

NORTH ROSE-WOLCOTT CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 6, 2014

6:30 PM

AUDITORIUM OF THE HIGH SCHOOL

PRESENT:

Judi Buckalew, John Boogaard, Robert Cahoon, Kari Durham, Kelly Ferrente, Danny Snyder, Gary Sproul

Elena LaPlaca, Cinda Lisanto, Robert Magin, John Walker and approximately 60 guests.

CALL TO ORDER

Kari Durham, President, called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance,

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Judi Buckalew moved and Robert Cahoon seconded the following motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. J. Boogaard, J. Buckalew, R. Cahoon, K. Durham, K. Ferrente, D. Snyder, G. Sproul voted yes.

Be it resolved that the Board of Education, upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and pursuant to Education Law, approves the agenda of January 6, 2014.

2. BOARD DISCUSSION

Kari Durham initiated a discussion by announcing that the Board wanted to have a public discussion following the vote so that taxpayers could hear Board Members have a dialog about the decisions that were made at past meetings. There are parts of the capital project that are very important to the Board.

The K-6/7-12 educational program is still important to the Board. After two plus years of research, fact gathering, input from teachers and administrators, the Board determined that this configuration is the best way to meet the educational needs of students in the most financially efficient manner.

The opinion of many, including Board Member John Boogaard, is that a grades 6/7/8 setting is an age appropriate educational program. Grouping grades 7 and 8 with 9 – 12 creates behavioral problems.

- Enrichment programs are important at the Middle School level.
- What are taxpayers willing to fund to keep enrichment programs going in the Middle School given declining enrollment?
- Teachers are paid to travel [no contact with students] and to instruct very small classes.
- Staffing needs are based on enrollment and maintaining a class size of 20-24 students.
- High School students earned 265 college credits in 2012-13. We are one of the few districts in Wayne County to offer these opportunities to students. We are adding Advanced Placement courses. The district will not be able financially sustain an 8th grade enrichment class and a Syracuse University English course at the High School given declining enrollment. Which one will go first?

- North Rose - Wolcott students are entering college with numerous college credits, which helps them graduate early.
- The Valedictorian and Salutatorian of a neighboring school district were denied admission to their SUNY College of choice because they had not taken any Advanced Placement or college credit courses.
- Board Member, Danny Snyder stated that his children cannot get the help they need now at the Middle School for Integrated Algebra.

John Boogaard stated that enrichment programs are possible in the Middle School. Teachers can be trained to provide instruction to students wishing to take advanced courses.

John Walker stated that he fully supports a 6/7/8 program and enrichment courses at this level, but asks taxpayers: what cost is the district willing to pay? The budget process looks at the number of staff needed based on enrollment to maintain class sizes of 20 – 24. Using a Middle School teacher to provide enrichment instruction to a very small group of students is not a responsible use of taxpayer funds and he cannot support the expense. It is extremely costly and underutilizes staff.

Some community members commented that the vote was against spending \$30 million dollars. Some commented that the vote was against a K-6/7-12 educational program; and, some commented that the vote was against closing school buildings.

Possibly the Buildings & Grounds committee will revisit all the data collected to readdress ways to efficiently and effectively address the program delivery model adopted by the Board of Education.

- This effort will be a waste of time if the public isn't in favor of changing the educational program. The only other option is to keep three buildings open, raise taxes and cut program.
- How does the Board get more direction from the community?
- How much and how long is the community willing to pay to continue the 3 building configuration given declining enrollment and increasing operation costs?
- Can the Middle School building be repurposed for Administrative offices and Pre-Kindergarten program?
- Can the Middle School concept be incorporated in another building but kept separate?
- John Boogaard stated that in his opinion it could not happen.
- The Board is financially hamstrung if they cannot use buildings and staff in the most efficient manner. The District cannot continue to operate as we have in the past given a tax cap, declining enrollment, shrinking tax base and less funding by the state and county.
- Would 5 – 15 community members be willing to work with the board to study what the next steps might be?
- The capital project was confusing. Facts stated in the brochures where confusing.
- Communicate to the public information on how much each proposal considered by the Board would cost.
- Investigate sharing services with other districts to cut costs.

- Not all taxpayers were against the capital project. Many people like the k-6/7-12 educational program but voted no because there were no plans for what to do with closed buildings. When Florentine Hendrick Elementary closed there were no plans for that empty building.
- The Board felt it was premature to solidify plans for vacant buildings knowing that they needed voter approval to move ahead. To make plans before the public voted risked reticule that the Board assumed that taxpayers would be in agreement with the proposal.
- The Board should have planned to bulldoze both buildings as the community can't possible use either building.
- Bulldozing the buildings would have been voted down, also.

- The Board was recognized and thanked for the work, time and effort that have gone into bringing this project to the community. Sharing more information, costs, enrollment projections and building capacity would help the community understand the financial dilemma facing education in the community. It appears that maintaining three school buildings will become an economic burden shortly.

Producing another flyer is a nice idea, but some will think the Board is "at it again", they won't read it and won't understand it. How does the Board get three years' worth of discussion on a piece of paper?

This has been an enormously complicated problem centered on buildings but no one is talking about curriculum and students and education and the impact that the educational system has on the community. The decisions made by the community now will have an impact on the future of education.

Brick and mortar were not the only issue. The community was scared of the dollar amount of the capital project because they didn't understand the explanation given. The fear mongering in the press and on social media made it a highly emotional issue.

The 5th grade is still located at the Middle School. It is a great concern. Parents were assured that 5th grade students would be insulated. That did not happen. There is skepticism that grades 7-8 would have an appropriate setting in the High School because nothing was done to help 5th grade transition.

Kari Durham thanked everyone for their continued interest in the district. She thanked Board Members for their continued dedication to the fiduciary responsibility of the district. She reported on the resignation of Philip Wagner saying that he did not resign simply because the vote was not favorable. There were circumstances over and above his membership on the Board that caused the resignation. He is an incredibly fine man with keen skills and he is held in the highest of regards. He was not undervalued by the Board of Education.

At this point, Kari Durham announced her resignation from the Board effective at the end of this meeting. The last three months of being confronted by community members not willing to learn the facts of the

capital project has made her lose her objectivity. Painful, nasty statements of distrust of the Board of have been hurtful to all Board Members. When that nastiness is conveyed by students to the children of Board Members, all open-mindedness is lost. Given all of this, Mrs. Durham stated that she feels she may best serve the community by stepping down.

At this time, Mrs. Durham called for a motion to go to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Judi Buckalew moved and Robert Cahoon seconded the following motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. J. Boogaard, J. Buckalew, R. Cahoon, K. Durham, K. Ferrente, D. Snyder, G. Sproul voted yes.

The Board moved to Room 210 to conduct Executive Session.

OPEN SESSION

The meeting returned to open session at 9:45 PM. The Board will elect a new President and Vice President at the next regular meeting scheduled for January 14, 2014.

ADJOURNMENT

Robert Cahoon moved and Kelly Ferrente seconded the following motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. J. Boogaard, J. Buckalew, R. Cahoon, K. Ferrente, D. Snyder, G. Sproul voted yes.

Be it resolved that the Board of Education, upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and pursuant to Education Law, approves the adjournment of the meeting at 9:46PM.

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Gary Sproul also presented a letter of resignation from the Board to be effective at the close of the meeting.

Clerk of the Board of Education