

Sale of school buses raises questions in Centennial

By Gary Weckselblatt Staff Writer | Posted: Tuesday, January 6, 2015 3:15 pm

The unapproved sale of school buses to a scrap dealer may have cost the Centennial School District \$2,000, according to officials.

The school board had given the go-ahead for the district to sell 13 buses on Municibid, an online government auction, for a minimum of \$2,500 each. Nine buses sold for that price. The other four, which didn't achieve that threshold, were taken off Municibid and sold to 611 Metals Recycling.

The district administration, however, should have gone back to the board before selling the four remaining buses for \$925 each, officials said.

"It really needed to come back to the board for subsequent approval," said Mark Miller, board vice president.

Two board members, Kati Driban and Michael Hartline, criticized the administration for its handling of the situation at the last board meeting when the sales were retroactively approved 7-2.

"It was done without any knowledge of the board, as far as I'm concerned," Driban said. "I think the way it was handled was not good."

Hartline said the buses should have been put back on Municibid, where two similar buses, he said, went for \$1,500.

"The whole process was a lesson, I hope we learned, on how not to handle things," he said.

While Miller said the district potentially lost \$2,000 on the transactions, he said scrap metal, much like the cost of gasoline, has fallen drastically in recent months.

"The most important point is, there was a mistake made," he said. "The administration has acknowledged this and we've used this as a learning situation."

Superintendent Joyce Mundy took the heat for the mishap, saying that "any error that happens comes to me as district leader."

She described her administrative team as "young" and said a system was put in place to avoid future errors.

"This was nothing egregious," Mundy said. "The safety, health and welfare of students, my top priority, was never in question. ... We're going to do better as part of the adjustment, and as school superintendent I'm going to work with my team to provide the best level of service to the board and to the community."

Jane Schrader Lynch, the board's president, called for an executive session when she learned of the

issue, and was quick to defend Mundy.

“What more can you say than someone made an error,” she said. “They said they’re sorry. Do I think we’ve lost \$2,000? No, I don’t. Do I think it’s a huge issue? No, I don’t. ... It’s time for us to move on.”