

MINUTES OF THE NORTH BELLMORE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING December 8, 2011

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The North Bellmore Union Free School District Public Hearing was held on Thursday evening, December 8, 2011, in the All Purpose Room of the Saw Mill Road School at 2801 Saw Mill Road, North Bellmore, New York.

The following members of the Board of Education were present:

Grace Cramsie, President  
JoAnn DeLauter, Vice President  
Rosemarie Corless  
John Ferrara  
Joseph Perrone

Also present:

Arnold M. Goldstein, Superintendent of Schools  
Carol Eskew, Deputy Superintendent  
Marilyn Johnson, Assistant Superintendent  
Toni Cincotta, Assistant Superintendent for Business  
Gary Pardo, Director of Technology  
Frank Russo, Director of Facilities  
Carol Melnick, District Counsel  
Linda Van Name, Secretary

**CALL TO ORDER**                      The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm by Board of Education President, Grace Cramsie. Mrs. Cramsie led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mrs. DeLauter then read the District's Mission Statement.

Mr. Goldstein read the CEEO Committee presentation impact statement thanking everyone from the community, board, and faculty members for expressing their concerns and questions. He also thanked the staff members in the central office. He stated beginning next year, the tax levy can be increased on average 2% per year for the next several years. The Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> CEEO meeting recommended to change transportation to 2 miles and to put a transportation referendum up for vote.

Mrs. Cramsie then asked Mr. Goldstein the following questions from the board:

At this point in time, looking at current financial information, what is the projected shortfall for the 2012/13 budget? Mr. Goldstein stated we were 1.8 million dollars short.

How does the Administration plan on using the reserves we currently have to offset the increased budgets in the future? Mr. Goldstein said that they will be supplemented with the reserve fund balances.

As far as unfunded mandate costs, are these costs currently included in our budget and how much do you expect the increases to be moving forward? What is a onetime AED charge? Why was there a difference between the Power Point at the CEEO mtg. and the impact statement? This figure is \$987,507 and the presentation used \$914,000. Is one number actual?

Mr. Goldstein stated next year's mandated costs with MTA taxes taken out. The district will have to use a new computer voting process which is several hundred dollars. We still do not know about recurring charges that happen on a yearly basis. Mr. Goldstein stated that the unfunded mandates are currently in the budget and that increases are something we have no control over. Some of these charges increase on a yearly basis. The onetime AED charge is a recurring yearly cost. The actual number is \$987,507 for the 2011/12 school year.

How will our energy performance contract be affected by closing a building? Mr. Goldstein responded we would rent the building and would put in the lease about energy use. We pay Johnson Controls based on our usage.

On SL's original report, they used a figure of \$56,000 for maintenance regardless of which proposal is chosen. On addendum #18, the costs are shown for electric and oil. How does using gas figure into the equation? What does the \$56,000 represent? Is personnel costs represented anywhere here? Mr. Goldstein responded that the \$56,000 represents the amount of money a building we could save looking at heat, electric, maintenance, insurance and it does include personnel. Toni Cincotta explained that the \$56,000 is the estimated cost savings for the electricity and oil costs. Personnel costs were represented somewhere else.

On Addendum #5, the Power Point screens show the cost of one teacher- but eliminating three including adding benefits subtracting unemployment. The top right screen shows additional personnel, does this also include benefits and unemployment...why? Mr. Goldstein stated SS, TRS, dental, unemployment and all other benefits were calculated for all personnel we anticipated for termination.

Savings shown 3 full-time faculty...271,224, added to the other totals 828,075 or 1,023,948.00? Which would be closer to the number now that Gunther has been suggested? Mr. Goldstein stated that the number is closer to \$978,000.

Bussing numbers show \$546,000 including Parochial School? Is that correct? Is that the actual costs for last year? What happens to the private school students? Is there notification if we are changing the mileage? Toni Cincotta responded the cost \$546,000 is the consortium buses which includes SEAS, Sacred Heart, Grace Christian, Kellenberg & Progressive. The private students are notified with a letter each year attached to the current transportation form that is sent to them.

