

Cassopolis Public Schools
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Board of Education
Minutes
Special Meeting
May 29, 2018

This special meeting of the Cassopolis Board of Education was held on Tuesday, May 29, 2018 in the Board Meeting Room at Squires Education Center and began at 6:30 p.m. as President Ward welcomed those attending.

Members Present: Lisa Cutting, George Calvert, Sue Horstmann, Deb Deubner, Amanda Smego, Jesse Binns, Scott Ward

Member Absent: None

Also present: Dr. Angela Piazza, Karen Blaha, Renee Manno, Geri Vlasticak, Dee Voss, Dave VanLue, Cindy Martynowicz, students, parents, community members and members of the media

Lisa Cutting led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda - **Moved by** George Calvert, **supported by** Jesse Binns that the agenda is approved, as presented. **Motion carried** 7-0, as follows: Binns, yes; Horstmann, yes; Calvert, yes; Cutting, yes; Deubner, yes; Smego, yes; Ward, yes.

Approval of Minutes – **Moved by** Jesse Binns, **supported by** Amanda Smego to approve the minutes from the May 14, 2018 regular meeting, as written. **Motion carried** 7-0, as follows: Calvert, yes; Horstmann, yes; Smego, yes; Binns, yes; Cutting, yes; Deubner, yes; Ward, yes.

Public Comment –

Geri Lynn Weston, 251 O’Keefe Street, said that she does not agree with the changes involved in the proposed restructuring. Mrs. Weston said that she is representing her Grandson who attends the high school and neither of them want these changes to occur.

Tina Reick, 24627 North Street, Cassopolis, said she is concerned about her son not yet having his schedule for next year. She was most interested in Honors classes and the student’s time in Band Class. Mrs. Reick said that she just heard that Band is being shortened to two days per week.

Anna Leach, 21174 Fox Street, Cassopolis, said she is an 8th grade student who has been here since 4-Rangers. She loves the school and its diversity but feels Honors English should not be added into another class. This Honors course has benefited her a lot and she wants to stay it to stay as it is.

Tanya Leach, 21174 Fox Street, Cassopolis, said that she has spoken with Dr. Piazza and Mrs. Blaha. Mrs. Leach said that while she understands change, she has struggled with the proposal. Mrs. Leach’s main concern at this time was to learn that Honors English might not happen. She was concerned that the top learners may not be challenged at the level they are used to and Mrs. Leach said she wants the Honors English class to continue, for her daughter and others in the class.

Lesley Steensma, 22323 Forest Avenue, Cassopolis, said she wants to know how it would affect the current weighted system if the Honors classes are taken away. Mrs. Steensma said she realizes this can't be answered now but would appreciate a response, she wants to know if this has been taken into consideration.

Elizabeth Merckx, 21276 Sail Bay Drive, Cassopolis, said she is also an 8th grade student. Elizabeth said that Mrs. Voss and Mr. VanLue have helped her all through her school years. Miss Merckx said she doesn't understand why students weren't informed about New Tech, since they are the ones in school. She said grading isn't figured evenly with projects.

Roger Leach, 21174 Fox Street, Cassopolis, said that he has worked in the district as well as in other area districts. For the last seven years he has been at Brandywine where they have seen a huge influx there since Niles started New Tech. He said he tries to keep an open mind, but the Math and Science areas seem more difficult for students to adapt to. Mr. Leach said he grew up in this school system and hopes that the changes are being very thoroughly researched.

Janet Merckx, 21276 Sail Bay Drive, Cassopolis, thanked the Board for their hard work. She said that there is not one single New Tech school included in the U.S. News and World Report. She asked if Board members knew the average SAT scores. Mrs. Merckx said she also heard that the advanced placement classes will be gone. She asked the Board provide a statement to clear the air on what is going on. Mrs. Merckx said that Mr. VanLue takes care of issues in the building immediately. She said the Board needs to give the principals a chance with New Tech. Her daughter has flourished here and will be starting high school at age 12.

Mr. Ward thanked those that came to tonight's meeting and thanked those that spoke. Mr. Ward said that, as a Board member, he hears all public comments, listens and understands. He said he also has kids in the district. Mr. Ward said that next year's schedules have not been finalized. Mr. Ward said that he would like to schedule a community meeting and said that it would be an opportunity for Board members to sit down, one on one, with the community; hear concerns and to talk about things. Mr. Ward said that this meeting will be within the next two weeks and the meeting date and time will be posted.

Financials – March, 2018: **Moved by** Deb Deubner, **supported by** George Calvert to approve the March, 2018 financials, as follows: General Fund \$247,571.22; and, Food Services Fund \$36,734.51. **Motion carried** 7-0, as follows: Horstmann, yes; Cutting, yes; Smego, yes; Calvert, yes; Deubner, yes; Binns, yes; Ward, yes.

Financials – April, 2018: **Moved by** Deb Deubner, **supported by** George Calvert to approve the April, 2018 financials, as follows: General Fund \$271,820.83; Food Service Fund \$32,797.41; Debt Service Fund \$1,316,489.75; and, Sinking Fund \$4,050.00. **Motion carried** 7-0, as follows: Deubner, yes; Binns, yes; Horstmann, yes; Calvert, yes; Cutting, yes; Smego, yes; Ward, yes.

