

## JOINT WORK SESSION WITH FROMBERG - MARCH 16, 2011

**1. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, INTRODUCTIONS:** Fromberg Chairman Scott Bauwens called the meeting to order in the Fromberg Gym Lobby at 7:30 p.m. Bridger Members Present: Kelly Stevenson, Krystal Zentner, and Russ Imlay. Fromberg Members Present: Julie Jones, Val Robertson, Jerry Paugh, and Lynn Roberts. Others Present: Bill Phillips, Gary Scott, Becky Bell, Diane George, Roger Heimbigner and Betty Sweet. Several staff and community members from Fromberg were also present.

**2. WORK SESSION: Discussion of areas of cooperation between Districts:**

Jerry Paugh welcomed the Bridger members and noted that he was the catalyst behind this joint meeting. He expressed his concern of the direction of education for the Fromberg District and his desire, as a taxpayer, to see the resources of the two districts to be better utilized. Scott Bauwens opened up the meeting for comment from anyone in attendance that might have suggestions, questions or concerns.

Julie Jones noted that they have lost a lot of students in Fromberg due to sports and, even though we have had problems co-oping teams in the past, it would be in our best interests to group classes and sports and generally work together. Other schools who have joined forces are doing well. Erwin Sankey, Fromberg community member wondered if we would be one or two districts. Since each district gets so much money for having a school, he wondered if we wouldn't lose money by being one district. He also wondered what is allowing students to move from district to district. Fromberg Superintendent Scott noted that when districts combine, they are allowed and incentive at the beginning and given both districts allotment for six years with the amount reducing after the first year. Fromberg will have to reduce their budget by \$44,000 this year and levy \$86,000. There are no more stimulus dollars coming from the state. Insurance is going up, steps and lanes will make wages go up. In Carbon County, students are allowed to go to any school they choose and it's not just sports that causes them to transfer. The state will probably never force consolidation but they do give some rewards.

Bridger Superintendent Phillips addressed the group. He understands the issues with sports and students moving from district to district. Other districts are having the same issues we are. Bridger is looking at offering retirement incentives and laying off staff members. Bridger does receive oil & gas money and if we lose that through the legislature it will be a blow to our district. He noted that he and the Bridger board members and staff are here to listen. He is hoping that the reductions-in-force that we are looking at are short term. Mr. Phillips does like the idea of sharing trips with other districts whenever possible. He noted that Bridger seems to have a stable enrollment. He encouraged people to talk to their boards and to each other. We have grant funds to send staff to professional development conferences but need general funds to pay for supplies, utilities and salaries.

Fromberg Superintendent Scott noted that they have money in other funds that can't be used for salaries. They plan to lay off some staff, combine some classes, re-group and departmentalize. Scott Bauwens asked the audience for input. He noted that Fromberg would consider co-oping classes but that other ideas are welcomed. Russ Imlay said that the question in his mind was, would this lead to a full consolidation. Bridger offers lots of electives but only have 2-3 students signing up for the classes. We don't want to, but, we

may be forced to cut back on those offerings. Lynn Roberts thought we might be able to share teachers – such as Foreign Language. Jerry Paugh thought the community might not want fewer high schools but that that looked more prudent to him. We all wonder what the community will bear. He thought if we just put the question of consolidation to a vote, then we would know. Communication was his big push to get this meeting scheduled. Scott Dynes noted that when he went to school in Billings, students were bused to the Career Center for vo-ed type classes. Perhaps the districts could do something like this, taking small steps and not try consolidation all at once. Other attendees commented on that type of situation where one school was geared toward college-bound students and the other for vocational careers. Mr. Scott feels that with the number of special needs students in their district, the students at the top academically are not being stimulated as they are not offered advanced classes. Mr Phillips noted that Bridger plans to add Advanced Placement classes next year. Kelly Stevenson added that our priority is education. He wondered if we have to do full consolidation to get incentives and the answer is yes. Consolidation would not save money but would increase our educational opportunities.

Members of the two boards and the administrators will be meeting to see what classes might be consolidated. Mr. Phillips added that we have to plan now as we can't wait to see what happens on election day. Lynn Roberts noted that consolidation was not popular when the community was surveyed a few years ago. Doug Tucker encouraged everyone in attendance to help educate the voters. We need to let our communities know that we are not just doing this for sports but for academics too. We will be doing some cost saving measures now as there isn't time to address consolidation but that we are looking at working together toward that end.

Fromberg will be holding a work session on April 7 and Bridger will be holding a community budget meeting on April 6. Another joint meeting may be set in April.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT:** Included above.

**4. ADJOURNMENT:** Jerry Paugh made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 p.m. Julie Jones seconded the motion.

ATTEST:

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Board Chairman

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Clerk of the Board