



Westlake Board of Education

Board Notes from Monday, 5/9/11 Work Session

Carol Winter was elected Treasurer Pro Temp to replace CFO/Treasurer Mark C. Pepera, who is speaking at an international financial professionals' conference.

Nate Cross questioned the executive session regarding preparing for bargaining session with public employees.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

1. OMEA State Band Contest: Symphonic and Concert bands earned Superior performances. Symphonic Band was only one to receive unanimous Superior rating and the only to receive that rating in the state.
2. Music a la Mode this weekend. Highlights our entire music program from preK-high school.
3. Parkside had great success at Invention Convention. 1st place winner with a desktop pencil clipper.
4. Parkside math team participated in GCCTM competition. 4 first-place trophy winning groups.
5. WHS senior Dustin Hall won 10th Congressional District art show competition. He'll be recognized this summer in Washington, D.C.
6. Forbes/Great Schools listed Westlake as one of top 10 cities to live and learn in the Midwest.
7. Mary Flanagan earned District 12 Outstanding Educator Award for the Ohio PTA.
8. Kim McCue from Hilliard recognized by ESC as outstanding educator for Cuyahoga County.

SPECIAL REPORTS & RECOGNITIONS

1. Hilliard art program
2. Recognized Hilliard Elementary School students for the 2011 Ohio Art Education Association Exhibition
 - a. Will Wilson, Hilliard art teacher, discussed Youth Art Month winners and made a presentation on the Hilliard art program.
3. Resolution of appreciation for retiring Hilliard Elementary Principal Mary Flanagan

- a. June 5 there will be a retirement celebration for Mary Flanagan at Hilliard Elementary School from 2 to 4pm.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. State budget/House version

- a. Dr. Keenan: In FY 12 we were facing a loss of \$3.13 million from basic aid, TPP and public utility reimbursements. Reimbursements were set asides through 2018 and were not on the table with the state budget beforehand. Hard hit because they hit all 3. In FY13 we still faced an additional loss of \$520,000.
- b. House version is approved with credit to legislators who listened to the arguments we had that this was not the most equitable way to address this. The 20% cap on basic aid, TPP and public utilities did not stick, but we did gain a 20% cap on basic aid. Now we are facing a \$1.97 million loss for FY12 and \$1 million in FY13 (basic aid frozen at FY12). TPP is subject to the biennial budget process.
- c. This is a compounding loss because of two reimbursements. Our forecast was based on maintaining those reimbursements. We were facing a \$6.7 million biennial loss. Now we are looking at a \$4.9 million biennial loss. Cuts won't sustain the way we need to address these losses.
- d. Our response to the House version of the state budget: continue planning to address in a balanced fashion (legislative process, concessions, reductions in staff and operation areas); continue to make revisions to a reduction plan to be presented for approval at the May 23 meeting; begin more definitive planning for the 2011-12 school year based on approval of reductions; hopefully readjust locally per any state readjustment to the budget.
- e. Communication and decisions need to be made for incoming kindergarten parents, high school students and families, all WCS kids and families, staffing and the community.
- f. Updated tentative personnel impact =approximately \$1.12 million
 - i. 2 administrative positions + concessions [Pupil services and gifted]
 - ii. 16 teaching positions + concession (10 actual people losing jobs, 6 positions unfilled)[program reductions, class size implications secondary, full-day kindergarten a tuition option only, Planetarium as purchased service only]
 - iii. 20 classified positions impacted + concessions [Transportation, cleaners, maintenance, aides and custodial]
 - iv. Exempt concessions
- g. Tentative operational impact = approximately \$950,000
 - i. Only required staff travel approved
 - ii. Staff development reduced to grant supported/specific CIP related
 - iii. No high school transportation
 - iv. Reduced summer maintenance
 - v. No bus replacement for FY12
 - vi. From 6 to 1 commentary and all other communications digital

