

NORTH ROSE-WOLCOTT CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 7, 2013 6:30 PM
AUDITORIUM OF NORTH ROSE-WOLCOTT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- PRESENT: Judi Buckalew, Kari Durham Kelly Ferrente, Gary Sproul, Phil Wagner
Elena LaPlaca, Cinda Lisanto, John Walker and approximately 50+ guests.
- ABSENT/EXCUSED John Boogaard, Robert Cahoon, Danny Snyder
- CALL TO ORDER Kari Durham President, called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance,
1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA Judi Buckalew moved and Kelly Ferrente seconded the following motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. J. Buckalew, K. Durham, K. Ferrente, G. Sproul, P. Wagner 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 .November 7, 2013.
2. COMMUNITY FORUM Each Board Member introduced themselves and provided a brief synopsis of their background and community involvement.
- Kari Durham then provided a detailed synopsis of how the board came to develop the proposal being presented to voters on December 12, 2013.
- Program discussions were generated in response to community concerns surrounding the housing of 5th grade students in the same educational setting as 6-8th grade students. The board charged the Curriculum director and Superintendent to gather data to make recommendations regarding instructional delivery models.
- Closure of the Florentine Hendrick building in 2011 allowed for immediate savings, and the funds were redirected to augment the remaining three school buildings. This initial board action set the stage for further conversations around consolidations and long-term planning.
- The 5 year building condition survey further highlighted top priority repairs needing to be completed. The data and recommendations received in conjunction with a responsibility to balance student enrollment and program with increasing maintenance and operations costs led to a charge to buildings and grounds to study housing of k-6, 7-12 program. On February 26, 2013 the board formalized the initiative and voted to change the delivery of instruction to a K – 6 /7 – 12 program.
- With this programmatic decision made, the buildings and grounds committee began deliberations on best facilities options bearing in mind taxpayer capability and instructional models. The following outlines their propositions to full board:
1. Do nothing except the repairs and maintenance to existing buildings and ignore the program change.

2. Use the existing high school for grades 7-12 and erect a new building for K-6 on a single campus.
3. Use the existing high school for grades 7-12 and add to it to house K-6 on a single campus.
4. Use the existing high school for grades 7-12 use Leavenworth to house K-2 and close North Rose - Wolcott Elementary.
5. Use the existing high school for grades 7-12, use North Rose Elementary to house K-6 and close Leavenworth.
6. Use the existing high school for grades 7-12, use Florentine Hendrick to house K – 6 and close Leavenworth and North Rose - Wolcott Elementary.
7. Use the existing high school for grades 7-12, retain both Leavenworth and North Rose - Wolcott Elementary as K-6 buildings.
8. Erect new bus and maintenance building at High School, use the existing high school for grades 7-12, erect a new K-6 building at the high school, sell remaining acreage at high school and sell all other properties.

The board had to consider the cost of each option to taxpayers and the district, both short term and long term; the program savings and educational improvements both short term and long term; projected enrollment rates for the next 10 years; long-term sustainability costs of each building. Following discussions at full board it was determined that 2 were most feasible and the committee would make a final recommendation after final cost studies.

The recommendation was to support the closing of Leavenworth and North Rose - Wolcott Elementary, to reopen the Florentine Hendrick building with renovations, and enhance the High School building. The Board stated that this decision best supports the fiscal management of the financial resources of the district and provides for the best educational system while respecting the capacity of taxpayers to support education.

Judi Buckalew read excerpts from a brochure dated 1933 where the Board of Education was seeking voter authorization to build the current Leavenworth building. She read:

“A great responsibility rests upon a Board of Education in providing proper educational facilities for its boys and girls. The future of this or any other community is largely determined by the interest and care which is given to its youth,. Somebody has truthfully said “what we are to be we are now becoming.” Indeed your Board of Education feels this great responsibility keenly and has been spending and are spending long and weary hours trying to give the pupils of this community the best educational advantages.

The responsibility now rests squarely upon the voters of this community to decide whether we will go forward or backward educationally.

This is without doubt the most important civic question that has come before this community in many, many years, and the way in which you decide it will have much to do with the future of Wolcott and vicinity. We cherish for this community the highest in education...”

We, the Board of Education, bespeak your full and loyal support,
Ralph Paddock
Howard B. Palmer
L. Early Henry
Alfred Lander
Arthur Eygnor

Mrs. Buckalew noted that the Board of Education of 1933 had the insight and vision to advocate for what they felt was the best education that the community could afford. They also stated their belief that a good education is the lifeblood of the community. As we all know, this bond proposition resulted in the completion of the Leavenworth school building.

At this time Mrs. Durham opened the meeting to questions.

Q: How many jobs would be affected?

A: The plan reviewed reduces a total of 10 positions, 8 could be instructional. However, the district expects to have to replace approximately 30 teaching positions within the next 4 years due to retirements (attrition). As these retirements occur, some of the positions will not be filled. Additionally, the district would be in a position to better utilize staff that are certified to teach grade levels that are currently located in other buildings. Double planning time and travel time would be eliminated, giving students more contact time with a specific teacher.

This includes the elimination of one Principal position and included in the cost projections is the increase of Assistant Principals to one full time for each building.

Q: How many staff had input in the proposed building layout? Why would these departments be moving locations? The boards make it appear that the technology department would lose two rooms.

A: All staff participated in data gathering process (through dept level/grade level meetings) and took part in answering specific questions that helped the Board in their decision making process. The district studied the instructional schedule and looked at room and space utilization in determining how a specific classroom may be used in the future. The planning boards on display at this meeting are for concept only and are not a final rendering of space.

