

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
January 31, 2019 – 6:30 p.m.
Medicine Lake School Library**

*Call to
Order*

Chairman Ator called the meeting to order with the following people attending:
K-12 Trustees: Hope Ereth, Josh Johnson, Alyssa Stromberg, and Josh Jensen
Superintendent: J Lail
Business Manager/Clerk: Melissa Elvsaaas
Others: Shannon Love, Leanne Knapp, Lois Goff, Keturah Vangen, and Nicole Jensen

Public

Participation No public comment or participation.

Employee

Termination Dr. Lail reminded the Board and those in attendance that Theresa Schmits was originally recommended for termination in November of 2018. He said that Theresa Schmits was finally granted a Class 5 Montana teaching certificate on December 26, 2018, so that matter was longer an issue.

Dr. Lail stated that he revised and renewed his recommendation for termination based on discoveries he made while investigating Theresa Schmits's insistence that he provide her with an emergency authorization.

Dr. Lail noted that he looked in her employee file and found only a resume and a signed District contract. Dr. Lail contacted various employers listed on the resume he found for Theresa Schmits. He found that Theresa Schmits did not work for the colleges she said she had. He stated that Butte College had no record of a Theresa Schmits. Dr. Lail asked the human resources office and department head to check other names Theresa Schmits had used in the past (aka Theresa Schmits-Fuentes, Theresa Earley). The college representative said there was no record of that individual ever having worked for Butte college. Dr. Lail said one college only employed Theresa Schmits for three weeks, while she had claimed to have worked there for a year.

Dr. Lail then contacted the high school in California where Theresa Schmits said she taught. He found that she only taught there for 5 months and it was adult education ESL classes and not high school classes. Dr. Lail called the certification office in California and found that Theresa Schmits had a provisional certificate for teaching ESL in California that was restricted to Madera Schools in California until she took appropriate steps to get full certification. The California licensing board confirmed that Theresa Schmits never achieved full licensure in California.

After finding that Theresa Schmits had misrepresented her employment history, Dr. Lail began looking into her academic history. He reported that he asked Theresa Schmits

through her MFPE representative for proof of her degrees. Dr. Lail also made these requests through the District's attorney. As of the date and time of the Board meeting on January 31, 2019, neither Theresa Schmits, nor her representative complied with the multiple request.

Dr. Lail then used the National Student Clearinghouse to investigate Theresa Schmits's academic credentials. He said the National Student Clearinghouse is the education standard for verifying academic credentials.

Dr. Lail utilized all information at his disposal to verify her credentials including all aliases (e.g. Theresa Schmits, Theresa Schmits-Fuentes, Teresa Earley) and all various spellings of all aliases, social security number, last known addresses and birthdate to obtain information from the Clearinghouse. Dr. Lail found the following information:

- Theresa Schmits claims to have a BA from the University of the State of New York in Liberal Arts
 - Dr. Lail confirmed she has a BA from Excelsior College, which is a division of Regents College
 - The University of the State of New York is a governing board for education facilities in New York
 - Theresa Schmits's degree is for concentration areas of political science and sociology
 - Dr. Lail stated that OPI verified she gave them transcripts showing a Bachelor's Degree
- Theresa Schmits claims to have a Master's Degree in English from the University of Illinois, Springfield
 - Dr. Lail was able to confirm attendance dates over a 5-year span (from 1999-2005), but there was no verification of a degree of any kind
 - Dr. Lail called the university and spoke with the registrar – he confirmed Theresa Schmits did attend the university for the dates noted on the verification from the Clearinghouse under the name Theresa Earley, but the registrar confirmed Theresa Schmits did not earn any degree while attending
- Theresa Schmits claims to hold a Ph.D. in English from the "Texas Tech University/Bryson University"
 - Dr. Lail said the Clearinghouse could not verify attendance dates for Theresa Schmits, using any alias at any time
 - Dr. Lail called the Clearinghouse and asked them to confirm with the registrar's office, as they would not release the information to him
 - The Clearinghouse confirmed that there was no registration, graduation, or attendance information for Theresa Schmits, or any of her aliases
 - Dr. Lail conducted a search for Bryson University – no such university exists in the National Clearinghouse database
 - Dr. Lail conducted a search for Bryson University

Dr. Lail told the board his investigation of Bryson University turned up a US Attorney's report from East Philadelphia. The report was about a man from Connecticut who was arrested and pled guilty to a fraud scam in which he sold fake college diplomas. He used the names of five fake universities and one of the names was Bryson University.

Dr. Lail reminded the board that all of these findings were alarming and he asked Theresa Schmits, through her representative, multiple times to provide proof of her academic background and was refused each time. He also reminded the Board that two of the Trustees asked her directly at the November hearing if she had a Master's Degree and Ph.D. Theresa Schmits said she did, in fact, hold those degrees. At that time, the Board members asked her to provide proof and she did not. Not at that time and not since.

The Board Chair asked if the Trustees had any questions for Dr. Lail. Mr. Jensen noted that he was one of the members who asked the questions to Theresa Schmits and asked her to provide the proof that was never given.

The Board Chair asked if anyone in attendance had any questions or comments. There were no questions.

The Board Chair said she would accept a motion to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to terminate the contract of Theresa Schmits and non-renew her employment for following years, or to reject the Superintendent's recommendation.

Josh Jensen made a motion to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to terminate the contract of Theresa Schmits and non-renew her employment for following years. Josh Johnson seconded the motion. The motion was offered for discussion, voted on, and unanimously passed.

Theresa Schmits's contract was immediately terminated and she will not be renewed for any future contract with Medicine Lake Schools.

Alyssa Stromberg made a motion to adjourn. Josh Johnson seconded the motion. The motion was offered for discussion, voted on, and unanimously passed. The meeting was adjourned.

Amy Ator, Chairperson

Melissa Elvsaas, District Clerk