

**Board of Education**  
**OWEN D. YOUNG CENTRAL SCHOOL**  
**April 6, 2010**

**Special Meeting - School Auditorium**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Debra Bronner, Cathy Mayton-Collins, Matthew Jacoby  
and Mark Peters

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Virginia Keegan, Superintendent, Keara Battisti, Assistant Principal,  
Jodie Rodriguez, Business Manager, Linda Bambara, District Clerk  
and 9 guests

President Bronner called the board meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

In a motion by Vice President Jacoby, second by Trustee Peters the meeting agenda was amended to add an item letter "B" to the President's Reports relative to merger discussions. The meeting agenda was approved with the above-referenced addition.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

In a motion by Vice President Jacoby, second by Trustee Peters the board entered into Executive Session at 7:33 p.m. for the purposes of personnel discussions.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

In a motion by Vice President Jacoby, second by Trustee Mayton-Collins the board exited the Executive Session at 8:07 p.m.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr. Curtis Richardson asked the board if the public could vote on the two open board seats. President Bronner advised that the board would be discussing the same at tonight's meeting.

Ms. Susanne Palumbo ask when the April 5, 2010 meeting was decided upon and whether the same was advertised. She was in formed that it was decided upon at the March 31<sup>st</sup> meeting and that the same was advertised on the school's board and on the school's website. She further asked if there would be tax discussion and the possibility of closing the school at tonight's meeting and she was advised that both matters would be addressed.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS**

A. 2010-11 Budget Review - Business Manager, Jodie Rodriguez, provided the board with an updated budget estimate and advised the board that there was currently a 4 ½% fund balance and the balance allowed is only 4% in reserves. Therefore, there is an approximate \$25,000 balance which could be transferred to reduce the tax levy. Mr. Chad Hess of the Poland Central School District prepared the a tax levy analysis which was presented to the board for their review. Ms. Rodriguez advised the board that in order to come back at a zero percent increase in the school taxes, and by adding the \$25,000 fund balance to the levy, there would still need to be an approximate \$71,000 cut in expenses.

Trustee Mayton-Collins asked if by adding the \$25,000 fund balance towards tax relief that this would calculate to a ½% decrease in the budget and she was informed by Ms. Rodriguez that this was correct.

Business Manager, Jodie Rodriguez, advised that if the one-half time math teacher was eliminated and the \$25,000 fund balance was added back into the calculations that would mean a tax levy increase of 3.71%. Ms. Rodriguez further advised that if the Assistant principal position was eliminated and the fund balance was added into the tax relief, then this would bring about a -.32% decrease in the tax levy. President Bronner said if the assistant principal position was eliminated in addition to the previously discussed cuts, the budget would maintain a zero percent increase and Trustee Mayton-Collins concurred. Vice President Jacoby did not agree with the elimination of the assistant principal position inasmuch as he stated that one lawsuit relative to a special education issue could result in this position's salary. Vice President Jacoby further stated that he is very concerned with the school's discipline which the assistant principal position currently handles. Trustee Mayton-Collins said that not one person can handle the discipline issues, rather it should be a collective effort between personnel and staff and that she feels confident that the school can handle the discipline without the assistant principal position in place. Superintendent Keegan stated her concern about "bullying" within the school and advised that Ms. Battisti is currently doing a wonderful job in that area and that she also handles all of the special education phone calls, reports, and regulations and the elimination of her position would be greatly missed and feels that the children's needs will not be completely met.

Trustee Mayton-Collins notes that she has received public feedback relative to the following: elimination of the assistant principal position, public's ability to vote on the open seat of Trustee Kowall, and keeping the HCCC program and she is confident that this can be done. The board's thoughts relative to the same are as follows: Vice President Jacoby would not like to eliminate the HCCC program inasmuch as this would take away from the children, but this school could also provide college enrichment through "in-house". Vice President Jacoby feels that to cut the Assistant principal position and keep the HCCC program is not foreseeable and finally, he stated that he does not see the state coming back with state aid as soon as you may think. President Bronner voiced her opinion that there needs to be restructure within in the school district and further stated that the community has been hit hard with this economic crisis and can only foresee a zero percent increase to this years's budget. President Bronner also said that the school could cut the HCCC program and provide transportation for the children who would like to attend with the tuition being paid by their parents or outside sources. President Bronner feels that we need to prepare our kids for college and this can be done at the high school level through courses such as the Angel class. President Bronner asked the board's opinion concerning the elimination of the Assistant principal position. There were three board members in favor of said cut and one board member against the same. After a lengthy discussion, the general consensus by the board at this point in time is to utilize the \$25,000 fund balance and put the same towards

tax relief, eliminate the one-half time music position, a reduction in contractual (maint/grounds) by \$8,000, eliminate the grant writing position at \$13,500, eliminate the HCCC program and elimination of the assistant principal position.

