

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Staffing was the center of several agenda items at last week's monthly school board meeting. Cathy Hanna, grade 7-12 family and consumer science teacher and the FCCLA advisor at Chase County Schools, submitted her resignation after this school year. Board members approved it unanimously, thanking her for her nine years of teaching at CCS.

Also related to staffing, the board discussed further a potential policy on inter-staff sick leave donations and approved a wage increase for the school nurse.

Hanna, who has taught a combined nine years at CCS, said in her resignation letter that the job has outgrown her "resources of time, energy and determination."

She believes the position is worthy of at least a full-time and half-time teacher, and had spoken to Supt. Brad Schoeppey about the possibility, according to her letter.

Hanna said in the letter she did not apply for the Early Resignation Program with hopes the board would consider two positions. She would be interested in a part-time position if it was available with additional staffing.

She also thanked Supt. Schoeppey and the school board for their support of her and the program. She added she's leaving a strong program in place for her successor.

Hanna taught two years from 1997-99, then returned for the 2007-08 school year until present. She also taught one year in Perkins County right out of college.

Hanna joins five other teachers who have resigned effective the end of this school year, including Lynn Rinehart, Al Zuege, Beth Larson, Sandy Silvester and Connie Thompson.

After a closed session, School Nurse Angie Paisley was given a \$1,500 increase to her present salary of \$39,000.

Her raise to \$40,500 represents a 3.8 percent increase. Paisley also receives the same full health insurance coverage as the certified staff.

Sick leave donation

The board continued to discuss a possible board policy on staff sick leave donations to other staff members.

No action was taken, but the board will have further discussion at its retreat later this month.

Several board members said they preferred having a "bank" from which staff members would contribute and then use days in the bank if needed. The policy presented from the teachers originally suggested staff could donate to specific individuals on their own if they had sick days built up.

Some board members were concerned with the 60-day maximum an employee could use and others felt the definition of "family" in the policy needed to be narrowed. By donating sick days to staff in such a policy, it would create extra cost to the school district, which also concerned some of the board.

Board member Gregg Smith said the teachers came up with some good groundwork to start this discussion. He'd like to see something tried on a one to two-year trial.

Two policies approved on searches, student interviews

Policies regarding student interviews and searches on school property were given final approval and passed at the March 11 meeting.

Originally a combined policy covering both areas, the policies were divided into two in February.

The one involving student interviews by law enforcement on school property outlines reasons in which a law officer can remove a student and for what reasons a student can be interviewed. It emphasizes every effort will be made by the school to contact parents beforehand, unless child abuse or neglect is suspected.

Student school records will not be released, according to the policy, unless there is a court order or subpoena.

Regarding searches, the policy states school property including lockers and desks can be searched at anytime when there is "reasonable suspicion" that contraband is present. The policy was expanded last month to include all school personnel in this policy, not just students. Both were approved on unanimous votes.

Other school board business

- Hours have been reduced for public use of the school's weightroom and indoor track. Activities Director Troy Hauxwell said there had been some problems with people using the gym floor and climbing down the pushed-back bleachers to do so. The gym floor was not to be open to the public. Others left trash on the floor and equipment out of place that had to often be returned to its positions by the teachers the next morning, he said. Previously, the weightroom and track were open to the public from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Now those areas are closed at 6 p.m. Some have expressed concern they don't have time to get in workouts now after work, but Hauxwell said, for the most part, the public has adjusted. Board member Sheila Stromberger said if they were having problems, she supported the cut in hours.

- Principals Mike Sorensen and Susie Stewart gave a presentation on the Professional Learning Communities conference they attended recently in Phoenix. According to studies, characteristics of "great schools" include: they are safe and secure, make students feel special and ensure that all students learn at high levels. One crucial point in exhibiting those characteristics, Stewart said, was a shift in focus from "teaching" to "learning." Instead of making sure the content is covered, the focus shifts to making sure the content is learned. Stewart said that in order to do that, grading will need to shift, as well so that the student's ending grade is based on what they learned rather than averaging their scores. "Their grade should reflect what they know at the end," she said, "not an average of how they got there."

- A board retreat is set for Tuesday, March 25, starting at 6 p.m. in the board room. One of the topics will be the English Language Learners (ELL) program at CCS, said Supt. Schoeppey. He said there are about 72 students in grades K-12 using the ELL program in some manner. The program is currently directed by one teacher, Tom Hansen. Schoeppey said staffing for that program needs to be reviewed. The school's ELL team recently recommended adding another ELL teacher to the CCS staff.

- The school's beleaguered Longhorn activity bus was to be returned last weekend after

being in the repair shop since early December. Supt. Schoeppey said Master's Transportation, from whom CCS purchased the bus in September 2012, was planning to schedule a meeting with the school board's transportation committee in the near future to discuss issues with that bus.

- After 11 months of employment, Norma Medrano submitted her resignation as activities custodian, which the board approved. Jeff Fine, a CCS alumnus, was hired to replace her.