- vii. New curricular materials reduced by 50%
- viii. Reduce site budgets 5%
- ix. No BOE account lines for professional development/travel
- x. Buildings limited greatly to outside activities after school
- xi. Reduced fuel for busses
- xii. Extended days reduced by 50%
- xiii. Do not fill 18-22 supplemental contract positions
- xiv. No maintenance replacement vehicle for FY12
- xv. Eliminate direct deposit notices
- xvi. Eliminate mailing direct deposit breaks
- h. Looking for guidance from the BOE on two matters
 - (1) **Do we have consensus on offering the option of All-Day on a tuition basis?**
 - (2) **Do we have consensus on giving the administration authority to seek concessions with the focus on saving over a million dollars each year for the next two years as part of a balanced measure to address the reduction in aid and reimbursements?**
- i. FAQs
 - i. Why don't we wait until June 30 to make budget decisions? We will. May 23 is to set staffing and provide guidance to our parents for planning
 - ii. Why still so many cuts if there's a 20% cap? Only applies to state basic aid. TPP and public utilities reimbursements were not areas on the table before and compound our losses.
 - iii. If there is a fund balance why is this needed? If you let the fund balance go all the way down, the levy will have to happen if schools are funded the way they are funded. Fund balance is a mechanism for funding schools. If we spend it down, looking at 15-17 mill range for a levy. Not reasonable at all to do this, the suggestion is at the other end of the spectrum of what was proposed last meeting, both can be done but both unreasonable.
 - iv. Why isn't going to the voters in November an option you are recommending right now? Things we still need to prove we are doing. We set a target for a range of millage and time to go, around 2012. We need to put ourselves in a position to see where we will be before we go on the ballot.
 - v. Would a full-day kindergarten curriculum differ than ½ day? Curriculum will not differ. Amount of instructional time will differ.
 - vi. How can you assure program doesn't provide a divide? Spent time looking at kindergarten programs. We can provide tools to parents to support their children with a half-day program.
 - vii. How will you avoid reoccurring facility issues? Balance with operational end to keep staffing and work on reduction of hours. Staff understands the need to do things differently.

- viii. How are we protection our Mission of Excellence for our kids with these reductions? Trying the balanced approach. No one entity can bear the entire brunt. We have to protect our students the most.
- ix. What do we hope to achieve with the Senate? Working with Sen. Patton's office. Aware of plan we worked on with Rep. Baker. Senate may have opportunity to put dollars back into the budget to support education.
- x. What is the likelihood this will change from now until June 30? High. We need to focus on task of arguing our cause and making sure it is heard and considered.
- j. Looking for direction from the BOE
 - i. Do we have consensus on offering the option of all-day kindergarten on a tuition basis?
 - ii. Do we have consensus on giving the administration authority to seek concessions with the focus on saving over \$1 million each year for the next two years as part of a balanced measure to address the reduction in aid and reimbursements?
- k. Nate Cross: In looking at FY12 forecast, prior to House version, there was a difference in expected revenues and expenses. Why would we not cut to a level consistent to revenue which would decrease our need to utilize fund balance and minimize millage request in 2012. Why is this plan just about making up statewide cuts?
 - i. Dr. Keenan: Presenting to prepare for FY 12 budget to open for next school year. Reductions are approximates. Concessions also are not listed because I have to prepare for the event they don't happen, but they are listed as something I recommend we pursue. The loss of \$ is a compounding loss. I believe my recommendation addresses both short term needs in a reasonably and balanced fashion and provides a foundation for a long-term remedy that addresses compounding impact of losing those funds. We are nearing the end of a funding cycle. Attempting to get us back on track to where we were to address similarly or look at other options. Trying to balance financial need and educational excellence need. If I make more cuts it begs the question of how are we protecting our mission of excellence? Concessions component is an important one. Trying to tackle a much larger than anticipated reduction. We're losing about \$4 million more than we anticipated.
 - ii. Cross: Seems never a discussion that salaries are reduced. Why isn't that a solution?
 - iii. Dr. Keenan: Concessions are listed on there, so there are projections for salary based on contract agreements. Concessions means impacting things that include salary. Those concessions are up to you as a Board. We have a budget for next year based on a salary agreement amount. Concessions I'm seeking would reduce that by about \$1 million in some form or combination. We'll need all components to be balanced.
- l. Tim Sullivan: Are the concessions you are seeking are to keep salaries at current levels rather than go up?

