

No Standing News

Since we have no standing, we stand with those left standing

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EWING SABOTAGES TEACHERS ADMIN 'TEAM' WINS AT BOARD "CASINO NIGHT"

On February 12th, in a 6-1 closed session vote, the school board gave whopping big raises to school principals and administrators. Altogether they gave away **cash totaling \$108,900 to the "Administrative Team"** who just last month had a collective temper tantrum to get Deputy Superintendent Westbrook hired to replace Ewing. Instead of being disciplined for their sass they got big raises to soothe their disappointment. Take a look at the raises below and see how you like the way the board has spent the first half of your new property taxes. Now we know why Wilkerson voted against the raises and why Ewing made a point of leaking his vote to a RDN reporter but didn't tell about the giveaway. The raises, plus splurging on other programs of dubious merit, made that the night of the "Big Casino Game." Everybody won except the taxpayers, students, parents, teachers and three- to five-year-olds. With the raises and the fuzzy figures on several new spending proposals, the board blew about \$500 - \$700,000 - money they aren't sure will be there when they rubberstamp the new budget in June.

To Waive or Not to Waive? That's not even a question. Prior to the meeting each board member received a letter from Angela Park. She wanted to know if they were going to accept the offer from the

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for a waiver or exemption from (the euphemistically named) Missouri School Improvement Program exam (MSIP), which is scheduled for November '03. The board was clueless about the waiver, but Ewing wasn't; he had received the notice on January 30, but hadn't told them. Her question to the board would have gone unanswered if Ralph Wilkerson had not once again departed from Ewing's tightly scripted meeting and asked him to answer her question. Ewing admitted he had received the waiver offer, but tried to save face by saying that on the surface it seemed like a good thing, but this offer (to relieve the faculty of hundreds of hours of preparation and expense for a nit-picking DESE review of things that do nothing to enhance the learning process) had to be examined from a number of angles before HE made the decision. Ewing made it perfectly clear that it was HIS decision and HE - not his employers - would decide whether or not to sign the waiver to let the teachers off the big MSIP hook.

What did the 'Admin Team' know and when did they know it? On January 21st when Ewing had a "small celebration" to tell the assembled teachers they had a perfect score of 109 on the Annual Performance Reports, he did not tell them that it made the district eligible for this highly-prized

waiver. Why? Did his management "team" know about the waiver? Well, if they don't know all the rules and regs on MSIP, what are they doing with those VERY big salaries? Did the teachers' reps know? Isn't that the kind of thing their MSTA and NEA officers are supposed to keep an eye on? They didn't miss an illegal trick when it came to mustering members to feed the "It's Worth It" machine all the public resources they needed to pass the levy. Anything Keith Strassner and Charlotte Wiggins wanted for "the cause," they got. In the recent RDN Newcomers Guide, Maggie Ogden and Mickey Neri-Hobson, local representatives of MSTA and NEA, proudly explained that they get along just fine with administration. They said they aren't a "rabble-rousing, anti-administration group" and they "have good communication with the local board and administration." Congratulations ladies, while you were being such good girls they were laughing up their sleeves and getting big raises for playing along with Larry's final joke.

Parents will continue to pay, pay, pay. The next unplanned and, from the board's point of view, unwelcome business at the February 12th meeting was a statement by Kay Hegler, candidate for school board. Since the board was in a giveaway mood she stepped up to the craps table and tried to get parents some relief from their

traditional role as the board's secret off-budget fund for school supplies. Hegler told them that 4,000 families are subsidizing the board's budget to the tune of about \$100 per child; that's \$400,000 a year the board "saves" on the supplies teachers need in their classrooms. She pointed out that the board is forcing teachers to panhandle from parents with supply list demands and parents must shell out money that many can ill-afford - or else. Apparently the "or else" last year was that one teacher gave kids detention if they didn't have all their school supplies. Now there's a child-centric educational philosophy for you. If the parents are poor or Wal-Mart runs out of supplies, punish the child.

The board said nothing at all to Hegler's request (really, not one word) - their usual gracious response to anyone who gives them a real problem to solve. That was a big mistake. We checked with Hegler and looked at the research supporting her contention that **it is illegal to make parents pay for supplies or fees for any academic credit course**. She got copies of the legal opinions from DESE, no less. If they had bothered to ask her for copies they would have run screaming for their lawyers. The opinions reveal that school supplies aren't the only illegal expenses they're shoving off on parents. She's right; they do treat parents like ATM machines. Something the parental ATM machines should keep in mind when they vote on April 2nd.

"Casino Night" continues at 500 N. Park. Without further questions about MSIP or the supplies they should be paying for, the board rushed on to the fun stuff. More big spending for: All-day kindergarten, creating a curriculum director job and deciding between five new

plans for reshuffling the administrative structure to add even more 'suits' to the management payroll. These spending "initiatives" are the inventions of some internal and anonymous Task Force that simply must be obeyed. During the board discussion some things slipped out that probably weren't for publication. When the board was discussing the creation of the \$73,775 - \$96,165 job of curriculum director, Jim Burns wanted to vote without delay because "Jerry needs to know." Jerry could only be Jerry Giger, principal of the Middle School. The Task Force also recommended that the 8 teachers on the curriculum committee be paid \$6,500 per person for a total of \$52,000 annually. If the curriculum committee members are going to be paid to keep doing what they have already been doing why spend another \$96,000 to have "Jerry" watch them do it?

