



Westlake Board of Education

Board Notes from Wednesday, 3/8/10, Work Session

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Discussion of Jan. 11 and 25 minutes

- a. Carol Winter: The minutes are not intended/required to be a verbatim record, and the way the district keeps minutes is in keeping with Ohio Sunshine Laws and ORC and case law. Our meetings are captured on audio tape. Two Board members asked to have verbatim statements added to the meeting minutes. In the interest of our Board moving forward, propose two different motions:
 - i. Add Board member verbatim statements from concerning bond issue resolutions from Jan. 11 on and 25 added to tonight's minutes
 1. Carol Winter: My intent is to make things right and move us forward in the interest of working closer together on issues important to the board and serve together as one unit. Ask that Mr. Pepera make corrections between verbatim words and actual audio from the meeting. Also ask that you request verbatim minutes be added during a vote.
 2. Tim Sullivan: Not advised of this before the meeting and no copy of the motion to read.
 3. Andrea Rocco: It's not difficult to understand what she's saying.
 4. Nate Cross: From this meeting forward, as public officials or anyone in the audience, they'll be able to say I have written remarks, but I would like these added to the minutes. Is that correct?
 5. Carol Winter: Our policy states if you are a board member and would like to have verbatim statements added to the record, state that at the time of your vote.
 6. Mark Pepera: We would have to incorporate that into agenda items. If you view minutes online, you see the narrative of items and action

items. If someone entered something into the record, a board member, we would incorporate that in there.

7. Tim Sullivan: The discussion that went into the timing to attach verbatim statements, I don't read our policy as requiring the statement that you want it recorded at the meeting you want it recorded at.
8. Carol Winter: It begs the question to address at our policy subcommittee. There are three requirements to meet Sunshine Law requirements. We can have a verbatim record or a video or audio tape. Or we could have our minutes in abstract form. Our intention is to make things accessible. A member may request his/her vote be recorded, and with approval of other members, he/she may append statements regarding his/her vote.
9. Tim Sullivan: If a board member wants a written statement attached to the record, you must make request at the meeting you make the statement? I think there are good reasons for a board member not to have to ask permission.
10. Tom Mays: I want to note I don't believe there's any lack of transparency on the part of the board.
11. Vote on the motion was unanimous

- ii. Motion that Board of Education meetings be videotaped for broadcast to the community was made by Board President Carol Winter. There was no second to this motion.

2. Hearing of the Public

- i. Harry Applegate: You made a motion, but did not hear a second to that motion, therefore all of that discussion should be stricken from the record. Roberts Rules of Order.
- ii. Tim Sullivan: That's why I think these motions should be made on paper so these types of things don't happen.
- iii. Carol Winter: There was not a second for that motion and discussion will be stricken from the record.

3. Planning for spring mini-retreat and summer retreat/board goal setting

- a. May 10 work session mini retreat. Good time to revisit board protocol and work through self evaluation. Looking at an outside consultant from OSBA to facilitate.
- b. Full retreat in August prior to start of the school year. Revisit belief statements, board goals. Departments to come in and give presentations to the board for an outline overview for the district administratively. Evaluate CIP. Tentatively scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 28.

4. Facility scenarios – budget thresholds

- a. Dr. Keenan: I want to make sure there is clarity in what I'm asking of the board. In 2006 there were recommendations for cuts if the levy didn't pass. We spoke about what Dave Puffer and I thought would need to be done to address our most serious building issues if the bond issue does not pass. Target to address the \$44 million in needs as described

in the back of Lesko book which are largely different codes, mostly building codes. OSFC indicated \$66 million to educate kids in the buildings. There are three things asking the board to respond to so I have direction and can work efficiently:

- i. If all are in agreement to a \$3 million level of spending on facility needs– that only gets us to 1/3 needs described as immediate in 5 years.
 - ii. Cuts from 2006 give you an idea of what previous boards/administrations looked at. Are there any untouchables from that list?
 1. Pay to play/pay to participate
 2. Supervision at PAC
 3. Administrative reduction (director of HR)
 4. Closing buildings after school
 5. Reduce communications
 6. Eliminate staff development
 7. Reassign technology resource teachers
 8. Reduce instructional materials
 9. Eliminate summer help
 10. Reduce transportation to state minimums (no hs and K-8 2 miles or further)
 11. Eliminate field trips
 12. Implement student fees
 13. Eliminate bus replacement
 14. Staff cuts (6)
 - iii. General parameters to consider when making cuts to recommend – i.e. cutting in an equitable % in costs of per pupil categories
- b. Carol Winter: I feel while \$3 million will be difficult to reach, it's an amount OK to shoot for.
 - c. Tom Mays: \$15 million or so projected over 5 years, won't that increase as years pass and costs increase as we go?
 - d. Dr. Keenan: At some point in time we'll have to consider whether we try something different with our levy. A PI to address this would be as much as a bond issue. At some point to carry this on for 5 years is unrealistic. Probably looking at a levy to contain it.
 - e. Tom Mays: I don't want to see programming touched. Without those things we won't continue the excellence in our education. My goal is to provide the best education possible, and we won't be able to do that with those kinds of cuts. We'll quickly drop from that category. There's only so much you can do when you start chopping away at education. Our kids, community, everything will suffer.
 - f. Dr. Keenan: OK, agreed, though then we'll have to accelerate our levy timeline. Programming, things you're talking about include staff, technology replacement, textbooks. Those are our largest items in regards to cuts.
 - g. Nate Cross: If that's the number, don't we have \$500,000 we set aside for facilities? Are we talking an additional \$2.5 million? We have a \$50 million budget. When do we have to make a decision?

