

WYOMISSING AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT 2013-4699

Minutes December 3, 2013

The regular meeting of the Board of School Directors convened at 6:11 p.m. in the Cafeteria of the Jr./Sr. High School with Mrs. Butera, Board President, presiding.

CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Butera called the meeting to order and asked if anyone would be recording the meeting. Recordings were being made by Channel 69 News, Reading Eagle, and Michael Hauser.

Board Members Present:

Mrs. Butera, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Heinly, Mrs. McAvoy, Mr. Painter, Mrs. Reese, Mrs. Reilly and Mrs. Seltzer.

Board Member Absent

Mr. Portner

Administrative Staff Present:

Mrs. Vicente, Mr. Stem, Dr. Babb, Mr. Fries, Mr. Griscom, Dr. Jones, Mrs. Kaag, Ms. Lampe and Mrs. Smith.

Attendees:

Jeffrey Litts, Esq., Kegel Kelin Almy & Lord, Becca Gregg, Reading Eagle, and Shelley Filer, recording secretary. Audience sign-in sheet included as part of these official minutes.

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following meeting schedules and locations were announced:

- The list of 2014 Board meeting dates approved at the reorganization meeting will be posted on the website and advertised in the newspaper.

All listed meetings are held in the Community Board Room of the Jr./Sr. High School unless otherwise noted.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Peter Munsing spoke in opposition to the fence for reasons including limited access to the field and track and the inability of police to sweep the area with a spotlight allowing more areas to hide. Similarly, Brian Karr recommended security cameras in lieu of the fence. Rick Johnston and Maureen Nolan stated that funds raised in a capital campaign should be used to reinstate programs and staff that have previously been cut. Ed Emery and Jesse Stock said that a fence will not keep people out and prevent vandalism.

Mike Gyomber, tennis coach, requested clarification on the part of the project involving the tennis courts and the components of the project in priority order. Tom Blakely questioned the lack of communication with the tennis coaches when the project was formulated.

Bill Murray and Sandy Matz questioned how the new Board members could be prepared to vote on a project of this scope having just joined the Board.

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Kimberly Lewis questioned how the Board could move forward with the project with so many unanswered questions and without donations in advance when it has been said that taxpayer money is not funding the project.

Bob Wolfrum, football coach, felt the installation of a fence is long overdue. Andy Bowman stated he has cleaned up spray paint from vandals, has seen people not picking up after their dogs, and using the field for purposes for which it was not intended, like hitting golf balls. He said he believed the added security of the fence is needed. John Bailey, a representative with the Wyomissing Football Association, stated that the majority of the football alumni are in favor of the fence for security purposes and preserving a valuable District asset.

Laurie Waxler raised the question why there was no uproar when the Borough eliminated the tennis courts at Happy Hollow. She also mentioned that as a football parent, she noticed that at every stadium the team played, the field was enclosed with a fence.

Susan Larkin commented that the community doesn't want to be like other districts. She stated that voting this project through with the new Board just being seated is misaligned with the District's priorities.

Kim Gent stated that in comparing ourselves with other Districts, the focus should be on academic programs, not fences. The focus on this project has diverted attention from our goal of preparing students for the future. She asked the Board to table the decision due to the opposition and suggested putting it to a community vote. If it passes a community vote, the Board would have more credibility and support moving forward with the project.

Albert Silveri stated that there are just as many people impassioned about supporting the fence as opposed. He was concerned that many of the arguments opposing the fence imply that academics and extracurricular activities are mutually exclusive. He felt that both are important.

John Larkin said moving forward with the project will seriously damage the credibility and reputation of the Board for years to come.

Joe Cacchione stated with the overt opposition to the project that it would be wise to step back from the process for a year agreeing with a comment made by Mr. Larkin at a previous meeting. Similarly, Colin Duncan suggested that just as the Board has reconsidered demolishing the tennis courts due to the opposition, it should pause and rethink the installation of the fence for the same reason.

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Carolyn Bamberger addressed the comments made against the credibility and integrity of the Board by saying that the project has been in the discussion phase for two years beginning with a Task Force investigating the possibility of a turf field. The fence has been discussed at committee meetings and public meetings since January 2013 and should not have come as a surprise to the community.

John Larkin, Jr. read some closing remarks from a letter Mr. Larkin wrote to his colleagues before retiring from the Board.

Angel Helm expressed her empathy for the position the new Board members are in when voting on a controversial project as a newcomer. She also commended the audience for the respectful decorum of the night's commentary and said it was positive for both sides.