Kinder-kids as political pawns.

No one explained why suddenly there was an urgent need for all-day kindergarten and there was no concern expressed or discussion by our "do-it-for-the-kiddies" school board as to whether being in kindergarten and on busses 8-9 hours a day is good for 5-year-olds. Annie Bass and Jim Burns began to discuss packing the elementary school grounds with more trailers for the artificially inflated kindergarten day. Burns wondered out loud if the voters might then be willing to approve retaining the soon-to-be-retired 69-cent levy to build a new grade school voters keep turning down. Ewing quickly stifled that line of talk but it was too late. Even without his slip the strategy is blindingly obvious. By adding three extra hours of "enrichment activities" (naps and playtime) they get to count each of

the little bodies twice for a double dip of state aid money.

Next add pre-kindergarten (more playtime for 3-4 year old tots but only 39 of them) and the 4000 (+/-) enrollment that has remained virtually unchanged for over 20 years (and the reason another grade school makes no sense) will suddenly take a jump. Not a sudden increase in district fertility; just exploiting tots for money. By packing the front yards of the grade schools with more sore-thumb temporary classrooms to accommodate these expanded programs, the board plans to have a more effective hand-wringing "trailer court" image to pressure voters into continuing the 69-cent levy instead of doing what comes naturally to taxpayers - voting themselves some tax relief. After seeing how the new levy revenue has been squandered on administrators' salaries and other frills how will you vote in 2006?

Being in such a rush to lock all this in before the April election, they didn't have time to wait to see if, at this late date, trailers were available, what they would cost and other small details such as the state budget crisis. With many costs and questions unanswered, board member Annie Bass made the motion to spend whatever it takes to get all of this done with an imperious, "Make it so." (Yeah, Capt. Picard, she really said that.) Altogether, in just one meeting, the board committed to new spending of over a half-million dollars, give or take a few thousand. Oh well, they can always put some more things on the parent supply lists next year - bus tires, toilet paper, cleaning supplies...

It never rains in Yuppie-ville. Neither Jim Burns nor any other board member expressed the slightest concern about what might

happen if the voters **don't** retain the eighteen-year 1987 levy when it expires. If that happens, the new 80 cents voters approved last April will be cut down to only 11 cents. Instead of a levy of \$3.88 (after the next two increases) if voters don't vote to "retain" the expiring 69-cents the levy will suddenly drop to \$3.19. A net gain of eleven cents is not enough to continue the teachers' raises and pay for this "Casino Night" binge. Typically, our "Visionary" school board can "Vision" the spending of millions but their "Vision" never includes the nightmare of financial reverses or putting some extra cash into reserves for emergencies. It was never more obvious than at that meeting that what we have is a board of instant-gratification, credit-card-waving Yuppies. If it feels good, spend it.

State Auditor samples School Board hospitality. The next week, at the board meeting on the 19th, the first order of business was a courtesy visit by the state auditor, Mark Ruether and his assistant. He came to answer any questions they had before they begin the board's first real audit, which he estimated will take 6 months. Several board members then took leave of their senses. They must have thought they were speaking to a parking attendant or a member of the public (much the same thing). They demanded to know what his credentials were, how much he made per hour, and if he had any experience. Dana Rapiet told him his timeline for the audit didn't meet her schedule and demanded he finish it sooner. Randy Stratman sarcastically asked if he had met with all 1,100 petitioners that afternoon. They say the higher the monkey climbs up the pole the more you can see his ugly rear end. Four

board members were high on the pole that night and still climbing.

Bass wanted to know what the auditor had talked to the petitioners about in his meeting that afternoon. When Ruether wouldn't tell her, she took offense. Then they whined that they hadn't been given advance notice that there was going to be an audit petition. They gave him a copy of an RDN article to prove that no one had asked their permission. Did they imagine that he would throw up his hands in shock and call the whole thing off? Mr. Ruether met their tiresome display of petulance patiently and most likely left laughing. There are lots of things on the Really Foolish List; provoking a state auditor ranks right up there with not pulling over for a cop or telling your wife her spandex pants make her look fat and lumpy.

More grace under pressure. After the auditors left (thank heaven, they didn't hear the whole meeting) the MSIP issue was next. Ewing, backed into a corner, came out snarling at Angela Park because she had forced his hand on the waiver. He quibbled that she was wrong on the waiver date but she wasn't; that was just the only thing he could find to try to divert attention from the fact that she had caught him red-handed. He obviously intended to leave the district stuck with MSIP as his parting shot. Rude and unprofessional temper fits have become a familiar feature of school board meetings since last summer, and once again the board president - whose job it is to stop such ugliness - just watched as if it was his favorite TV program. We hope the April election gives us some grown-up board members.

