



Westlake Board of Education

Board Notes from Monday, Jan. 11, 2010

OPENING MEETING: The Board amended the agenda to extend the public comments section of the meeting to accommodate the large crowd and those who may wish to speak.

1. Joe Kraft: Westlake resident with children in the school system. Chicago transplants who moved to Westlake for the schools. Chairing campaign finance committee. Listed campaign committee members. We want to rebuild the schools and believe in the 20/20 Vision committee plan. We trust the leadership and believe in the process used to get there. We believe the process is one a caretaker of the schools can be proud of. We support the plan because it's the right thing to do and the right time. What is the right thing to do? We're getting away from what we must do, cutting up a plan carefully crafted and supported by facts. Let's rebuild the schools. We face the worst economy since the 1930s. Interest rates at all-time lows. Take advantage of that.
2. Joe Kilbane: Every city is judged by its schools. My question is the timing. We are going through an economic slump. Your real estate tax bill showed taxes went up although values went down. I don't think those people are going to vote for this. I think the timing is all wrong. Economically people are not doing well.
3. Dave Newman: Offer a certain perspective on why we need more space and additional facilities. LBMS had two intervention specialists, an aid and one room. We tripled the space so they each had a room and more space to expand. 12 years later we have 4 rooms but 13 certificated intervention specialists and 9 aids. Gone from 3 to 22 people serving special needs students. They must have space to teach our children. Nobody made a mistake in 1997. No one could have predicted No Child Left Behind, influx of immigrant students unprepared for academic rigor and taught in a foreign language. The reality is all special needs students and foreign students have a geometric value. We have more students than LBMS planned for and we have adapted.
4. Harry Applegate: I've been a member of this community for 46 years and attending school board meetings for over 30 years. It is starting to look like this board is going in the direction of the boards in the 1980s when nothing got done and the public lost faith in the board. I hope this board will continue this positive motion. The citizens of Westlake have spent a lot of money to

evaluate the facilities. The experts have spoken. I can see buildings are substandard and overcrowded. If you don't believe what they tell you, don't waste my money to hire them. I spent 2 years on the 20/20 committee and can assure you everything was open and transparent. The experts say we need \$120 million to bring our facilities up to standards. They say the citizens will support \$84 million. Let the citizens of Westlake decide if \$84 million bond issue is what they can support. Westlake schools should not have to live with trailers; they should be a stopgap measure, not a solution. It is only going to get worse. I don't want to raise taxes, but this is a wise investment in Westlake and its schools. Vote unanimously for the bond issue. Stop using operating income to patch our facilities. We need to replace buildings that can't give our students a 21st century learning environment.

5. Lisa Hopkins: New Westlake resident in December. Decision rested solely on proximity of business and reputation and quality of Westlake Schools. I read 20/20 progress online. Concerned about obvious challenges, impressed by due diligence of this district. I'm a big fan of data based evidence. Assumed you were moving forward. It is my understanding there may be some hesitation about moving forward. You don't need to move forward on the bond just for the kids. I have two children in Westlake Schools. Westlake needs to attract and retain the best and brightest educators to maintain your excellence. It is our job as a community to ensure overcrowding and maintenance issues are solved. You need to bring this to the public. Fiscally responsible thing to do. It is no exaggeration to say the value of our homes, viability of Westlake's consumer base rests on your schools. There are other excellent school districts in this area. Don't make the mistake to wait for a right time. There is never a good time to ask people to pay more in taxes. Communities can always be called to invest in their schools.
6. Michelle Distefano: (provided handouts to Board members). Advocacy chair for Westlake Council of PTAs. 5 years ago my husband's employer relocated him to NE Ohio. We had 6 weeks to find a place to live. I approached communities about snowfall averages and school quality. We narrowed our community choices to Westlake, Bay Village and Rocky River. I relied on state statistics to choose our new home. It was the only one that offered neighborhood schools. If we had time to look at the schools, we would not have moved here. It is evident the quality of school. I am embarrassed and angered Dr. Keenan's recommendations have been ignored. He has considered all the relevant facts. I am impressed with how he has approached this issue to look at fiscally responsible solution. There are countless articles relating housing value and school quality. First determined in the last 1960s. I have a handout with references. She referenced studies about public school quality in relation to home values. School quality is the most important cause in the value of homes. Fiscal responsibility not limited to not spending.
7. Julie Moroney: WHS junior. I have noticed a lot of little things that note the quality of our facilities do not match our excellence. We turned off our ancient furnace than not be able to hear each other speak in physics. Camping experience in AP class. It's hard to learn in an environment. I feel I have to study longer at home to make up for it. Papers ruined and tests destroyed because a teacher left papers on his desk adjacent to leaky windows. Have been in a bathroom with a flooded toilet. Sometimes while walking to class the hallways is blocked due to a leak. I have an old locker that requires putting in the combination multiple times. I know people have to jam books into a friend's locker because theirs is broken. What other school