- h. Dr. Keenan: We've been using operating money to address fire code violations. I would target \$3 million in expenses to be a \$2.5 million cut from other areas. By cuts I mean cutting programs or services. Containment, reduction or gaining revenue such as pay to play to address needs. This is all relative to what we feel needs to be done. We can get fined \$1,000 a day until we get these some of the fire violations things taken care of. There are a lot of consequences to waiting, most importantly students are in a poor environment until we address. I would like to give individuals a heads up to obtain employment elsewhere if we are going to be making cuts in staff. Our budget would be approved in August after setting it in the summer.
- i. Mark Pepera: You'd also re-factor that into your current financial situation. Talking about a capital problem and addressing it with operating money. It will impact the forecast from a long-term standpoint. Some reductions/reallocations could not be permanent. At some point you would reinstate that.
- j. Dr. Keenan: We need a back-up plan.
- k. Tim Sullivan: We talk about codes. Explain what code we're talking about. There is a difference between code and bureaucratic standards.
- l. Dr. Keenan: Referring to what was presented to the board from Lesko at the last board meeting that said these matters refer to building code in Ohio. In the section concerning \$44 million of immediate needs. The \$66 million you are referring to refers to as bureaucratic standards were set by the OSFC. They developed standards set forth as minimum standard in Ohio acceptable for an adequate school building to educate children. The code Lesko refers in their emergency section to involves occupying a building, more related to code. I asked Mr. Puffer read exactly from the Lesko report last meeting.
- m. Tim Sullivan: The Lesko study, I go back to adjectives before needs. Makes it difficult to reach an agreed upon standard that is needed. I find troubling to rely on Lesko study. While some needs may not be immediate, they must be anticipated in 10 years. That is what I have trouble within the study, the disclaimer that none of the needs are immediate but must be addressed within next 10 years. What are the real needs?
- n. Dr. Keenan: Do you believe needs exist to the level listed there, reviewed by 3 other professional groups?
- o. Tim Sullivan: I agree with what Lesko says.
- p. Dr. Keenan: You had a chance to meet with Lesko. They addressed the whole board. You had chance to talk to MKC, Turner Construction. They've all presented to the board. I have at the board's request followed up on Lesko by asking these groups to look over the report. When you are making these comments you are saying you are skeptical. What method do you suggest we follow to get a number, rather than have an individual board member look at all of these systems? We don't want to spend any more money on firms. I'm not sure what you need.
- q. Carol Winter: We've approved every group of professionals that has come in. At some point we have to say these are the numbers. Do we as a board agree \$3 million the number to start to whittle away the problems.

- r. Dr. Keenan: I have to rely on some level of expertise when it comes to buildings. We've had four opinions, and none starkly differ from the others in regard to magnitude of the problem. I have no suggestion on how to do this differently. I feel responsible to address these facilities.
- s. Tim Sullivan: You have to educate. When do you start to address these? When it breaks. That's one way to look at it.
- t. Dr. Keenan: We have a fundamental issue here. Our handicapped students can't access the great majority of our educational facilities or their equipment because of space issues. We have water issues that continually cause damage that can't be fixed by addressing only one system. There's a tendency to just say fix it when we have reviewed what that process of fixing entails. We went with \$15 million, 1/3 of those issues. If you want to minimize the need Lesko, Turner, MKC and Hammond stated to us, I'll concede 2/3 of it. You're saying do that without educational cuts. That's not realistic unless you feel our professionals are misleading us. I don't understand what you want us to do. My frustration is because I hear skepticism and unsuredness, but I have sought four opinions and tried to address over 28 months.
- u. Carol Winter: We need to let Dr. Keenan know how much we want to cut the budget. \$3 million will impact the program but will help us get out ahead of it. We're already experiencing what happens when things break. What we have set aside is not keeping up with our needs. We have issues of leaking, ADA compliance. We need to reallocate, agree and move on from this. Is \$3 million what we want Dr. Keenan to aim for.
- v. Nate Cross: After looking at the issues, I do think there are problems. If we don't deal with this and push it off, the reality is it will be tough to get to that \$2.5 million. I'd like to see us develop a plan that allows us to figure out how we're going to get out of this. If this bond issue doesn't pass, \$3 million is around the right number before you get into serious bleeding. I'd like to know that is an investment toward fixing these problems. When you look at the building rankings, there was just one item ranked satisfactorily. Everything else was needs repair/replaced. When you go building by building, there may be flexibility in dealing with numbers to work down. An option is moving the operating levy up. I agree a PI levy will not resolve the issues. We need to look at operational expenses closely. Doing it in an equitable fashion across the board is fair. We can look at impact of salaries, assessment to look at future financial needs. A long term financial plan to reduce per pupil expenses should be looked at. Administrative, operational and staff expenses are things to look at for cutting, maybe 10-20% in those areas.
- w. Dr. Keenan: The \$3million annually will not provide value in return. To renovate everything was \$80 million. You know, you have been involved in the process for two years. You were part of the small group comfortable with full renovation, which was around \$80 million.
- x. Carol Winter: Was as a board approved these professional groups.
- y. Dr. Keenan: it comes down to either you trust them or not, what you value for our kids, and do we want to be responsible to our taxpayers. I feel confident how I stand on all three of those. I'm trying to address all three of those. Some of these other suggestions,