Policy AC-R. After the January 24th board meeting, Ace Reporter Amy Wilson made quite a deal out of

Ralph Wilkerson recused himself from a closed session. She printed a delicious little tidbit at the end of her news article pointing out that Mary Wilkerson, his wife and a H.S. math teacher, was in the closed session for some mysterious personnel reason. She neglected to add that there was one other employee in the closed meeting, thus leaving readers to leap to whatever interesting conclusion they might concoct about Mrs. Wilkerson. Wilson must have received some flack for her little teaser because in a following editorial she protested "having her skills as a reporter called into question." The cryptic quote from the closed minutes she used in her defense only made the water muddier. She said she was still "out looking for answers," so we found them for her.

Being only ordinary mortals and not "real" reporters we spotted her problem immediately. Ace had left out critical information in the minutes - the first two sentences, which explained why the board was in closed session and why they made the motion. This is the entire entry from the minutes - including the missing first two sentences: ***"The Board in keeping with Board policy AC-R heard a timely appeal submitted by Dr. Steve Laub. As a gesture of good faith the Board also gave Mrs. Mary Wilkerson an opportunity to present her issues.***

" On motion of Dr. Blum and seconded by Mrs. Bass the motion carried (6-0) to affirm the findings of Dr. Zalis with the exception noted that while the relationship between the two parties has been strained because of this issue, contact should be minimized until such time that each party feels that they might reestablish a professional working relationship. The board instructed Dr. Ewing and Mrs. McWhorter to prepare a letter

to send each party after being reviewed by Mr. Tom Mickes, legal counsel." (emphasis ed.)

Policy AC-R is the district policy about sexual or racial harassment (race was not the issue) involving, "unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favors and other unwelcome verbal, ..etc. etc.(which) can contribute to rendering an environment hostile, and thereby

discriminatory, on the basis of sex." The policy says that if an investigation by the compliance officer (Zalis) finds the accusation of sexual harassment has been substantiated, the accused (Laub) may appeal to the board - which he did, and they didn't buy it. Now... you may leap to a more informed conclusion.

In a later development, Mrs. Wilkerson resigned from a faculty

committee because "contact had not been minimized" by those administrators whose job it is to enforce the board order. Shortly after her editorial defense, Ace did a front-page feature story on Laub; on February 12th, Superintendent Ewing recommended him for an \$8,661 two-year raise. The message to female employees and students in the district is now crystal clear.

The New Administrative Salaries:

Name	FY02 School	FY02 Position	FY02 Emp Days/Mos	FY '02 Contract	FY '03 Contract	increase	FY '03 Contract
Ted Arthur	RJH	Asst Principal	220 days	\$57,700	61,500	3,800	
Floyd Baker	RTI	Dir.-RTI	260 days	\$58,325	63,500	5,175	
Gary Bartle	RTC	Adult Ed Coord.	240 days	\$56,495	60,375	3,880	
R. Berkbuegler*	RHS	Principal	260 days	\$85,714	93,500	7,786	98,200
Darlene Bramel	RHS	Asst. Principal	260 days	\$70,700	75,100	4,400	
J. Cavender	Wyman	Principal	220 days	\$63,487	68,000	4,513	
John Edgar	Truman	Principal	220 days	\$63,487	68,000	4,513	
Larry Ewing	Admin Bldg	Superintendent	260 days	\$109,600	?	?	
Kevin Garner	RHS	Activities Dir	240 days	\$55,675	60,700	5,025	
Jerry Giger*	RMS	Principal	260 days	\$73,853	80,700	6,847	84,750
Linda Giger	Admin Bldg	Special Serv Dir	230 days	\$58,710	64,000	5,290	
Craig Hounsom	RMS	Admin. Intern	220 days	\$50,780		0	
Chris Johnson	RTI	Asst. Director-RTI	240 days	\$52,300	57,000	4,700	
Gloria Larivee	RHS	A+ /Dir. of Guid.	260 days	\$61,470	65,500	4,030	
Steve Laub*	RJH	Principal	260 days	\$74,939	79,600	4,661	83,600
J. Martin*	RTC	Dir. of Voc. Prog.	260 days	\$73,450	78,000	4,550	81,900
L. Schwalje	Mark Twain	Principal	220 days	\$63,487	68,000	4,513	
Anita Studdard	RMS	Asst Principal	220 days	\$56,000	59,600	3,600	
David Warren	RHS	Asst Principal	240 days	\$55,900		0	
L. Westbrook	Admin Bldg	Deputy Super.	260 days	\$91,035	?	0	
Aaron Zalis#	Admin Bldg	Dir.-Hum. Res.	260 days	\$72,470	87,500	15,030	
TOTAL				\$1,405,577	?	92,313	
* two year contracts							
? Ewing, Westbrook, Warren salaries will be replaced/increased?							
# 20% increase is for promotion to Asst. Super.							

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