district has a room the teacher can't turn off the A/C even in the winter. Where is our Demon pride? You can find it in our passionate students, teachers, attendance at sporting events, excellent test scores. Our facilities do not reflect the type of community we are. We must manifest a certain amount of pride by putting this issue on the ballot. These things affect comprehension of every student. I invite you to change the facilities and confirm this community's value in education. Show current and future students this board is supported to continuing the excellence of Westlake Schools.

8. Cathy Axcell: I have been an involved strong supporter of Westlake Schools for 10 years. I have used my professional background to serve these schools in levy campaigns and PTA positions, as well as other school committees. I commend Rocco, Winter and Mays on supporting the mission of this school district. Cross and Sullivan I respect your right to express your opinion but I do not agree with your views. I find it unacceptable you challenge the data, process, community findings and survey results. You have had time to present your concerns and ask questions. It is not acceptable to turn your back on the community process. You have a responsibility to tell the community there is a need and allow the community to make a decision. It was realized a smaller issue would not address the issues. It is not just a cost issue but a plan issue. The polling showed the community could support the \$84 million plan. I am prepared to take on campaign leadership. Please do not turn your back on the kids and vote unanimously to place the plan on the ballot.
9. Brian Rujowitz: 3 kids in the system. We moved here in June 2009 from Chicago. When choosing what city to live in, my wife did an extensive amount of research: distance from downtown, cost of housing, culture, schools. The city we moved from had fantastic schools. The Westlake schools were better than where we came from. The teachers here care more. This is a valuable asset we should not take for granted. In our former city, the citizens approved pay increases and capital projects. Housing prices were high but justified because of the great school system. As a city I would think we want to build on this. We don't want to lose our teachers. We have a first class education system that needs better buildings to perform in. With more research we might not have chosen Westlake. We were questioning whether Westlake Schools would be acceptable. Coworkers told us not to be fooled by how bad the schools look. So we moved here. If Avon Lake didn't have environmental issues, we may have chosen to move there. Compare Westlake to a 1962 corvette. Runs perfect but sitting outside for 10 years – beat up and ugly.
10. Tony Falcone: My family has lived in Westlake for 33 years. I went to school here and met my wife at Parkside Junior High School. Served on 20/20 committee. My father served on citizens advisory committee 20 years ago. We feel passionately about this community and the schools. The plan put before you by the 20/20 committee reduces the numbers of schools from 7 to 6. That sounds economically responsible to me. Reduces operating costs when complete, that sounds economically responsible to me. Stops us from wasting money on patches and band aids, that sounds economically responsible to me. Spreads economic burden by phasing the project, that sounds economically responsible to me. Schedules 2nd phase after demonstrating care of tax dollars during the first phase, that sounds economically responsible to me. Calls for 2nd phase to start at a time when a tax won't be realized because of a millage drop-off, that sounds economically responsible to me. Irresponsible is for you to ignore the data put in front of

you. Four independent studies determined 93% of systems assessed are below adequate. 52% of those systems listed as poor with only 1 excellent and 1 good given. The 20/20 committee took this data and other input and gave you the plan you give today. This is not about politics, personal agendas, campaign promises. This is about our kids. Please be responsible and vote unanimously on this topic.