Upon elimination of busing (if that were to happen) how would drop off and pickup be designed in our remaining buildings to ensure the safety of our students? Mr. Goldstein said that they have been going to each building in the am and pm to observe bus loading and drop off procedures in order to set a up a plan for increased bus routes.

Since the recommendation of the committee is to close Gunther, how will that area be redistricted? What criteria will be used? Will an exception be made for the current 5<sup>th</sup> grade class from Gunther relocates as a class to the same building? Mr. Goldstein replied that of the 211 General Ed Students, 72 will attend Dinkelmeyer and 139 will attend Saw Mill Road.

If a building is to close will all self-contained classrooms district-wide be reassigned to the Martin Ave. School? Will there be enough physical room/space to accommodate the services that these students need in addition to the services that are already being conducted in Martin now? Will that environment be optional for learning? Ms. Eskew is reviewing the space availability at all buildings for the placement of the self-contained classes.

Will the present self-contained classes be able to transition into our regular classrooms with the ease and success that they do in their present environment when relocated to a new building? Ms. Eskew stated that the self-contained students at Gunther are already familiar with the Martin Ave. building because they currently attend summer school there. There are already some self-contained classes at Park and Saw Mill.

Would personnel changes reflect the need to ensure that our most fragile students would be taken care of to the best ability of this district? Ms. Eskew said that we cannot tell the developmental predictions of many students and we have added one self-contained class every year. Each year more students with intensive needs are coming in than aging out.

School Leadership didn't include classrooms separated for self-contained in their report. How close did they look at special education? Do we have enough space for self-contained current and future classrooms? Mr. Goldstein said that there is room in our buildings and they are looking at all of the services in each building. There is space for growth options looking forward.

How was the 85% capacity decided? Mr. Goldstein said you need to leave marginal room in each building. If pushed to 100% there is no space for additional classrooms or resource rooms.

The numbers shown between SL and Attachment 4 page capacity/enrollment differ. The maps on attachment 15 also show different numbers. Which are the actual enrollment/capacity projections? The capacity numbers were reviewed by Mr. Goldstein and Toni Cincotta after the original discrepancy brought to light by the CEO. The capacity numbers are the figures provided by Mr. Goldstein to the Board.

Were the current Transportation Board Policies checked out during the process as suggested in SL report? Ms. Melnick stated that education law was adhered to and followed by the Advisory Board Committee.

On recommendations on the last page of the packet...#6 asks about shared utilization. Was this discussed or considered by the Committee? Mr. Goldstein said if we rented the building some tenants wanted 3 rooms on the first floor and we may share the space on the second floor. As far as renting the building for basketball, we will get advice from our attorney depending upon the program and if the lease will allow us the flexibility.

On recommendations on last page of the packet #3...You've given us the savings. What are the costs of closing a building? Mr. Goldstein said they are relatively small. We will be using our workers and a moving company. The present Gunther bus will be used as an additional bus to the Dinkelmeyer school and we will need 2 additional buses for am and pm use to Saw Mill.

A survey is quoted in the Princeton Plan Was it ever done? Did we complete everything suggested by the sub-committee? Mr. Goldstein that the district did not pursue the Princeton Plan survey.

## **VISITORS**

Mr. Mattei (Linstead Lane) said that Arnie Goldstein has stated he believes the projection costs of closing the building are between \$10,000 - \$20,000. Mr. Mattie wanted to know if that includes the cost of unemployment benefits. Ms. Cincotta stated that unemployment benefits could run from 26 -99 weeks. We estimated a conservative projection of 26 weeks.

Mr. Montalbano (870 Linstead Lane) stated that Gunther may be closing for the wrong reason. Albany is pressuring you – you are a pawn of Albany. Also complained about the leaves near security gate and the bushes have not been trimmed. Mrs. Cramsie said thank you for your concerns.

Mr. Leibowitz (875 Cedar Rd.) stated that it was the district's plan all along to close Gunther. Dr. Fowler recommended closing a school and presented us the Princeton Plan to appease us. Mrs. Cramsie thanked him for his comments.

Mrs. Mallia (247 Belmont Ave.) Close the largest building so that we do not have to do this again next year. Mr. Goldstein stated that Gunther was chosen because it impacted the lowest number of students.