Q: What happens to Leavenworth and North Rose - Wolcott Elementary in 5 years? There will still be maintenance costs to plan for. What are the plans to reuse or sell?

A: The district will continue to receive state aid on both buildings for 10-13 years and will continue to maintain them. The board has not yet studied this aspect of the plan. It is not fair to find buyers or tenants or devote study to this (anticipating closure) when the public has not given approval to stage one. If the proposition receives a positive vote, the board anticipates forming a committee, and we would seek community input/volunteers.

Q: Clarification: there will be a cost to maintain two closed buildings, yes?

A: Yes, although the board recognizes state aid will come in against the bonds to offset maintenance, etc., we did not bring specific numbers to properly address this question with specifics. We will ask our business administrator to make these numbers available at our next meeting (prior to the forum). <*they were made available at the 11/12/13 board meeting>

Q: What happens in 5 years? There will be a new board and a new superintendent and they will have a vision different from the current board. It seems that every few years the board proposed a capital project.

A: The Board and district now have a long term plan in place that is sustainable by future superintendents and boards of education. This is the first time a board of education has planned for the future of the district. We recognize that the consistency (or inconsistency) of the leadership has caused some speculation in the community in regards to projects. It is the belief of this board that WE are the ones to be held accountable for these plans and will work to build trust in the process we are working through.

Q: Can you give concrete examples of why a K-6/7-12 program will work?

A: Teacher certifications run in two blocks, K-6 and 7-12 just like the proposed program change. Grouping elementary classrooms in one building insures cohesive instruction from grade to grade as all teachers will have the same staff development targets and expectations. Skills development for students is much smoother when these grade levels are grouped together and provides opportunities for advancement of academically gifted children.

Additionally, program enhancements for elementary grades include the reintroduction of beginning band for grades 4 & [5], jazz band in grades 7&8 and AP music at the high school level.

Q: What happens if the proposition is not passed by voters?

A: The board must still do something. We will revisit other options and construct a new proposition. There will be costs involved with all options. Closing buildings will still be considered. However, this proposition is the most fiscally responsible plan of all the options the board considered.

Q: Are there plans to isolate or segregate the middle school students from high school students? Will age appropriate areas be established in the 7-12 setting to ensure positive reinforcement of behavior?

A: The district is planning how best to deliver instruction to grade 7-8 students in the high school with nominal interaction with grade 10-12 students. Our team is looking closely at student populations (again, the placement of 5th grade amongst age-mates initiated much of this conversation.)

Q: Did the board consider a one building campus?

A: Yes. This scenario was the #1 consideration. The 1998 consultant study that encouraged this scenario was tabled and we revisited that study again. Now the district cannot afford to do this because the State Education Department would not provide enough funding.

Q: If the proposition passes, what will the district do with the asbestos at the Leavenworth building?

A: If left undisturbed the building is now safe and will continue to be safe for occupancy.

Q: What is the cost of leaving Leavenworth open? How much in reserve funds? What is the cost of this proposal versus doing nothing at all?

A: Projected maintenance costs for North Rose - Wolcott Elementary and Leavenworth are approximately \$20 million. The bond cost for the project is \$26.9 million with reserve funds of \$3.6 million.

Q: Can you guarantee that there will not be another capital project bond issue within the next 5 years? It seems that every 5 years a new superintendent has new ideas that the taxpayers must pay for.

A: No. This is the only way the district has to complete repairs from building condition surveys. Just like your house, the windows, siding, roof need to be maintained and kept in good working condition. We do never speak in terms of guarantee. We need to forecast and plan for.

Superintendents are charged by and work for the Board of Education not the other way around. So any proposal to spend money comes directly from the board, not the superintendent.

Q: There was a drainage problem with the last capital project at the Florentine Hendrick building. Will this continue?

A: The board was unaware of this issue. According to our architect, there are regulations in force now that were not 5 years ago and storm water must be handled in a manner that will not disturb the ground surrounding the building.

Q: How will a centralized or regionalized high school affect our district?

A: The board president, vice president, the Superintendent and the Business Administrator met in Albany to discuss all of the options listed in these minutes. The State Education Department will not advocate for regionalization and has left it to the districts to decide on their own how they want to fund program and maintenance and repairs.

Q: How will this plan accommodate Universal Pre-K? SED may mandate this program.

A: The district already supports a couple of UPK sites in the district. No one has heard that SED may require that it be housed in a district owned building. We cannot plan classrooms for this.

Q: How long before the new school would open?

A: Not earlier than September 2016.

John Walker stated that contrary to what has been said in the community and in newspapers, he likes the community and the buildings in the district, but does not like them as an educational setting. He is fully vested in all students and is passionate about providing educational advantages for all. He stated that the Florentine Hendrick building is still close to the Village of Wolcott and students will be part of village life.

District residents cannot afford to do nothing. The future cost of operating three buildings given financial resources and taxpayer prosperity is limited. With the impending loss of \$400,000 in sales tax revenue from Wayne County, and the closing of Electromark, the board may be forced to make decisions that are unfavorable to educational programs.

Kari Durham stated that the Board of Education has evolved to the point that the exchange of questions and answers should assure taxpayers that they are in charge of the district's policy, finances, budget and program. They have spent two years gathering and studying data in an effort to provide the best education for children in the most cost effective manner.

This is a monumental decision for the community, both programmatically and financially. It is a difficult emotional path and doing nothing ensures more financial stress on the district.

She thanked everyone for coming and asked everyone to take the time to come on December 12th and vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Kelly Ferrente moved and Judi Buckalew seconded the following motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. J. Buckalew, K. Durham, K. Ferrente, , G. Sproul, P. Wagner 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 8:30 PM.

Elena M. LaPlaca, District Clerk