11. Tim Falcone: In 1976 I was appointed to the Westlake Fire Department. We made the choice to stay here on the school system. Fortunately, for my family, people who resided here before me saw the value in putting money in their school system. When my kids went to college they found themselves far ahead of other students thanks to educators in this system. I give them credit for doing the job they do with what they have. I spent 30 years as a state fire inspector. The maintenance people have done a yeoman's job to keep these buildings safe. To put good money after bad is a mistake. I'd like to think my 5 grandchildren will have the same opportunity and start in life my children had, especially since we've saddled them with so much debt. When you talk to our city fathers, one of biggest things they put in their promotional literature to relocate here is the school system. We can't let our future children down. It has to be unanimous.
12. Mike Medoro: As a member of the original 20/20 committee, we objectively evaluated the analysis provided by OSFC, architects and others. This group visited our schools, considered patching, incremental fixes and all new buildings. We recommended two options to adjust the facilities. At that time the decision was made to gather more data and continue analysis. Time moves on and a year later 68 community members formed an expanded 20/20 group. Analyzed a variety of options, reviewed survey data and came to a thoughtful conclusion to the problem. We presented in December it was no longer acceptable to do nothing. It's irresponsible to ignore, but appalling board members act as if no problem exists. Can't believe original member of 20/20 committee is suddenly confused about the data and moving forward. I am hard pressed to come up with a worse example of how to treat volunteers who spend hours to come up with a solution, to ignore a sound proposal is insulting. I came into this process knowing the board is not required to follow the advice of volunteers. But you must follow the will of the community. You have another choice: use operating funds to fix and replace faculties. A bond issue would serve as a good example of being good financial stewards. No one likes the idea of paying more taxes. Now is the time to act responsibly by investing in the infrastructure of our schools. You've reviewed the data. All advise you to proceed with the December 2009 recommendation. I respectfully request the board take a numinous vote tonight.
13. Dave Cooper: In 1968 I got on a school bus for kindergarten at Hilliard Elementary. Graduated in 1981. I have three children in the school system. I've seen the great work our educators do. I'm also a business owner. My entire family moved to Florida. I'm the only one left in Northeast Ohio area and I do so because of the school system. It's where I wanted to raise my kids. By the time these projects are complete, my kids will be graduated. I'm standing here because I've already received a personal benefit from the school system. We don't have great facilities. We need to make that happen now. We just doubled the space of my business. The rates I'm getting are tremendous -- \$3 less a square foot. It's a buyer's market for doing these types of projects. My wife's family owns the Vitamix Corporation. They are expanding and getting excellent bids. There's an opportunity here. Place this on the ballot. We may get more bang for the buck. It's

their decision so they have the opportunity to vote on this issue. I'm confident what we'll see as an outcome. Urging you to do so unanimously for the sake of the kids of the community.

14. Gretchen Herzberger: I'm a homeowner in this district and would like to have nice schools to send my kids to. I'm a teacher and a product of the Westlake Schools. I got a wonderful education for the time I was there. I was sitting in a class 10 years ago and almost had a tile fall on my head. I heard a lot of fighting last week, as well as good points. You're the trustees for these kids. What happens when you don't trust the trustees? You don't want to have distrust in the community. If you can't come to a consensus, you'll find out what 15 years of no new money is.
15. Beth Vecchio: A lot of people are here tonight. I moved here in 2001 mainly for the schools. I've been in every PTA and on every board. It's deplorable the condition of these schools. Every other suburb has had to deal with this issue. We haven't. This is a regional issue and we're not dealing with it as we should. The time is now; this is our window of opportunity to do something. If it doesn't happen now, it will be a long time. Put it on the ballot and let the voters decide.
16. Cathy DuBois: I have twin boys at Bassett and a daughter at LBMS. Two years ago I was employed by Westlake Schools. I love the people I work with, the students, parents, community. The one thing I don't love is the schools we work in. There's a real disregard to the clear need of attention to our buildings. I see the negative impact it has on my special education students. I push a cart from room to room. I have 15 students with individual needs. I have to scramble to find a place to sit with them and get them the instruction they need. I hope you work together with the community to make this happen.
17. Michael Bookson: I'm a product of Cleveland. When my wife got pregnant, we thought we'd stay in Cleveland. Then we had all the politics in Cleveland and knew it was time to move out for our child. I came to Westlake because it's beautiful. We spend money on our roads, shops, dogs are groomed, women dress beautifully, we drive nice cars. It's about our kids that will carry forward this tradition. I never doubted anyone would question the quality of our schools. Those who think they don't need the public schools because their kids are in St. Somethingorother. I'm proud to be here. I picked that house because of vast amount of land, the neighborhood and the people. If you believe you only get higher education in private schools I beg of you to reconsider. Our public schools need help. Our schools need these renovations. I'm a contractor. We're putting bids out 40% lower than normal. This is optimal time to do any expansion.
18. Pam Griebel: Consider a unanimous decision. Consider if we don't put this on the ballot and we have to use our general fund money, because this is the only process we have in Ohio, we will again put our good money after bad. I've seen roofs repaired and leak again. The pipes at the high school have leaked multiple times. We throw money and they still break. We'll put more money toward these repairs. I'm afraid of what it will take away from our academic program. We need resources from the teachers. It will dip into what we can offer the children. Please let's retain that. Let's not have to dip into that, let the voters decide. We are models for our students. This democratic process is a wonderful model for our students in this audience. I'm proud we can have a discourse like this in a respectful manner. I went to Bay Village Schools and grew up there. I voted for every levy and bond issue. I was the product of the education they

