

Oxbow unified union school district meeting - April 30th - Newbury property tour

****unofficial minutes as there was no quorum to establish a meeting.****

In attendance:

Board Members: Danielle Corti, Carol Cottrell, Timm Judas

Staff: Sarah Rinehimer, Geraint Jones

Community Members: Walter Cottrell, Max Judas

Real Estate agent - Darren Sherburn

The board members and community members were led up through the property by Darren Sherburn. Property packets were provided and the conversation consisted of property boundaries property and cost listed at \$78,800. The realtor pointed out that there was an area that would be considered more desirable for building (a landing or flatter spot) the cost of running electricity up to that reasonable building site was at least \$13,000 but could be up to \$30,000. In addition there is no well or access to town water. If building a house or structure that needed water a well would need to be drilled (at least 250 feet was his guess). Also of note is that in order to get supplies up a small concrete bridge must be navigated. The property line goes along the forest line on three of the sides and the fourth side was marked with orange ribbon.

The teachers shared information about how they had utilized the property as an outdoor classroom. Mrs. Rinehimer said that the walk to the outdoor classroom is a mindful walk with students being asked to be quiet and aware of their surroundings. Especially on the walk through the small neighborhood. Talking about what it means to be part of a neighborhood and respecting the people that live there and their property. She also showed a small hill that was part of the logging road used to access the land that they have used as a small sledding hill for younger students. There is a small brook that runs along the northern edge of the property that Darren said he would check but assumed that we would have rights up to the middle of it, as with most streams that are on property lines. He said he would check on that for us. Mrs. Rinehimer showed areas that the school had used previously for fires, nature observation, class meetings and student engagement. When discussing building it was noted that adding some small wooden benches and possibly an outdoor lean-to or wooden structure to provide some protection from the weather and elements might be something that the school would be interested in doing. Walter asked why add man made structures to the natural classroom. It was pointed out that part of the forest school teachings do suggest a small structure that is built by the students that allows classes to leave supplies at the classroom site. Many potential educational opportunities were discussed. Mr. Jones pointed out that being able to have the outdoor classroom provides students with the ability to show their different strengths and skills. A student may not have strong writing or math skills but is a hunter or logger and is able to lead the class and demonstrate that knowledge. Currently teachers are not permitted on the property as it is actively for sale. Previously the teachers utilized the space as an outdoor classroom resource for all grades. Paras also actively participated in the opportunities to be in the outdoor classroom. While it does require more planning and can create challenging situations if behavior issues arise the teachers have walkie talkies to be in communication with the school.

Board members did ask about increased liability or getting a better understanding of the potential liabilities of owning the property. Mr. Jones and Mrs. Rinehimer let the board know that all students have a permission slip signed by parents acknowledging the use and potential risks of the outdoor classroom. The realtor suggested the only man-made item he would highly recommend would be a gate at the entrance to the property to prevent unauthorized ATVs and wheeled vehicles from accessing the property.

It was mentioned by board members that there may be an opportunity to use surplus funds to pay for the property acknowledging that all decisions about the property would need to be made by the full board and then go to the community for approval. The real estate agent was aware of the fact that the process would involve a community vote and felt confident that there would be a way to arrange a purchase and sale agreement that took those processes into account.

Walter asked why not use the Montebello property. Mr. Jones said that they have been using that but that there is less ability to allow the students to wander freely around the property. They feel they should stick to the trails. They are not able to do a fire or the fire pit. It is a longer walk that involves crossing the road and have at times encountered other community members that are enjoying the property.

Submitted by:
Danielle Corti