

Chelsea Miles

COMM 240

November 3, 2011

Beat Story #3

Fremont school board split on policy reading

ST. ANTHONY, Idaho —The Fremont school board reached a split vote to accept the second reading of Policy 708 in the school board policy manual at the meeting on Oct. 20.

Policy 708 focuses on the payroll for the district, including teachers. According to the policy, one of the payroll deductions includes “membership dues in recognized associations.” This refers to the Fremont Teachers Association (FTA).

School board member Burke Hanks suggested a revision of this policy. He thinks the school district should not have to pay the FTA fees, and that teachers should have to pay these dues from their own pockets. School board chair president Phil Baker agreed with him.

Hanks thinks the FTA dues should not be a cost to the district. “I find it very disturbing as an employer to have my employee sue me indirectly,” he said. “If they so choose to support an organization, they should do it on their own.”

Board member James Neubauer did not agree with Hanks’s revision. He said that as a school board, they should be seeking for unity rather than separation within the district, and he felt this revision would go against that unity.

Board member Shawn Dye agreed, saying the revision seemed harsh. “Don’t we represent the teachers?” he asked the board.

In the extreme case, Neubauer said that taking away FTA dues deductions could mean that the FTA is not allowed to meet in district buildings for its meetings. He does not think this is cooperation or unity.

“I simply feel the board needs to be supportive of its people down to the custodians,” he said. “It’s what makes the district work.”

Hanks understood Neubauer’s argument, but he said as a school board it is part of their role to make these revisions and they cannot turn away from that role.

“I like to feel we could be warm and fuzzy,” he said, “but at some point you have to take the challenge and go with it. There comes a point where leaders have to lead.”

Neubauer responded, saying, “It does not call for a negative reaction from the board. We need to join forces, because we’ve got a lot of people working against us, most of all the [state] legislature.”

Although Hanks made a motion to pass the policy reading without any revisions, he and Baker voted against the motion, while Neubauer and Dye voted for the motion.

Because of the split decision, the reading for Policy 708 will be back up on the school board meeting schedule later this month.