helped pay for. As our students see us put this on the ballot, they see us willing to pay for this for them. When they are the informed citizens, they will also make these responsible, informed decisions.

19. Mike Cutter: There was an energy conservation act at the state level to meet efficiency standards. Required by 2014. If it's not fulfilled the schools are penalized. I believe they are required by the state to act on that. Curious if you were aware of that. [Dave Puffer: Aware something being talked about as part of the Governor's energy conservation efforts. Assumption was if move forward with capital improvements, we would meet those to be LEED certified.] Instead of being penalized by the 2014 deadline, could you be grandfathered? [Puffer: If we completed projects or in progress, could appeal to the state until we were finished with our projects]. I was reading notes about anticipated rates, how was that calculation derived? [Mark Pepera: Determined by our underwriters. Assuming issue placed on May ballot, earliest to get things together is July 2010 or beyond. Most likely a year out from the election]. Is there federal and state money to pursue? [Dr. Keenan: We've applied for 0 interest bonds].
20. Susan Carroll: Mother of twins at WHS. The best dollars we spend contribute to the betterment of our community and education of our children. My company works well by listening to all aspects. I am confident you will vote unanimously to support the recommendation.
21. Claudia Bakelos: Spanish teacher at LBMS and WHS. We give our all to our students. WE have such a passion for our teaching. To have to do it in these conditions, pushing a cart to 5 different classrooms. It gets so exhausting by the end of the day but we do it for our students. When you look at the conditions of other districts and what they have and how they use the technology and they have the minutes in the day. There are so many things we can't do because we don't have a classroom. To have a building and not accommodate is not fair. When I push my cart next to 8 buckets of water in the cafeteria, 7 in the library to get to class. I'm proud to be a Westlake teacher. I beg of you to please vote to put it on the ballot.

Carol Winter: This is important to have a winning initiative at the ballot. Thank you for your input.

SPECIAL REPORTS & RECOGNITIONS: The Board recognized Kartik Dhinakaran for being the top scorer in the state in the 2009 American Mathematics Competition. Recognized LBMS students Aswin Bikkani, Nicholas Craven, Kartik Dhinakaran, Melissa Karpuska, Calvin Pozderac and Krish Shah for scoring in the top 1% on the exam. Recognized LBMS students Vanessa Melikian, Austin Moran, Eleni Packis, Elizabeth Raiff, Ameesh Shah and Christopher Tsuei for scoring in the top 5% and earning National Honor Roll status.

Recognized WHS students for their participation and accomplishments in the 2009 Cleveland Clinic eXpressions program: Clare Wittenberg, creative learning intern; Sammy DeMarsh, scientific intern; and artists Kate Humphrey, Allison Smik, Jenna Glasscock, Maura Phillips, Laura Musser, Marty Krebs, Luke Graber.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Westlake Schools earned the 2nd straight perfect audit from the State of Ohio. Westlake got a clean report for the 2008-09 school year. This is the 12th year we've had an excellence in reporting award.

LBMS and Parkside LEGO League FIRST teams recognized in 2009 competition. LBMS got top research award. Parkside sponsored a team and received top award for innovative solutions.

Westlake women's soccer team named 1st team Adidas All American for athletic achievements. This year we are first in state of Ohio and 4th nationally with 4.28 GPA overall. That same team won the regional championship.

Dave Puffer: Responding to what we would do if we did not go on the ballot or what would happen if an issue did not pass. I've had some experience in aging facilities. Lesko identified \$44.6 million in immediate needs in 2008. That would be approximately 20% of the general fund budget if done over 4-5 years and these needs are listed as immediate. Doing 1/3 of what Lesko identified, \$15 million divided by 5 years is \$3 million per year. After reviewing the data I've trimmed some costs because we have addressed some of those needs. What we can get done for \$3.1 million per year for 5 years does not include \$30 million of immediate needs identified by Lesko. First category safety and emergency needs, 2nd category roofs, 3rd category roofs and HVAC, 4th category HVAC and 5th category everything remaining. Taking this approach does not address the needs. These are fixes, temporary stopgap fixes. They will address problems individually. Last year we put a new HVAC system in LBMS, introduced heat into the library, which has a corrugated roof. The heat melts the snow and leaks through the roof. Last year we repaired the roof but the water finds a new way. It is difficult to recommend anything that does not take a comprehensive approach to fixing our facilities problems. You fix one thing and create a different set of problems.

