

## Custodial jobs to be outsourced?

By Hillary Gavan hgavan@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Saturday, May 11, 2013 10:00 am

The School District of Beloit Board of Education will vote at a special meeting at 5:15 p.m. Tuesday at the Kolak Education Center at 1633 Keeler Ave. on whether to outsource custodial and maintenance personnel to a private vendor, according to Director of Personnel Services Todd Cabelka.

The outsourcing could result in around \$330,000 a year in savings initially, and more savings in the long-term. The private vendor will be able to secure significant material savings because the company buys its own cleaning materials in bulk. There also will be savings to the district because it will not have to pay toward worker's compensation for the employees.

Due to ongoing budgetary concerns, Cabelka said the Board wanted the district to look at all of its programs to find potential cost savings. One issue discussed was the possible outsourcing of custodial services. However, the Board wanted to ensure that district employees would be treated financially in the same manner as if they were still working for the district.

"The Board made it clear these are valued, long-standing employees and outsourcing is not to be taken lightly. We went with a request for proposal to area vendors who provide custodial services and received several bids for those services a few weeks ago," Cabelka said.

A vendor has been tentatively selected. The potential vendor has agreed it will hire on the 52 district custodial and maintenance staff for at least five years with the same rate of pay and comparable health insurance benefits they receive from the district, including the exact same premium share.

Any new employees hired by the vendor, however, will be paid at their market rates. And once the district employees are hired on by the private company, they will be subject to the work rules of the new vendor.

Cabelka said the district has met with the custodial union, Local 1475 AFSCME, AFL-CIO on two occasions to alert them of the potential outsourcing.

"Before we went out with an Request for Proposal we sat with all members of the union and had a discussion about private vending of their services. The board was concerned and mandated that as little disruption as possible be given to our valued employees and directed the process be as transparent as possible. A lot of these people are veteran employees of the district and are part of the fabric of the school communities and we wanted to make sure they are taken care of," Cabelka said.

Cabelka said the union had the right to negotiate wages with the district under their current contract, which expires on July 1. They may not be able to negotiate wages with the new vendor, unless it is a union shop.

For now Cabelka stressed the district worked to negotiate wages on their behalf to make their transition

as smooth as possible, including no loss of current pay.

“We wanted to ensure they wouldn’t receive a reduction in pay,” he said. “Our goal is to protect our employees and through this process, we’ve at least guaranteed their employment for five years without fear of individual financial loss.”

If the Board votes to go ahead with outsourcing the services, it would take effect on July 1.