like a PI levy, will keep costs down. Professional groups have said that will not provide for our kids the right way, adequately. Your priority is to keep taxes low. I am in agreement with that, but when there is a huge separation, it's not right for what we're trying to do. Any one of us should be called out or confronted when the gap between priorities is minimizing either the taxpayers or the children. PI is not going to correct our problem. Great point in regard to what getting for \$3 million. That's where I'm not confident of the value we'll get for what we spend. That's why I recommended the bond issue. Hard to argue you'd get value for what you spend by trying to nickel and dime this along the way. I agree we need to look at administrative costs. Costs per pupil, I agree we need to do everything we can to contain that.

- z. Nate Cross: If we're doing cuts, we're doing so because the bond issue doesn't pass. My point is how do we deal with this then. We need to be strategic as a board on how we handle this.
- aa. Dr. Keenan: Tough thing for me is my predecessor and boards are taking a beating over this. When in reality they did what everyone now is proposing. The difference is we have the hindsight they did not have. You can't pay minimum on a maxed out credit card and expect to catch up. If we do a PI the same size as our bond issue, we're not even hitting a drop in the bucket for our needs.
- bb. Nate Cross: If we were to say for next 5 years, \$3 million a year. Develop a financial model around the problems, in addition to a PI, looking at targets for per pupil expenditures. When you look at individual strategies working together in a framework. I want to make sure what we do there is a game plan as a board.
- cc. Dr. Keenan: The game plan is the bond issue. That process has taken place and we've made a suggestion and it was approved by the board. If it doesn't pass, we do have to be prepared. Plan B of \$3 million, it won't get us much value, so we'll have to consider pushing our levy up. Impossible for per pupil to go down by increasing revenue on a new levy to address this problem. Just for theoretical purposes, if we took a 0% raise three years for everybody, and we wanted to address facilities without cutting as many of you are proposing we can't do, we'll add revenue that will add to our expenditures per pupil. Yet I am being asked to cut per pupil, address the facility needs and not harm education. The tough decisions part is what we're talking about. I have every motivation to keep taxes as low as possible to continue to gain the trust of our community.
- dd. \$3 million question
 - i. Carol Winter: Agree this is a good number
 - ii. Tom Mays: Still doesn't address our needs
 - iii. Tim Sullivan: I don't know what the right number is either. Have trouble bringing together a bond issue of this magnitude and budget cuts. Passed out information on comparison of per pupil costs with area districts. \$3 million is a good target.
 - iv. Andrea Rocco: You cannot compare us to other districts. We don't have the same student population. Accept the \$3 million number, but agree it won't help

us out of our situation in the long run. Leave it up to Dr. Keenan to find the best areas to cut.

v. Nate Cross: Closer to \$2.5 million.

ee. Board parameters

i. Tim Sullivan: Don't increase costs per pupil over the next generation. Put our costs per student in the next generation in line with surrounding districts. Avoid a situation going forward where we spend more per student than any other district around us.

ii. Nate Cross: Look heavily at administrative costs.

ff. Untouchables

i. Andrea Rocco: Prefer those programs that do not touch education should go first. Also think sports, music and art are part of the educational experience.

ii. Nate Cross: take off 15-20% administratively.

5. Board discussed having 2 board members form a subcommittee to meet with Mark Pepera to discuss cost per pupil comparisons. Subcommittee will be formed at the next work session.
6. Dr. Keenan: I will have a very tough time not touching the classroom to generate the type of dollars we are talking about.
7. Will discuss videotaping board meetings at the next work session.

HEARING OF PUBLIC:

1. Harry Applegate: \$44 million. Does a school system have to comply with state, city and county codes? We're going to try to fix that with \$3 million in cuts a year? I can't see putting bad money after good and to compare a house with a school building is worse than apples and oranges. Comparing a business with a school system is ridiculous because a school's budget has 86% of budget tied up in salaries and benefits.
 - a. Dr. Keenan: We fall under buildings codes and generally have to follow the same codes. Home codes are likely different than building codes in some respects, but it's similar.
2. John Finucan: Maybe a pause would help when changing the agenda.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: The next meeting of the Board will be Monday, March 22, regular meeting at 5:30pm at the Westlake Schools Administration Building.

For more detailed information on these items, visit

<http://beta.westlake.k12.oh.us/boe/meetingschedule/default.aspx>