Andrea Rocco: this is an important part of the story we will tell in the coming months. Before we make the kind of cuts we may have to make to our operating budget, it's important the community understand the state of education they will have if they don't pass this issue. I think people have to understand what they've gotten used to has to change because we can't keep allowing the conditions to continue. People that don't understand this issue, that haven't paid attention to the data. This schedule for our buildings has to change. I've been on this board for 8.5 years now. I've been here with board members who were here for all the right reasons, and some who weren't here for the right reasons. There were so many other issues to address. What Dr. Costanza did was the best they could with the monies coming in. It takes a lot of time and effort to get an issue like this on the ballot. It wasn't a top priority and energy that needed to be put into it. Two years ago we said this is something we need to address. I think we have a wonderful story to tell. I think this community needs to make this decision whether they will accept the kind of cuts that will come if a bond issue does not pass. If we don't put one up for the voters those cuts will definitely occur. It's a big step.

Dr. Keenan: In response to the question, if we're already excellent, why do we need to do this? If you take 6% of our budget and ignore 2/3 of the issues and add 0% for inflation, you're talking not really addressing the problem responsibly and about major cuts that seriously jeopardize what we are able to do for kids. Robert Dykes from TRIAD is here to clarify points.

Robert Dykes: TRIAD. The bottom line is with a strong, I believe an \$84 million bond issue has a good chance of passing. Our firm does many bond issue surveys, hardly any of them would pass when first

mentioned to the voters. Reason is most voters do not have kids in the schools and unaware of conditions in the school described to you tonight. In the absence of that knowledge, they don't necessarily support that issue. In the course of the survey we described trailers, classes in the hallways, improving the HVAC, lack of handicapped access and special needs education. When they heard those things and heard there were those deficiencies in the school buildings in Westlake, that is what drove them to increase their support for the bond issue.

Dr. Keenan: Turner Construction is here to give background on cost estimates.

Turner Construction: Explained how they arrived at costs. My company is within 3% of cost estimates. They have done over \$200 billion in OSFC school projects over the years. OSFC numbers are fairly accurate.

Nate Cross: Questioned the process over the past two years. We looked at \$44 million in immediate needs and pared that down. As I look at schools and what we did, how did you figure renovation v. new buildings? Explain the 2/3 rule. If I'm a homeowner of a \$100,000 home and haven't taken care of things in 10 years. I'd decide what to repair and replace. That benchmark is something we're close on. I do believe there are problems. Are we getting the best deal based on the benchmark we used to determine if we should renovate or build new?

Todd Wroblewski: MKC Associates. We were making an apples to apples comparison. Bassett renovation costs just under \$7 million. That 2/3 analysis is what is the cost to replace that building. Looked at enrollment and renovation costs. At Bassett, based on enrollment, that building slightly undersized. To look at what that building would have with an addition plus renovation v. what an entirely new building would look like. Sethby ratings look at the condition of existing buildings. Comes down to the cost of those items to replace. 3 is a total replacement. OSFC has preapproved building assessors, went through the buildings, came up with ratings and costs. MKC/Osborne team went back through buildings to verify assessments.

Nate Cross: When we looked at cost to renovate, curious about initial number we came up with for cost to renovate to fix the problem. If you have a homeowner on a tight budget, maybe all the items.

Carol Winter: you were part of the group that went through these questions and we've been looking at them for 26 months. I don't want to get bogged down in the minutia of the numbers. We've accepted the numbers as a board. It's tough to start as a new board member, but you were on that committee and an integral part of that committee. If you weren't sure of the numbers, why weren't these questions asked before.

Nate Cross: This does have an impact on how I will vote. This is part of the process. As an elected representative I have to make a decision on this and I want to feel very comfortable.

Carol Winter: There's been some time. I want to be cognizant of the fact that a lot of people have gone through the process and gone through the numbers. The board has accepted these numbers.

