

## **Meeting Minutes, MQEC Board Meeting, Thursday, March 13 2008**

The meeting was convened by President Tom Cotton at 10:00 a.m. A quorum was present consisting of the following:

1. Bruce Messinger
2. Harry Cheff
3. Lance Melton
4. Doug Sullivan
5. Darrell Rud
6. Mike Nicosia
7. Tom Cotton
8. Peter Marchi
9. Marco Ferro

Members Absent: Eric Feaver, Andy Holmlund, Jack Copps

Others Present: Bob Vogel, Cal Moore, Dave Shreeve, Jim Molloy

### **1. Approval of Minutes from January 24, 2008**

A motion was made, seconded and passed to approve the January 24, 2008 minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

### **2. Remedy Committee, Bruce Messinger**

Remedy Committee Chair Bruce Messinger presented concepts for necessary refinements to the school funding formula discussed and adopted by the MQEC Remedy Committee as of its last meeting. Key areas addressed in that proposed remedy include:

- a. Quality Educator Payment Increase of \$7,250 to help schools improve teacher salary rankings to 25<sup>th</sup> nationally (where Montana was ranked in 1984). Source data is FY08 budgeted FTE.
- b. Restore State's Share of Special Education Costs to 80% (1989 levels). Source data is from OPI special education program.
- c. Implement At Risk funding in accordance with the average weighting factor used by other states that provide at risk funding. Source data is from QSIC.
- d. Payment for textbooks and supplies at \$260 per pupil. Source data is QSIC analysis of textbooks and supplies element in classroom entitlement.
- e. Indian Education for All in accordance with Senate Bill 390 from the 2007 Legislative Session. Source data is fiscal note and contents of SB 390.
- f. School Unit Allocation for Building Operations of approximately \$33,000 per school unit (250 ANB in elementary, 450 in middle school, 800 in high school). Source data is OTO funding stream for this payment as contained in SB 2 from 2007 Special Session.

The Board also reviewed the 6 Additional Points Incorporated in the Remedy Proposal.

The overall impact of the proposals above would be to restore the state's share of school district general fund budgets to 1991 levels, slightly above 70%, to restore the state's share of total school spending to above 50%, also at 1991 levels. The proposals are designed to address key aspects of the court's ruling, particularly those affecting staff recruitment and retention, addressing achievement gaps and overcoming the competition between regular and special education. The net impact of the proposals is designed to restore the state's role in K-12 public education funding to where it has a historically-demonstrated capacity to reach.

Bruce explained that this is a work in progress but represents the best and latest thinking of the Remedy Committee at this time. Bruce further explained that, with the MQEC Board's permission, future activities would include providing these concepts to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to assist her office in preparing budget recommendations for the 2009 Legislature.

A motion was made, seconded and passed to endorse the concepts of the Remedy Committee to date as presented, understanding that the work is ongoing, and to authorize Bruce Messinger to share the work of the Remedy Committee with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to assist OPI in its budgeting processes, with the Governor's office, and with other state policymakers.

### **3. Executive Director's Report, Mike Nicosia**

- a. How have schools used funding? Reporting of data.

Mike Nicosia summarized recent activities focused on addressing the Governor's call for schools to explain how they spent increased funding provided during the first three years of his administration. Specific activities undertaken have included the following:

- Mike explained that he has prepared and submitted a guest editorial addressing this issue from a statewide perspective to all papers of daily circulation in the state. Mike has also offered to submit the letter to weekly newspapers at the request of any MQEC member and sent a copy of the guest editorial to MQEC members for their information.
  - According to figures of the state Office of Public Instruction, school districts statewide increased their spending on pupil instruction and student services (which go directly to the classroom) by almost \$6 million dollars more than the increase in ongoing state support of school district general fund budgets provided by the legislature during 2006 and 2007. The state increased its support by \$70.6 million, while schools increased spending on direct services to students by \$76.4 million.
- Mike explained that he has prepared a district-specific template for identifying how the increased funding has been used, and has provided that template to the members for their use. Mike has also encouraged members to prepare and submit district-specific information to the Governor as previously requested.

### **4. Litigation Status, Jim Molloy**

Jim gave an update on the litigation status. The state has filed its response and has focused on the argument of mootness, but without a motion to dismiss the case. MQEC's reply brief is due March 14. We will be asking the judge to set this matter for a hearing schedule.

Jim explained that he has reviewed the original pretrial order from the first trial and is asserting a consistency in problems cited in that pretrial order from the first trial and the similar problems cited in our present matter. The intent is to show that there are 8-10 key issues cited then and relevant now that show an ongoing problem.

Provided that the Judge rules that we are entitled to further relief, our strategy will be to ask the Judge to order the parties to work together to come up with a solution for FY09.

### **5. Political Strategies, Aidan Myhre, Working with the Governor and Legislators**

Aidan talked about the need for transparency, specificity in pursuing, explaining and showing the value in our remedy proposal. How will we spend the money and what will it buy in terms of added value to the state of Montana. We need to look outside and build the coalition.

Look to other groups currently not engaged (business, families, other advocacy groups) in supporting our efforts. Focus on the need for a long term sustainable funding system.

## **6. Other**

### **Website:**

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously passed to authorize the Executive Director (Mike Nicosia) and the Board Secretary (Lance Melton) and President (Tom Cotton) to collaborate in determining what to post on the website, in their mutual discretion. Items to be regularly posted when available shall include, but not necessarily limited to agendas for all meetings, minutes in both draft and final form and financials, both audited and unaudited.

### **Dues:**

The board discussed the issue of dues for FY09. The board deferred a decision on whether to invoice dues for FY09 until further analysis of our projected expenses and how that would impact our revenues that we have at this time.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.