B. Volunteer Coach for Grades 7-9 Intramural Softball - President Keegan provided the board with the credentials of Mr. Gerald Manning who would be willing to volunteer to coach the above-referenced girls' softball team. President Keegan will email the board with any potential costs involved with said position.

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORTS**

A. Open Board Seat - Discussion and Possible Action - President Bronner asked that the board review the legal email which was handed out at tonight's meeting concerning this matter. President Bronner further advised that if this seat was by appointment, then said appointment would be good for only one year and should the appointed individual care to hold this seat after the one year term, then said person would in fact have to run for the seat in the following May election. Superintendent Keegan stated that the school's legal counsel agreed that the public should be able to choose the individual who would fill the vacant seat and not by board appointment. Trustee Mayton-Collins agreed with the public election. Vice President Jacoby intervened that such an appointment has been done in the past and they would seek an individual who was a prior board member with experience. Vice President Jacoby further stated that the board needed to move forward and place this matter under Action Items. Trustee Peters voiced his opinion on the bad timing of Trustee Kowall's resignation and his concern. He further stated that he would hope that the community would step forward and that the board would seek an appointment. President Bronner advised that any and all board members have the right to voice their opinions.

B. Discussions of merger option - President Bronner believes that there are funds available to conduct a merger study and asked if the board should direct Superintendent Keegan to go forth in obtaining said information. Vice President Jacoby advised that it would be a good idea to conduct an exit poll relative to a possible merger. Trustee Mayton-Collins stated that she would like to hold off on this matter until after the budget vote is held and further advised that there are at least 18 other options as opposed to an actual merger. Vice President Jacoby feels that the school needs to move forward with this matter and advised that other school districts have in fact conducted these studies and that the community had given their input relative to the same. He believes again, that an exit poll should be conducted at the May election and that we need to look at neighboring districts. Superintendent Keegan advised that she would be more than happy to look into the possibility of any funds available for a study and options of consolidation costs.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

In a motion by Trustee Mayton-Collins, second by Vice President Jacoby the board consented to add Items "B" through "G" relative to budget cuts to the Action Items

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

In a motion by Vice President Jacoby, second by Trustee Mayton-Collins the board consented to

- A. Approve Mr. Gerald Manning as a Volunteer Coach for Grades 7-9 Intramural Softball

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

In a motion by Trustee Mayton-Collins, second by Vice President Jacoby the board consented to

- B. Add an amendment to the current legal notice to include the open board seat of Trustee Kowall

**AYES: 3      NAYES: 1**

In a motion by Trustee Peters, second by Vice President Jacoby the board consented to

- C. Abolish the one-half time music teacher's position

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

With regret by Vice President Jacoby.

In a motion by Vice President Jacoby, second by Trustee Peters the board consented to

- D. Abolish the Grant Writing position

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

With regret by Vice President Jacoby. Trustee Peters would like get through the budget process this year and take another look at this position next year.

In a motion by Vice President Jacoby, second by Trustee Peters the board consented to

- E. Abolish the funding for the HCCC Program

**AYES: 3      NAYS: 1**

In a motion by Trustee Mayton-Collins, second by President Bronner the board consented to

- F. Abolish the Assistant Principal's position

**AYES: 3      NAYS: 1**

Trustee Peters advised that it was very hard to make this decision. With regret by Trustee Mayton-Collins.