Nate Cross: In light of the tough economic times, is there a way to fix this problem at a lower cost than to build new? These costs were based on a design manual. Is there flexibility in the estimated costs to fix these problems?

Carol Winter: They said they are giving us their best price.

MKC: The only way to lower the price is to lower the standard. The standard is the OSFC. It gives you a nice Chevy, in terms of a building. Very nice, well built Chevy. MKC has designed and build over 50 OSFC projects. 90% of those districts who choose to go that route do something a little more than what OSFC provides. If notion is the OSFC is driving the cost up, we're under the wrong impression.

Nate Cross: Are there school districts that did not receive OSFC funded and did they fix the problems in their schools? If a homeowner can't fix everything on the list, some things will be repaired or fixed. Probably some flexibility. This recommendation was based on a standard that drove us down one path.

Carol Winter: I've spent 26 months looking over the data. By deciding to use or not use an OSFC standard doesn't lock us into anything.

MKC: Very few have gone below OSFC standards. Some may take 25 square feet out of a classroom, but is used elsewhere in the facility.

Carol Winter: We have flexibility to capture OSFC money on parts of buildings we use their standards.

MKC: Decision not to determine whether using OSFC.

Nate Cross: there's an \$84 million plan before us with a brand new high school. Based on OSFC standard. There's a huge difference in building a new school rather than fixing a building. There's a problem that needs fixed. There are more cost effective solutions v. this plan. The process is this will go back to the board. This is my second meeting. If we don't get a chance to explore alternatives, I am forced to make a decision on an \$84 million plan I don't support because I believe there are more cost effective solutions.

Dr. Keenan: We have considered alternatives through the process. One of the clear points from the group was we are also talking about overcrowded corridors, stair wells and cafeterias and areas we've outgrown. 2/3 is one bit of information we considered, but not the only information looked at in regards to our high school which is our biggest expense in regards to wasting money. We haven't used one point of data to make any decision. The Board has asked me to look at different things. We have discussed alternatives.

Andrea Rocco: The alternatives were not supported by the data, which says we need to build a new high school. To renovate the high school is to do what we've been doing. Let's fix it now and put it on a schedule so it's good for the next 50-60 years.

Nate Cross: I believe there is some flexibility.

Andrea Rocco: You're not an architect or a builder.

NEW BUSINESS: Approved classified resignation of Peter Kodysh. Approved classified resignation for purpose of retirement for Joy Bell. Approved certified resignation for purpose of retirement for Antony Hoty, JoAnn Hoty. Approved amended classified employment for Sue Pease.

Dr. Keenan: When I came here I was presented the issue of facilities. We've gone through a data-driven process that demonstrated an enormous problem. Over 90% of our schools were deemed inadequate. We asked deeper questions, challenged the data and sought solutions. The Board agreed a community engagement process needed to take place. Tours of buildings were offered, community groups met, surveys were taken. The process has met its intended purpose of providing community and professional input. A great number of solutions have been considered thoroughly. This plan was carefully and thoughtfully developed through a transparent process that involved schools personnel, the community and professional groups and is based on data. I strongly recommend:

Resolution of necessity of submitting the question of the issuance of school improvement bonds, in the aggregate principal amount of \$84 million to the electors of the Westlake City School District.

Carol Winter: Thanked Dr. Keenan and staff for studying this issue. We've heard so much from the public. This is an issue we've been facing for awhile. Our school facilities have been determined to be overcrowded. As Board members it's our responsibility to meet the needs of our community and preserve the community's assets and provide a self maintained environment for learning. Should our citizens be allowed a chance to vote on supporting our facilities? I can't see why not. The timing, if not now, when? It's never a good time. We've put off addressing our serious facilities issues twice. To let the gap continue to grow between what facility needs are to support the educational program is irresponsible as a board. We have best bid environment and lowest bid environment in 50 years. This will still keep us lower in our tax rates with neighboring communities, even while improving our schools. It will minimize the tax burden in phase 2. We've already heard from professionals. We won't know until we put it out to the voters. By combining the district's need with strong public support for how we manage tax money, we have a good chance at the ballot. It won't be a slam dunk. It never is. This is our best alternative. We have a very solid plan. At some point we do need to trust. What are our facilities doing to the education of our kids? The strength of our community rests on a yes vote and letting our community design. Our city leaders see incredible value in regular improvements to their investments in the infrastructure of our city. We saw a \$5 million to the Rec Center. They're not scrimping, why should we with our kids, especially if they are using our schools to promote the city. Time to ensure our buildings have the same improvements the city puts into theirs. Having a unanimous vote will help us at the ballot.

