

**EAST TROY COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Meeting Minutes – December 2, 2014
REVISED**

The East Troy Community School District Board met in special session on December 2, 2014. The meeting was called to order by President Ted Zess at 7:03 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Board members present were Steve Lambrechts, Chris Smith, Martha Bresler, Dawn Buchholtz, and Ted Zess. Also present were Dr. Christopher Hibner, Kathy Zwirgzdas, Amy Foszpanczyk, administrators, forty-one guests, one reporter and two student representatives, Julia Kostopoulos and Monica Zoellner. Ted Zess read the open meeting statement indicating that the meeting is open to the public as required by state statute and that notice of the meeting had been sent to the media and/or posted.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AS POSTED

A motion was made by Dawn Buchholtz and seconded by Chris Smith for approval of the agenda as posted. Motion carried unanimously.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES ON NOVEMBER 10, 2014 REGULAR BOARD MEETING

A motion was made by Dawn Buchholtz and seconded by Chris Smith to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2014 regular Board meeting.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PER BOARD POLICY:

Mr. John Murphy stated that he is all in favor of improving schools and education as they are valuable assets to the community. He inquired about the possibility of completing new construction at the Prairie View site and revamping the high school within the funding limits identified as part of the last referendum.

Mr. Terry Dignan addressed three issues. First, he urged the Board to work to develop a level of trust among themselves and within the community. He expressed concern about board members speaking out against one another at public meetings. Mr. Dignan feels that not being able to address differences in private is an indication of the lack of trust. He suggested that the Board hire a mediator to provide training so that they can learn how to reach consensus. Secondly, Mr. Dignan asked the Board members to learn from the work and wisdom of previous Boards. Years ago the Board opted to construct a new high school out by the airport where there was open land. This location addressed

issues including public safety, traffic patterns and the opportunity for future expansion. In addition, when the land was purchased at the Prairie View site, the plan was to eventually build a primary school. At this time, experts were called in to assess the possibility of adding on to Doubek and it was deemed not worthy of expanding. The traffic issues in front of Doubek are dangerous, a death waiting to happen. Also, Prairie View is overcrowded as this building was not meant to house second graders. Finally, Mr. Dignan asked that the needs of the middle and high school not be ignored. He encouraged members of the Board to talk to the people who are in the classrooms to find out what is needed to deliver an education. He also asked for space dedicated to developing tools and skills for emerging areas of job growth. Mr. Dignan also requested that the students involved in the performing arts are granted the same advantages as those involved in athletics.

Mr. Joe Klarkowski reiterated the importance of having quality facilities. He described his decision to move to the East Troy community and recognized the fact that the reputation of the school system is important to families. He stated that the improvements being asked for are common sense. Mr. Klarkowski made a suggestion to allow the Board to move forward. He suggested the Board should address the list of needs one item at a time to determine what can be agreed upon. Mr. Klarkowski stated that the Board cannot go to referendum another time without first having consensus.

Mr. Patrick Evans reminded the Board of the three laws of real estate: location, location, location. He shared information he gathered regarding the Reek Elementary School Referendum and shared the components of the process that led to their success. This included: unanimous decision among the School Board, transparency with the voters, having a photo model to display, not allowing the architects to hire the construction firm, all construction placed for bid, questioning each 'change order' and creating a citizen's committee of entrepreneurs to spread the word and provide feedback as part of the negotiation process. Mr. Evans stated that the Board should forget about the Doubek site and move out to Prairie View.

Mrs. Vicki Ksobiech, a kindergarten teacher who has been in the district for twenty-nine years, encouraged the Board, administrators and community members to stop in the buildings when student are present to see what's happening and how the space is utilized.

Mrs. Tricia Harris stated that it is not possible for anybody to get everything they want. She emphasized the importance of putting personal agendas aside and working together to compromise. She also stated that she has heard parents express concern about sending their little ones to a K – 5 building with over 700 students. Parents like the small setting that Doubek provides.