Kurt Bamberger commented that when this project was conceived, the committee viewed it as an enhancement to our facilities that people would be excited about. From a legal standpoint, he said it makes sense to have a fence because it shows an attempt to secure the area should there be a catastrophic accident on the field.

ROUTINE APPROVALS

MEETING MINUTES

Upon a motion by Mrs. McAvoy, second by Mrs. Reilly, the Board approved the following minutes:

- November 11, 2013 Business Meeting with Committee Reports
- November 25, 2013 Regular Business Meeting.

Yeas: Butera, Davis, Heinly, McAvoy, Painter, Reese, Reilly and Seltzer.

Nays: None. Motion carried.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. CURRICULUM/ TECHNOLOGY

No items.

B. FINANCE/ FACILITIES

Upon a motion by Mr. Heinly, and second by Mrs. Reilly, the Board approved the Finance/Facilities agenda item as follows.

During discussion, Mrs. Reilly stated that she has listened to people who oppose this project and those who support it. She has attended Board meetings and committee meetings. She feels the prior Board listened to the comments and made adjustments to the project by adding additional gates for access and getting a second opinion on the tennis courts. She stated that

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the reasons for installing a proper fence are valid and a capital campaign to raise the funds is appropriate.

Mrs. Davis stated that the project was recommended by the Development Committee and has support from other Board members not on the committee. The roots of the project began two years ago when the Athletic Field Task Force recommended installing turf on the stadium field and putting a fence around the field. Much time and effort by Board members and administrators has been spent in communicating the project to the community. How the Board members vote is representative of what each believes is in the best interest of the District.

Mr. Painter said that when he joined the Board four years ago there was mistrust between the Board and the community. The Board dedicated themselves to rebuilding that trust in three ways: securing a top-notch administrative team, establishing a level of transparency by involving stakeholders, and listening to the community. Without full community support he fears moving forward with the project will impair the relationship between the Board and the community. Mr. Painter made a motion to table the item for a minimum of 30 days to obtain a survey of the community's wishes. There was no second to the motion.

Mrs. Butera thanked the Board for all the time spent talking to community members regarding the Spartan Pride Stadium project.

Mrs. Seltzer said when she came to this area from western Pennsylvania she was surprised there was no fence around the field. She has heard from many supporters of the project. She thanked the former Board members for their time and effort on the project.

Mrs. McAvoy stated that she too does not want to be like other districts with a chain link fence around the field. The design of the proposed fence fits in with the design of the community. When the vandalism occurred last year it was the youngest of football players, elementary children, who were the first to see the vulgar graffiti. That was the determining factor for her that a fence was necessary and installing one does not eliminate all the open green space that exists in the community. The Board has an obligation is to protect the students and the District's assets.

1. SPARTAN PRIDE STADIUM PROJECT

- a. To proceed with the "Spartan Pride Stadium Project," (including but not limited to a perimeter fence around the stadium field, renovation of visitor bleachers, rehabilitation of existing tennis courts, renovation of the walkway around the stadium field, updated athlete entrance to the stadium field, and donor walls) which will provide safety, security, functional and aesthetic improvements to the School District's

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outdoor stadium area, and to commence with a Capital Campaign to pay for certain components of the Spartan Pride Stadium Project, (including the perimeter fence, the tennis courts, the walkway, updated entrances and donor walls, and other items) to be designated by the School District

- b. The Board approves and authorizes all steps necessary to proceed with the Spartan Pride Stadium Project, including but not limited to all planning and design, obtaining governmental approvals, and obtaining (but not accepting) construction bids for the Spartan Pride Stadium Project.
- c. Any awarding of construction bids, and any subsequent construction activities for the Spartan Pride Stadium Project, must be voted upon by the Board at a public meeting.
- d. For any component of the Spartan Pride Stadium Project to be funded through the Capital Campaign, (including the perimeter fence, the tennis courts, the walkway, updated entrances and donor walls, and other items) to be designated by the School District, no construction bids or construction activities shall be approved by the Board, unless and until adequate funds for construction costs have been raised or pledged to the satisfaction of the Board.
- e. The proper officers, administrators, legal counsel and project designers of the School District are authorized and directed to take all action as may be necessary or appropriate to carry out the intent of this motion.

Yeas: Butera, Davis, Heinly, McAvoy, Reese, Reilly and Seltzer.

Absent: Portner

Nays: Painter. Motion carried.

C. PERSONNEL/ POLICY

No items.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None

UPDATE FROM ORGANIZATIONS

None.

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ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mrs. Seltzer, seconded by Mr. Painter to adjourn at 7:32 p.m.

Board Secretary