Nate Cross: the decision to place an issue on the ballot is a complex and emotional issue. For us to successfully meet this challenge, we should find a solution that has the best chance at the ballot box. Need timing, lowest solution. My firm belief the district needs to create a fiscally responsible plan to fix our schools. The current problem we are facing did not evolve overnight and may take time to correct. A defeat on the May 2010 ballot may complicate our operating issue in the future. Three criteria must be

met: is the timing right given economic environment? Does the issue have critical community support? Are there alternatives to maximize support to fix the problem? The timing is in the worst economic environment in decades. We should exercise discipline in historic economic uncertainty (Ohio's unemployment rate increasing, property tax revenues decreasing, Ohio eliminating tax cut, other competing agencies have issues on the ballot, state operating mandates, building permits have decreased, foreclosures jumped, private school enrollment increased). No verifiable reason to dictate if they build it they will come. The survey results indicate support for a bond issue is not there. If the election were held today or no strong campaign, neither issue would pass. Other points in the survey I have issue with. At a minimum, we must consider realizing lack of full support and lack of poll numbers speaks to the issue of need. After two years you'd think there would be a stronger movement toward the issue. Are new facilities the answer to academic distinction? Are there other alternatives to maximize support? We can bypass state funding to realize significant cost savings that should be the priority of taxpayers. Perhaps new facilities not the only answer to the issue. We must further explore or consider that option of renovations or additions. I do not support putting an \$84 million bond issue on the ballot in May as I think other options have been given proper consideration.

Tim Sullivan: Our community basks in the glow of the great results our staff, community and students produce. I am a believer in public schools. In the past two years the district administration has presented the board with convincing evidence that our schools are aging and overcrowded. While our facilities have needs we must address, I am reluctant to support a large spending plan requiring a large tax increase during this brutal recession. Our taxpayers are living in uncertainty and they are dealing with problems. We'll be asking these same individuals to increase their taxes to support basic educational programming in a few years. I don't think this proposal is adequately responsible in terms of timing, scope and cost. In my view, this plan is not in the best interest of our community and students. We can maintain our facilities and weather this recession. We must address the real hallmarks of an outstanding education are attention to detail, hiring and retaining the best employees and achieving goals. I have continually promoted taking a more incremental approach. We need a permanent improvement levy to address our facilities. I agree our facilities have needs and will support a plan to address them, but not this plan.

Andrea Rocco: The unemployment rate is 6% in the city of Westlake. I've been involved with 3 levy issues and 1 bond issue. No survey ever said we had a 55% support rate. Your basis for those arguments is faulty. Never has the 20/20 committee or experts stated they will build better schools to attract private school children. We are just providing facilities our teachers can teach our children the way they need to be taught in this 21st century. A levy in 2 or 3 years will come much sooner if we have to start pulling from the operating budget. You say there are alternatives, yet no alternative has been suggested. A PI levy to be large enough to tackle these issues will cost as much as this bond issue. We aren't taking an all or nothing approach. We have surpassed the amount of time these buildings were to meet the educational needs of our kids. You had your mind made up before you listened to any of this. You are taking all of this information, 26 months of work and saying you know better than the community representatives who said this is a plan they can get behind. You come here to vote no and offer no solution. That sounds like such a canned response and I expect more from this Board. The right thing to

do is to put this in front of the community so they tell us if they're not comfortable with raising their taxes. Then we'll make the cuts this community is not prepared for. But at least we've given them that option. We will see a change in the way our kids are educated.

Thomas Mays: We moved to Westlake 17 years ago because of the school system. We're not going to be the best school district in Ohio if we have to start cutting from our programming. The money has to come from somewhere. We're charged with a major responsibility, offering the best education for our youth. We have educators and professionals give us their expertise. I think we've proven we are fiscally responsible. It's important we allow the voters to make this decision. Over 26 months community members went over all the data. That group looked at fact, not opinion. They came back with recommendations. We were originally looking at a \$120 million project. This is the 5th January we'll be voting on inside millage (\$134,000 annually that the district could get without a vote of the people). We've always voted it down because voters haven't had their say. We would like to give the public the opportunity to tell us what to do here. If the voters pass this, we'll be just as fiscally responsible. My vote is to put it on the ballot in May and let the public tell us yes or no, and then we'll do what's necessary. Mr. Kilbane was the only one to say it's not the right time for the levy. Every city is judged by its schools.