Mr. Dusty Stanford shared his concern regarding the traffic congestion issue at Doubek. He believes that, with Doubek's location, many parents could walk their children to school. He would like to maintain the small town feel and try to address these issues so that children can remain at Doubek.

VII. WORKING REFERENDUM SESSION

A. Board of Education working to rebuild trust by establishing Board of Education "team norms":

President Ted Zess began by describing three levels of trust that must exist in order to move forward. There must be trust at the Board level, between the Board, administration and the selected consultants and between the District and the community. Mr. Zess provided each Board member with the book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. He asked each Board member to take some time to read the book but also provided a brief synopsis. The book describes five behaviors that lead to dysfunctional teams. These behaviors include: the absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability and inattention to results. Mr. Zess suggested that, in an effort to rebuild trust, the Board work to develop norms for behavior.

Mr. Smith stated that he felt a sense of mistrust when the 'vote no' ad was placed in the paper. Mr. Smith believed that issues and concerns had been discussed and debated at the Board level. Mrs. Bresler stated that she felt the entire Board agreed that the majority of money would be spent on HS. When the high school administration suggested that they could move forward with improvement totaling \$7 million, additional options for the remaining budget were never discussed. Mrs. Bresler felt a meaningful discussion was never had. Rather, it was quickly decided that the remaining money would be spent at Doubek. Mr. Smith responded that these quick decisions were a direct result of the timeline that needed to be followed. Mrs. Bresler stated that the Board had agreed to go to referendum when they were ready and she didn't believe they were ready. She explained that the last referendum would have committed the District to four sites which is a major change in philosophy from the original push for efficiency. Mr. Smith felt the referendum was created based on the survey results. However, Ms. Buchholtz stated that, according to survey, Prairie View was the preferred site.

Mr. Zess brought the discussion back to task at hand: establishing norms so as to rebuild trust. Mr. Smith discussed his concern about the time needed. He feels it is important to move forward so the District can take advantage of lower construction costs, etc. Mrs. Bresler stated that the passionate comments made by staff at the last Board meeting reminded her that the Board must be passionate about every student in East Troy. Mr. Smith requested that the passion

demonstrated in the newspaper be brought into the discussions at the Board meetings. Mr. Smith stated it was a clear decision in his mind and he didn't think there was a time out you can call. Mrs. Bresler stated that she needs time to think through things and get arguments in place. Ms. Buchholtz added that both she and Bresler prepared statements requesting more time. However, this request was not addressed as the resolution was decided in a 3-2 vote, 3 different times. Mr. Zess recalled that the statements made dealt with trust issues regarding administration and the consultants.

Mrs. Bresler expressed her concerns regarding the district's operational budget. She explained that this was never discussed but is crucial to supporting programs. Bresler stated that the district will be dead in the water without programs and teachers. In addition, Mrs. Bresler stated that she is certain that another referendum would not be passed in three years. In her mind, a decision was being made that we were going to live with for 10-15 years.

Again, Mr. Zess returned the focus to the norms by asking Board members to review the norms that have been presented and to suggest any needed additions or revisions. Mr. Smith asked Ms. Buchholtz to address her level of trust for administration and the consultants. Ms. Buchholtz stated there are things that had been said to members of the community by the architects and the construction consultants that are not truthful. Buchholtz stated that the Board needs to be thorough when going through items and budgets presented by the architects. She believes that there some problems that exist that they need to answer to. Mr. Zess stated that this lack of trust didn't seem to surface until a new plan for a referendum had been established. Mrs. Bresler stated that, when trying to sell the Doubek addition, it appeared as if things became more expensive. Mr. Lambrechts stated that the scope of the projects had changed which resulted in the differences in cost. Mr. Zess reminded the Board that elementary needs cannot wait another 10 years. Mrs. Bresler expressed her concern regarding the space available for 21st century learning at the middle school. The Board agreed that this is an extremely crucial issue and needs to be addressed in a timely manner. Special meetings may be required. Mr. Zess stated that the Board would return to the norms at the next meeting.