Old Business – Action Items:

Fifth Year High School Clarification: **Moved by** Deb Deubner, **supported by** Lisa Cutting that it is

hereby resolved that it is understood that State School Aid Section 6(4)m requires that students must not be otherwise eligible for high school graduation to participate in a fifth year of high school and that Section 3(f) of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act and Section 3(g) of the Career and Technical Preparation Act require that students be enrolled in at least one high school course required for graduation which must be a high school or dual enrollment math or math-related course. Mathematical Literacy 102, or a dual enrollment math course will be used to fulfill this requirement. **Motion carried** 7-0, as follows: Smego, yes; Deubner, yes; Cutting, yes; Calvert, yes; Horstmann, yes; Binns, yes; Ward, yes.

Non-Renewal of Administrative Contract #1 due to restructuring: **Moved by** Lisa Cutting, **supported by** Deb Deubner that it is hereby resolved that the administrative contract of DeeAnn Melville-Voss is non-renewed, due to restructuring the school district's administration.

Jesse Binns read the following statement into the record:

"Due to the overwhelming response from the community, the phone calls, concerns expressed by numerous parents, faculty and students, I feel a change this drastic, too soon, could be very detrimental to our school district.

We have several new administrators already in place, a new way of learning approaching with the New Tech program, and many people feel our current administrators deserve the chance to move forward with these changes in their current positions, as principals.

As stated in our Board Policy, we should "maintain two-way communications with citizens of the District. We shall keep them informed of progress and problems of the school District, and the citizens shall be urged to bring their aspirations and concerns about the District to the attention of this body". As seen in the past meeting and today, the citizens support our two administrators. It also states we should act as a truly representative body for citizens in all matters related to programs and operations."

Mr. Binns further said he doesn't feel this is the right time for these changes. Mr. Binns asked if tonight's meeting was posted on the web site.

Amanda Smego distributed a handout to Board members referencing Section 380.1229 of the Revised School Code. Mrs. Smego read from portions of this material regarding timelines for holding meetings and notifying individuals of potential non-renewal.

There was then discussion between all Board members on these meeting items. After substantial discussion, Mr. Ward called for a 5-minute recess at 7:31 for the Board to obtain information requested.

The meeting was called back to order at 7:38. Mr. Ward said that the posting for this meeting was placed in the same exact spot that all Board meetings are, it was posted the same as always. Mr. Ward said that the Superintendent spoke to Brad Banasik, Head Legal Counsel for the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) on several occasions to obtain proper deadlines and verbiage for accompanying letters and resolutions.

Mr. Binns asked if there was no other way that this could have happened. Dr. Piazza asked for

permission to reply which request was granted by Mr. Ward.

Dr. Piazza said that this situation could have most definitely gone differently, in that the non-renewals could have been just that, with both principals being non-renewed and removed from the district at the end of their contract. Instead, Dr. Piazza created new positions that focus on their administrative strengths as a way to keep them in district, so the district would not lose their expertise. Dr. Piazza said that the restructuring should have been the easier way to handle the situation, but instead we are now at this point.

Earlier motion was then called on for a vote.

Motion carried 4-3, as follows: Binns, no; Horstmann, yes; Calvert, no; Cutting, yes; Deubner, yes; Smego, no; Ward, yes.

Non-Renewal of Administrative Contract #2 due to restructuring: **Moved by** Deb Deubner, **supported by** Lisa Cutting that it is hereby resolved that the administrative contract of David VanLue is non-renewed, due to restructuring the school district's administration.

Mr. Binns said that he attended the seniors last day at the high school last week and it was eye opening. He said that we are a small community, he doesn't especially care about test scores; he cares about good quality people coming out of the high school, and we have that now. Plus, he feels why not give Mr. VanLue a chance with the New Tech program.

There was then discussion amongst Board members on this action item.

The motion was then called on for a vote.

Motion carried 4-3, as follows: Cutting, yes; Binns, no; Deubner, yes; Horstmann, yes; Smego, no; Calvert, no; Ward, yes.

Awarding Position – Coordinator of Special Programs: **Moved by** Deb Deubner, **supported by** Lisa Cutting that David VanLue is awarded the position of Coordinator of Special Programs for the 2018-19 school year. **Motion carried** 7-0, as follows: Cutting, yes; Calvert, yes; Horstmann, yes; Deubner, yes; Smego, yes; Binns, yes; Ward, yes.

Awarding Position – K-12 Literacy Coordinator: **Moved by** Deb Deubner, **supported by** George Calvert that DeeAnn Melville-Voss is awarded the position of K-12 Literacy Coordinator for the 2018-19 school year.

Mr. Binns said that the fact that Mr. VanLue and Mrs. Voss have accepted these positions and been willing to come back to the district should show the community their dedication to the district.

Motion carried 7-0, as follows: Binns, yes; Horstmann, yes; Calvert, yes; Cutting, yes; Deubner, yes;

Smego, yes; Ward, yes.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Piazza said that parent informational nights for New Tech are coming up next week, on June 5 and June 6. Flyers will go home with students and an all call will be sent with the schedule.

There being no further business to come before the Board of Education it was **moved by** George Calvert, **supported by** Jesse Binns to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. All in favor.

Susan Horstmann, Secretary