The Board voted 3-2 in favor of placing an issue on the ballot:

Yes –Mays, Rocco, Winter

No – Sullivan, Cross

HEARING OF PUBLIC:

1. Harry Applegate: Thank you for voting for this difficult issue. Now it has been passed. It is your responsibility to support it. The team in place to pass this bond issue will be able to do it. It will be helpful if you do support it. You cannot fix non-compliance with IDA 97. A special education with a cart does not comply. You cannot patch anything or do anything that does not comply with that. Every child in our system should be afforded the resources to get the best education. Right now we are not doing it.
2. Beth Vecchio: When is the right time? When should be have done this? Posed to Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Cross.
 - a. Sullivan: I just took the facts in front of me and voted.
3. Joe Kilbane: What is our real estate delinquency in Westlake? We can pass all we want if people aren't paying.
 - a. Pepera: It's higher than usual, but not as high as other communities. It's not a hard and fast number. We receive taxes over two different years. A critical change from last year to this year. We just received 2009 tax year evaluation. That number if factored in our forecast.

4. Laura Steinbrink: You did an excellent job in handling this meeting. The two D's are disappointing and dumb, that you would choose opinion over fact. We know what this community needs and we know what's right. By working together to overcome this, we will succeed on the May ballot.
5. John Colosar: 1985 graduate. Mr. Sullivan, you wear a flag lapel on your coat. People died for the right to vote and you voted for your will not to give the people the right to vote. Your contradictory statements are embarrassing. Freshmen should be seen but not heard.
6. Eric Kaiser: Disappointed it wasn't unanimous. I think some people don't have a clear grasp of the facts.
7. Julie McCallister: For the people unemployed during this time is incredibly sad. What are they going to do to sell their homes when our schools look like this? Every community around us has one new school. We don't. It's an investment in the community. If you don't want to be here, good luck leaving. The schools sell our property. Obviously property values have gone down, but we do have a way to stop it from going down. Invest in our schools and the property values go up.
8. Michal Bookson: I came here today with zero knowledge of what's going on. After being here, I believe I was able to grasp 99% of what's going on. Then hearing the closing comments by Mr. Cross, I can't comprehend any of the three points he made. We're at the lowest interest rates in my lifetime. Your first point is garbage. I watch foreclosure market on a daily basis and all I find is condos. If you base those three points after all the presentations, I don't know what you were listening to. I do regret voting for you. I don't see any fault of passing something to let people vote on something. Let us vote. It's up to us, let us vote. Nobody mentioned after you spend \$84 million your operating budget will decrease tremendously because you won't have to replace a new furnace. We are the lowest tax district around, lowest bond rates, excellent district. Your preplanned speeches are disrespectful.
9. Cathy Axcell: So the vote is over. I stand before you to let you know I will lead a group to get this done. I am confident we will raise the money and be successful at the ballot. We are prepared to work as hard as we can to get the issue passed.
10. Lisa Hawkins: Mr. Cross and Sullivan, you are very brave, thank you for your comments. I did just move here from a state with a higher rate of foreclosure and unemployment. My former district had a bond issue on the ballot. 60% of the population voted for the bonds. Our housing prices are so tightly tied to the schools. This rests on my mind about where we will buy a home. I hope we have your support moving forward.
11. Tim Falcone: I am retired for three years. When I drive through Westlake and see Crocker Park, new homes, I don't put myself and living in a community where \$14 or \$15 a month will kill a homeowner. Other retirees want the system to continue to be as good as what they remember when their children went there. It's one thing to be elected to represent people and another to be dictatorial about it. We had a city that went to the ballot 3x to get a building built. They built up enough in their budget to build a building. Those types of issues should go to us.
12. John Kolesar: Go to OSBA web site. They have a code of guidelines and ethics . I don't know if there are political aspirations you have in this city. I know your kids go to private school. It is interesting both of your prepared statements sounded very similar. In that code of ethics, if you

present your personal opinion, you should support eh majority. We will expect your support of this levy.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: The next meeting of the Board will be Monday, Jan. 25, at 5:30pm at the Westlake Schools administration building.

For more detailed information on these items, visit

<http://www.westlake.k12.oh.us/AdminBldg/BOE/BOESched.htm>