B. Reviewing timeline for April or November referendum:

The Board discussed possible timelines for a referendum. Mr. Zess asked members to think about whether or not April 2015 is too quick to move. The option of a special election in November 2015 was also discussed. However, Mr. Zess wants to ensure that a special election will not be perceived as a negative. Mr. Smith stated that he does not believe April 2015 is too

quick if the right solution is identified. He also stated that the Board needs to do a better job of educating the community about the District's needs.

Dr. Hibner reminded the Board and the community that the district revenue is approximately the same as in 2008-2009 school year. However, as we know, expenses do not remain status with inflationary increases. Hence, the District has had to reduce \$5 million in the last 8 years to align to the State mandated Revenue Limits. Dr. Hibner discussed the needs that currently exist in education toward providing an authentic learning environment that truly supports a personalized learning environment for each and every child toward ensuing high student engagement and a year to a year plus of learning growth. In addition, he reminded the audience of the importance of assisting our students with skills toward being college and or career ready. He also discussed how education must evolve for what our students are learning, and more importantly; how our practices must continue to be evolving toward supporting independent learners that are producers. Dr. Hibner reiterated the competitive nature of education and the impact that open enrollment has on our District. He reminded the Board that there is much to be proud of in East Troy, but that there are behavioral issues that exist. Dr. Hibner stated that we will never get to solutions unless the behavioral issues are addressed. He also clarified that the need for an operational referendum is completely separate from the capital projects. The operational needs are due to the revenue cap gap, not a capital project. Mr. Zess also reminded the Board that deferred maintenance now complicates the budget. Mrs. Buchholtz stated that consensus needs to be reached and perhaps an operational referendum needs to be discussed. Mr. Smith agreed that the operational needs must be evaluated. He also commended the community members for their presence and stated that he would like to see more public participation. Mr. Zess reminded the Board that an April referendum would require a decision by January 24th while a November referendum would require a decision in August.

C. Attempting to understand each other:

Mr. Zess asked the Board members to communicate reasons and clarifications by identifying items for the administrative team to explore and research. Specifically, Zess asked Board members to discuss exactly what information is needed to move forward. Mrs. Bresler stated that the needs at the middle school need to be identified to ensure that there are 21st century learning spaces. Mr. Smith stated that \$20.8 million should not be the deciding factor any more. He followed by explaining that all of the lists that have been generated identify needs not wants. Mr. Zess reminded the Board that \$42 million in needs have been identified. Smith expressed his interested in discussing the closing of both Doubek and Chester Byrnes and either

adding on to Prairie View or building a new primary school at the Prairie View site. Dr. Hibner asked Board members if Chester Byrnes needed to be explored. Mr. Smith stated that Chester Byrnes is not a viable solution and doesn't address the needs of the students. Mrs. Bresler added if Chester Byrnes could be made into a viable facility for bridging the gap to the next one for a couple of million, might that be a possibility to look at? She was sure that she could not see putting in major bucks to something we would walk away from in a couple of years. Zess reminded the Board that the District cannot afford to maintain buildings that are not being utilized. Mrs. Buchholtz stated that she believes the \$5 million estimate to renovate Chester Byrnes was way out of line. Buchholtz would like to further investigate what it would take to get Chester Byrnes to a usable state. Buchholtz requested estimates for the updating of mechanical components and improvement needed for the educational setting. These numbers can then be studied to determine what seems reasonable. Mrs. Buchholtz requested Kathy Zwirgzdas to bring information regarding the fund balance to the next meeting.

D. Set next meeting date:

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 15th at 7:00. (**Has since been altered to Tuesday, December 16th at 7:00 p.m.**)

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Martha Bresler and seconded by Dawn Buchholtz to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Smith