



## **SCHOOL BOARD RETREAT MINUTES**

### **May 31, 2022 – 5:30 p.m.**

Pursuant to the regulations, the Board of Education met in a retreat format with Dr. Fred Johnson on the above date in the Waupaca High School Community Room.

The purpose of the Board Retreat Minutes are to capture the essence of discussions. These minutes should not be interpreted to represent a transcription of the meeting.

#### **Call to Order:**

Board President Stephen Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

#### **Roll Call:**

Present in the WHS Community Room: Stephen Johnson, Dale Feldt, Patrick Phair, Steve Klismet, and Betty Manion.

Excused: Mark Polebitski and Ron Brooks.

#### **Also Present:**

Present in the WHS Community Room: Ron Saari and Dr. Fred Johnson.

#### **Approval of Agenda:**

A motion was made by Patrick Phair and seconded by Betty Manion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

#### **Review of Board Meeting Norms:**

The Board reviewed their collective commitments.

#### **Review and Discussion of Meeting Norms:**

Mr. Saari introduced Dr. Fred Johnson who then facilitated the meeting.

For a School Board to be world class, nothing is off limits for examination. Everyone is up for what we can do to make our team better. For this to occur, the team needs an environment of trust. To create an environment to show people they are appreciated and valued. No process will improve without trust. Any structure can work with trust. It is no longer about competence, knowledge, position, title, or skill. Today the key to effectiveness are teams that are authentic, real, vulnerable, and transparent.

There are two items that separate world class organizations from others: 1) How they solve problems; and 2) How they make decisions (better than everyone else).

Drama is a poorly resolved conflict. Drama is about five people involved in a two person problem. World class organizations minimize drama. The best tool to minimize drama is the use of meeting norms.

Most teams don't make decisions, they react. Reacting to the noise is just managing the noise. When you are managing the noise, the noise runs the show from under the table. Less than 1% of organizations have a clearly established decision making process. Most organizations allow politics, personalities, pain, and pressure to direct decision making. True world class organizations do not react to the noise. Their purpose is it. They look to see if the decision is aligned with their values, norms, and strategic plan. The typical organization can't handle more than 2-3 major initiatives at a time. This is because 50-60% of their time is spent "paying the rent" (doing the day to day business items).

Decisions are never perfect and you will always have naysayers. At the same time, always let your board values make the decision for you. The board's values will never steer you wrong. If your decision would violate any single value, then the answer is no. You can't do it all. Know your purpose, values, and strategic plan and if the decision doesn't fit into them, don't do it.

World class organizations and effective boards are protective of adding new initiatives. If you add, then which of the 2 or 3 you already have will you put aside? You need a laser beam focus which allows you to say no more in order to protect the greatest yes'. Every time there is an election where new people are brought on, there is a change in the dynamics. Effective boards can't function out of someone's personal agenda. Everyone on the board has to take their ego and subjugate it for a greater compelling purpose.

Your inner fiber is so very critical. The key to consistency and longevity is your culture. Your board's and organization's culture is the sum of your collective behaviors that you agree to, no matter what. The norms you have developed are the culture.

On a scale of 0-10, the average adult in the United States has a self belief level of 2.7. In 1960 it was 6.0. An individual with an 8.0 self belief level believes their validity comes from them, not others. If I violate a norm and am called out on it as being out of line, and I am at 8.0, I accept it and apologize. I treat accountability as an act of respect. If I am at a 2.7 level, my validity comes from what others think of me. If I am a 2.7 and violate a norm and am called out, I claim that you are harassing me, say "how dare you." This is a political stunt.

How real are your norms? Whenever someone violates your norms, and the behavior is not addressed, they are a sacred cow. They bring more baggage to the table and actually lead the team from under the table.

Naysayers take up 80% of a team's emotional bandwidth. These people love chaos, they need chaos, chaos feels safe to them. Naysayers always have to create one crisis after another. They never solve their own problems. They are masters at having meetings after meetings because they know who is weak and who can be manipulated. Naysayers can never get enough information. Having the floor and speaking feeds their ego because they are in control. They publically ask tough questions in order to get a reaction. They are really not interested in the information, but want to discredit others and to make them look better. They live under the table.

Team norms allow the team to not operate under the table. The most powerful consequence for the violating of a norm is public accountability. Some people can get comfortable being comfortable. However, when norms are broken people need to get out of their comfort zone with positive intent in order to keep the norms alive. With positive intent and trust, a board needs to talk with one another over and over again. Members can't stay silent when norms are violated. Instead, stay calm and address the issue. Norms create an environment of psychological safety, where people feel heard, respected, and valued.

Collaboration is the key to effective leadership. A conflict averse board will never collaborate. Collaboration can't happen in an environment where people are afraid of conflict. When someone notices that we are not on the same page, collaboration is necessary, and sticking with it is necessary.

Compromise is a lose-lose strategy where people are competing to get their way. Collaboration is a win-win. Staying in the conversation until we figure out a way through the issue. Doing so allows us to understand each other and each other's needs. It requires us to become comfortable being uncomfortable.

Emotion comes out when someone feels disrespected. Be kind, direct, and respectful. Keeping your norms real is important, otherwise it is just a reading exercise. Review your norms and ask each other what they mean. You do this to support the culture you want to grow. This is the real work! It is not "fluff stuff." Look at the definition of each norm and ask everyone to share what they believe it means.

**Adjournment:**

A motion was made by Patrick Phair and seconded by Betty Manion to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 p.m. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.