Mrs. Tortora (790 Taft St.) stated that Gunther is the best school – quality of education and that their students were stars in high school. Mr. Goldstein stated all 6 buildings successfully educate our children.

Mr. Corcons (3 Hancock Ave.) – wanted a run down on his tax bill. He does not own a computer and does not read the newspaper. Complained he was not mailed a notice about these meetings. Mr. Goldstein told him that a budget notice was sent to his home. Mrs. Cramsie thanked him for coming and encouraged him to come to a Board Mtg. at Martin Ave.

Mr. Kurlatnik (840 Cedar Rd.) – stated that the budget was over by 10% - why do we have 10 million dollars in the reserve fund? Mr. Goldstein said we have been over budgeting fund balance and explained how it works by building extra money to help offset tax levy the following year.

Mr. Bifulco (1560 Pea Pond Rd.) stated that school is not closing because of poor classroom conditions or poor management. He stated it is a model school. He would like everyone to work on other options. He wants us to put budget up as usual and let the voters decide if we should increase by more than 2%. Ms. Cincotta explained that we would need 60% super-majority vote and if the budget goes down 2 times we cannot increase the tax levy at all.

Ms. Darcy (2220 Van Nostrand Ave.) praised Ms. Speidel, Park Ave. principal and did not want to see her leave the district. They had given her Honorary life because of her wonderful talents. Mrs. Cramsie commented that the board could not discuss personnel issues.

Mr. McCormack (2244 Lafayette St.) also stated how wonderful Ms. Speidel is as a principal at Park Ave. School and did not want to see her leave the district. He wanted the district to explore alternatives to closing a school. Dr. Fowler's assessment was only the Princeton Plan or closing a school and no other alternatives were addressed. Mrs. DeLauter explained that alternatives include 30 or more students per classroom. Dr. Fowler's report preserves programs for the entire North Bellmore community. There are buildings that are underutilized. Mr. Goldstein stated that reducing education for the children is not a viable alternative. Mrs. Cramsie said that it is the responsibility of the board to look at these things and bring the issues to the public and explained this was a public process from the start. She again stated that buildings are underutilized and alternatives include changing the busing policy.

Ms. Klein (738 Evelyn Ave.) expressed if we knew the live birth rate because she knows many other children who will be going to Gunther when they are 5 years old and she commented about the small class size at Gunther. Mrs. Cramsie told her that we check the local nursery schools as well as the live birth rates every year.

Ms. Debbie (Sherman Ave.) stated that it was the board's goal to decide which school to close and how is the district going to keep the other buildings from overcrowding. Mrs. Cramsie said that the children will be divided between Dinkelmeyer and Saw Mill Schools and that the buildings will be only filled to 85%.

Ms. Janosko (1809 Seaman Dr.) asked if we will be losing Eileen Speidel? Mrs. Cramsie said they cannot comment.

Mr. Harris (2763 Ravine Pl.) praised Gunther community and thanked the board. Asked the board if they considered every option before deciding to close the school. Mrs. Cramise responded yes. Mr. Harris then asked if the board feels it is making the appropriate decision on closing a school? Mrs. Cramsie answered that they have not had the opportunity to meet and decide about the recommendation of the CEEO Committee as a group.

Ms. Arriaga (75 Jenkins St.) stressed that a school closing could cause Park Ave. to lose their principal and they are upset. Mrs. Cramise stated that this matter could not be discussed.

Mrs. Restivo (2595 Columbus Ave.) was questioning the extra 10% budgeted over the last few years. She had an overhead with all of the budgets and how much was left over. Mr. Goldstein asked her to meet with them in private to discuss the budget. Mr. Perrone stated the district has an audit committee she would be welcomed to join.

Ms. Harris (2763 Ravine Pl.) expressed that everyone cares and does not want Gunther School closed.

Mr. Amara (2527 Columbus Ave.) asked to keep the school open. One Hundred hours is not enough time for the board to make a decision about closing one of the school buildings. Mrs. Corless stated that it is the goal to preserve programs for children. Mrs. Cramise thanked him.

Gunther parent shared her disappointment about closing Gunther.

**ADJOURNMENT** The meeting was adjourned by Mrs. Cramsie at 11:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Van Name, Secretary

Toni A. Cincotta, District Clerk