Milton School Board

Schigur spent $93k on assembly speakers

By Jeff Brown
Special to The Reporter

During his five-year tenure as district administrator of the Milton School District, Dr. Tim Schigur spent $93,500 on speakers and performers for eight all-staff assemblies, including former Green Bay Packer LeRoy Butler.

On June 13 The Reporter made a public records request for copies of invoices related to all-staff assemblies held near or at the beginning or end of the fall and spring semesters for the 2014-2015 through 2018-2019 school years. On Tuesday, July 2 the district turned over copies of those records.

The Reporter made the records request after learning that the school district had spent $5,000 for a performance by magician Rick Wilcox at the May 24, 2019 all-staff assembly.

When questioned about the expenditure during a June 10 board of education meeting by board member Brian Kvapil, Schigur said he owned the decision and said Wilcox's performance "was a way to kind of celebrate the year." Board member Tom Westrick told Kvapil it wasn't the first time the district had hired Wilcox, and he added that the district had paid to bring in Olympic athletes for all-staff assemblies in years past.

Go Pack Go

According to an invoice submitted to the school district on Aug. 3, 2015 by Jeff's Sports Inc., in exchange for $5,000 Butler gave a 15-20 minute motivational speech and did a meet-and-greet with guests. Butler also brought a football and a jersey to be raffled off.

Butler played strong safety on the Packer's 1996 Super Bowl champion squad. He is widely credited with inventing the Lambeau Leap after returning an interception for a touchdown against the Oakland Raiders on a bitterly cold Sunday in December of 1993.

According to its website, Jeff's Sports Inc. is a sports memorabilia company located in Brookfield, Wis. The website is replete with photos of the company's owner standing alongside current Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers.

$30k for graffiti artist

The guest for the next year's August all-staff assembly was considerably more expensive, if perhaps less well known (at least in Wisconsin) than Butler.

The school district paid Erik Wahl $30,000 for an hour-long presentation on Aug. 23, 2016, according to a client agreement dated May 17, 2016. Part of the fee—$5,000—covered travel expenses for two, including flights, ground transportation, meals, parking, two hotel rooms and art supplies.

Also included in the $5,000 were 24 copies of Wahl's book "Unthink: Rediscover Your Creative Genius," 10 copies of his book "Unchain the Elephant: Reframe Your Thinking to Unleash Your Potential," and seven copies of his book "The Wahl Story."

According to the homepage for Wahl's business, www.theartofvision.com, "As an internationally recognized graffiti artist and a #1 best selling business author, Erik redefines the term 'keynote speaker.'"

More magic

Other expenditures detailed in the records include:

—A $1,000 donation to the American Cancer Society's Coaches vs. Cancer, in exchange for a speech by Gary Close, a former assistant coach with the UW-Madison men's basketball team, on May 18, 2015.

In a letter to director of the University of Wisconsin Basketball Operations dated May 18, 2015, Schigur referred to the event at which Close spoke at a "professional development training session."

—$5,000 to Wilcox for a performance on Aug. 27, 2014.

Paralympian

There were apparently two all-staff assemblies held in August of 2017, because for an Aug. 24, 2017 event the school district spent $12,000 for a speaking fee for Melissa Stockwell. According to her website, melissastockwell.com, Stockwell is a former U.S. Army officer who lost a leg to a roadside bomb in Iraq and now competes as a Paralympian swimmer.

Stockwell's appearance was handled by Chicago Sports and Entertainment Partners, the same company the school district paid $18,500 to for appearances by several Olympic athletes at an all-staff assembly on May 25, 2018. This expenditure was previously reported in The Reporter.

Business author

The recipient of another speaking fee previously reported in this newspaper—$17,000 for an Aug. 28, 2018 all-staff assembly—can now be revealed as Dr. Jackie Freiberg.

According to the website Freiberg shares with her husband, Dr. Kevin Freiberg, the Freibergs "help you create the best places where the best people can do their best work. If you want proven strategies on leadership, innovation and culture we've got plenty and we're ready to help you and your team translate them into your own formulas for success."

The Freibergs are best-selling authors who have co-written seven books, according to their website. Titles include "Be a Person of Impact!: 12 Strategies to be the CEO of the Future, "Do Something Now: Be the One Who Makes Something Happen," and "Boom: 7 Strategies for Fueling Leadership and Accountability."

In with the new

Schigur resigned from the school district on June 30, after a four months-long controversy that began when it came to light he was awarded a $10,500 pay increase by then-board president Tom Westrick without the approval of the board.

Westrick apologized for single-handedly approving the pay increase. A lawyer hired by the board to investigate the approval concluded it violated a school board policy which requires that the board set the district administrator's salary.

On June 24 the board hired Richard Dahman, the former schools superintendent in Winona, Minn., as an interim replacement for Schigur. The board plans to conduct a search for a permanent replacement during the upcoming school year.

Will Dahman continue Schigur's practice of dropping five-figure sums on speakers for fall and spring all-staff assemblies? The Reporter has emailed the Milton School District requesting an interview with Dahman, who begins work on Monday, July 8.

Bond sale saves Milton School District $15M

The bonds issued by the Milton School District to finance the $59.9 million facilities referendum approved by voters this spring have been sold, board of education president Joe Martin said during the board's June 24 meeting.

Martin said the bonds sold on June 20 with an interest rate of 2.86 percent, a rate significantly lower than the 4-4.5 percent forecast by Baird Financial Advisors, the firm the district hired to manage the bond sale. The lower rate will greatly lessen the burden the referendum places on the district's taxpayers, Martin said.

"The difference is approaching $15 million dollars in what I'll say are savings for the district. Now that isn't necessarily savings we can spend—that's $15 million less the community has to pay for this referendum over the life of the bonds. It is a big, big deal."

Board member Tom Westrick thanked the employees in the school district's business office who compiled the data necessary to allow Baird to take the bonds to market. He said their efforts were key to helping Baird sell the bonds at a good interest rate.

Horsing around

Under an ideal Wisconsin summer sky, Drought and Eclipse gladly strode along Hillside Road on July 6, just south of STH 106, pulling Tom Bolden to Highwood Dr., where he had offered free horse-drawn wagon rides to kids of all ages at the neighborhood party being given. A lifelong farmer in Albion Township, Bolden said, "I like to give rides for free when I can, and this is the perfect day for it!"

Photo by Tristan McGough

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