional building level support at no additional cost to the district.

To keep professional development costs down, Dr. Stepp has facilitated the vast majority of professional development for the administrative team over the last seven years. This year Dr. Stepp believed it was necessary to utilize the expertise of a professional in the areas of behaviors, motivators and social and emotional intelligence in order to provide the depth of understanding necessary to effectively administer OTES and OPES. This is also an area of study that was part of the MBA program in which Dr. Stepp recently participated.

The district has an operating budget of approximately \$70 million. The district has close to 700 employees and does invest in professional development to assure that the staff have the skills needed to respond to new mandates by the state, to continue to provide an excellent education to the students and to work toward preparing them for the global economy upon graduation.

Did the Board require or direct Dr. Stepp to attain an MBA?

Answer

Dr. Stepp's acquiring his MBA was mutually agreed upon by the Board and himself. The Board president at that time signed off on the employer agreement to support Dr. Stepp in the program he was entering. Dr. Stepp did receive some input regarding the appropriate MBA program that he should attend.

Review of the public record by the Gazette found no mention of Stepp's contract either in the agenda that accompanied the advance notice of the work session or in the minutes provided to the union representing the district's 400 teachers.

Answer:

The agenda can be modified by the Board members during any regular or special meeting to include any additions and/or deletions. The manner in which the Superintendent's five year contract was approved does not violate the collective bargaining agreement or Ohio Sunshine Law.

The Board was aware of numerous high profile superintendent vacancies around the State of Ohio. These vacancies are accompanied by active searches which annually close in March. In

order to be certain that the Board could retain Dr. Stepp they acted as soon as the law permitted.

According to the ORC Section 3319.01: "A board may at any regular or special meeting held during the period beginning on the first day of January of the calendar year immediately preceding the year the contract of employment of a superintendent expires and ending on the first day of March of the year it expires, re-employ such superintendent for a succeeding term for not longer than five-years, beginning on the first day of August immediately following the expiration of the superintendent's current term of employment and ending on the 31st day of July of the year in which such succeeding term expires."

The Board uses executive sessions to discuss legally permissible items. The Board has the legal right to determine the need for an executive session before or after any public meeting.

It wasn't until after the school board's January 22 regular meeting that the minutes were revised to include the board's unanimous approval of an "an amendment to the superintendent's administrative contract."

Answer:

Board meeting minutes are not official until they are approved at a regular meeting. The draft minutes that was circulated was merely a draft. One of the reasons to circulate drafts of the minutes is to allow individuals to identify and correct mistakes. The procedures to be used in preparing and adopting the minutes are left completely in the discretion of a public body. Most public bodies in Ohio circulate drafts of their minutes and allow for corrections before minutes are approved. The procedure for approving the minutes from January 7, 2013 does not violate the collective bargaining agreement since draft versions were provided prior to the regular meeting.

The current practice is to send draft minutes in monthly board packets for review to board members, union representatives and the media. Any minutes are available for public review in the district office once they are approved at a regular board meeting. The district web site is also used as a means for the public to review the minutes.

Moving forward the board will continue to provide union representatives with agendas and draft minutes. In the future the official minutes will be sent out once they are approved after the regular meeting.

Leatherman said the school board not only failed to provide adequate notification of the January 7 work session, but also provided him incomplete minutes of the meeting.

Answer:

The public notice of the January 7, 2013 meetings were sent on December 26, 2012. The notice stated that the board would be holding an organizational and monthly work session starting at 5:00 in the high school media center. The public media, the unions and other community members were included in the notification.