In a motion by Trustee Peters, second by Trustee Mayton-Collins the board consented to

- G. Transfer the fund balance sum of \$25,000 to be used towards the tax levy relief

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**DISCUSSION TIME**

Trustee Mayton-Collins said this was an extremely difficult process and her heart goes out to Keara Battisti with tremendous regret.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ms. Susanne Palumbo inquired as to the superintendent's salary and was informed that the same was \$119,600. Ms. Palumbo stated that discipline and bullying in the schools are major issues and should first and foremost come from the superintendent and support of the teachers. She also noted that bullying seminars should be a requirement for all personnel whom are "hands on" with the students. Ms. Palumbo asked whether the school had personnel with CSE qualifications. In addition, Ms. Palumbo does not believe that eliminating the Assistant Principal position from someone who handles so much of the school's discipline and CSE requirements is a good idea. Also, Ms. Palumbo inquired if one music teacher is effective for the children and President Bronner advised that it is not an ideal situation, however, the budget cost per student is extremely high. Lastly, Ms. Palumbo voiced her opinion that the school's open board seat should be filled with the public's participation through the voting process.

Ms. Melissa Manikas said that a zero percent budget increase is wonderful, however, cutting a key position (ie: Assistant principal position) and then hiring part-time personnel to fulfill those duties doesn't seem the way to go and what happens down the road. Ms. Manikas also stated that there are major time issues relative to bullying and student discipline together with the CSE duties and feels that she would rather pay an increase in taxes and keep the Assistant principal position currently in place so the kids do not suffer. Ms. Manikas inquired as to how the Assistant principal position would be absorbed and Trustee Mayton-Collins said she was confident that the resources are there to handle this matter. Ms. Manikas also asked for a specific reason why the budget had to come in at zero percent.

Ms. Sharon Galusha asked for clarification concerning the election of the board seat and the appointment, if necessary. Further, Ms. Galusha inquired whether the discipline within the school had to be handled by an administrator. Also asked was if funds are restored by the Governor, what would change and is the spending plan set in stone? Business Manager, Jodie Rodriguez advised that should funds be restored, this may reduce the tax levy. Also, Ms. Rodriguez said that an amendment may be an option to the budget, however, she would have to look into the issues surrounding this matter. Ms. Galusha inquired whether the board would be looking for a CSE assistant and was advised by President Bronner that the position would first tried to be filled by in-house staff. Lastly, Ms. Galusha stated that she knows how time consuming the CSE duties are and is extremely sad about the elimination of Assistant Principal Keara Battisti's position. Also, Ms. Galusha regrets eliminating the half-time music teacher's position.

Mr. Jeffrey Starring said that it was very important that the superintendent be assisted with the student discipline and felt that the school needed to keep the Assistant principal position with all of her experience with CSE, bullying and discipline. Mr. Starring stated that the work involved in these matters need to be addressed. He would rather expect to pay a tax increase in order to keep the Assistant principal position. Mr. Starring inquired if the music and Assistant principal positions were not eliminated what would the budget increase to the public be and he was advised by Business Manager, Jodie Rodriguez that it would be a 7.63% increase.

Ms. Jackie Snyder inquired as to whether Mr. Manning had his softball certification and was

informed by Superintendent Keegan that he in fact did. Ms. Snyder also stated that a exit survey should have been commenced 12 months ago and we need to move forward relative thereto. Regarding the HCCC program, Ms. Snyder said that mandating the students' parents to accept the burden of the tuition would divide the children on who would and wouldn't be able to attend this program and feels that the HCCC program should be modified and not eliminated.

## **BOARD COMMENTS**

Trustee Peters proposed that the budget not exceed 2%. Trustee Peters inquired as to whom absorbs the cost of the HCCC program if a child fails their courses. Superintendent Keegan advised that it was the responsibility of the parents, however, the school has not been reimbursed to date.

Vice President Jacoby was extremely sad to lose the key position of the assistant principal and asked that if the school received state funding shortly, would it be possible to keep the assistant principal and music teacher's positions. Vice President Jacoby thanked the community for their comments and participation at tonight's meeting.

Trustee Mayton-Collins is delighted of the board's opportunity to dip into the fund balance in the amount of \$25,000 to aid the tax levy. She further stated that until the financial books are closed and we see where we are at, maybe some positions/programs may be restored in August. Trustee Mayton-Collins stated that many school districts have to dip into their fund balance and still many jobs are lost, not just this district. She believes the actions of tonight's meeting will have the least impact on our children.

President Bronner states that as an educator this is not one of her happiest times and feels that we need to look at how to reverse this economic crisis inasmuch as neighboring districts no longer have anything to give. President Bronner welcomes any individual willing to step up to the plate to shorten the budget deficit in the future.

In a motion by Vice President Jacoby, second by Trustee Peters, the meeting of April 6, 2010 adjourned at 10:18 p.m.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Bambara, District Clerk