- i. Dr. Keenan: I provided numbers to you. The concessions I am proposing are the same as the numbers I provided to you this past week. They equal to a little over a million dollars each year of money we forecasted based on already agreed upon terms through December 2012. If you seek more than that, that can certainly be the board's position that's up to you. I'm looking at a problem we have immediately and considering how the solution I recommend can also lead to a foundation for a longer term solution as well. I am not using this to address something you may not be happy with that you agreed to before, but to address a very real problem that we are facing.
- m. Carol Winter: To get concessions we must talk to our unions. Our unions are going to want to protect their members, but they care about their students and the community. It's our job to make sure taking care of taxpayers' money. We need to have conversations and hear what each of us has to say in executive session. I am fine with us seeking the type of concessions described, it is something worthwhile for us to look at and solve together. I feel strongly we need to offer all-day kindergarten on a tuition basis as a compromise.
 - i. Dr. Keenan: I'm looking for concessions. I am not seeking full-blown negotiations. We are working with two groups where we agreed to something based on our situation 3 years ago.
- n. Andrea Rocco: Where are you Mr. Cross on the two questions Dr. Keenan had?
 - i. Cross: In terms of all-day kindergarten, it is not something that I support. It's an issue of timing and the economy. Until we see our finances become more manageable, it just is something I'm not comfortable with. The other issue about the curriculum, I've gotten calls and emails from people who are concerned. If we do this with tuition option, it creates haves and have nots. Is that fair? In regards to concessions, the unions have offered to talk to us. This is not about the kids. This is a new law unions are trying to circumvent in Ohio. In Bexley, teachers agreed to a salary freeze, but when all said and done, for some step increases led to a 7% raise. In Tuslaw School District, teachers agreed to pay more health costs and agreed to pay freezes and step freezes. In Hilliard, last week their operating levy failed. They proposed many of same things in our reduction plan. The one thing they did not do was talk about salary reductions. That's a starter for a conversation. This is not the right time to go behind closed doors to reopen contracts. We may have new tools provided in SB5 to help us deal with our rising costs. This is the wrong time to do this. We need to look our union members in the eye and say they are causing us to reduce these jobs. Take a 5% pay cut and be leaders by reducing salaries. Until I hear the board supports salary reductions or that the unions support that, I won't support reopening of contracts or salary negotiations.
 - ii. Dr. Keenan: Not permitting me to seek concessions is inconsistent with your message when both associations have already indicated they are willing to be a part of the solution. We need to understand where the board is collectively. It's

antagonizing to go after and insult people that work with us and for us in the fashion you are choosing. I'm prepared to represent the board, but you aren't saying that saving millions of dollars through concessions is better than giving the increases we're already committed to on a financial basis?

- iii. Cross: I'd like to hear from my fellow board members that they believe we need to reduce salaries as part of the process. I've not heard that.
- iv. Rocco: I would point out that we will not be able to speak to the unions until we go to the negotiating table. Leadership is the 5 of us working together. Most issues are somewhat complex. It's not just your way or the highway. The 5 of us working together, taking Dr. Keenan's recommendations as a basis, we should discuss many different options. Your words paint a very negative, cynical picture. That's the last kind of approach we need at a time when we will have to make decisions that affect our kids in the classroom as well as the men and women who run these schools. I believe this is a very appropriate time to seek concessions. I would support that effort. If you understood collective bargaining law you would understand you need to sit down and have a discussion with the other group and progress is usually made. Years ago we went to our teachers and explained how our medical costs were escalating. They pay a fairly high percentage, when comparing to other districts in Ohio. We've been able to work together. Now is not the time to draw a line in the sand. This community deserves more. As far as all-day kindergarten, I do support it on a tuition-basis. Dr. Keenan has spent a great deal of time providing school board members with figures and recommendations and explaining the practical side of these recommendations. It's very important we work together to do the best for our community and we don't lose sight of the important mission we have to educate kids.
- o. Tom Mays: The kindergarten issue has really drawn out the parents. It allows people to understand what's going on in our schools. I've always felt all-day kindergarten is an important step to take, and support the tuition-based program. On the other matter, we are just seeking concessions, it's not full blown negotiations. We can learn from other school districts. Our policies say we are looking to attract and hold highly qualified men and women to provide quality educational program. Get there through a fair teacher compensation plan. To say we should be the standard bearer in totally reducing salaries with no basis sends a bad message. If we made concessions today and the budget improves, does that hurt us? I don't think so. Then we can put programming back in currently on the cut list. Before we can hear what the union wants or what they are willing to do, we have to sit down. You can't guess at what they are trying to do. I really don't know we can take SB5 into consideration. It may not come into effect. If it does stay law, it won't impact us until January 2013 anyway. We have to look at these things now. If we can save, we would be foolish not to examine this. If we go into concessions and there are things we don't like, you don't have to accept anything. Not going into

discussions would be a mistake. I'm in favor of talking to the unions about concessions and going into executive session to talk about that.

- p. Sullivan: I respectfully am not in favor of the tuition-based option. Things have changed. Can we achieve a middle ground? If the academic benefits of all-day kindergarten and strength of programming is so good, don't feel right offering it to those who can do it and not being able to help those who don't. It's not fully paid for. On the other issue, I've heard school board members the teachers are great people. Not good to make broad generalizations of an organization of 400 people based on casual observations and friendships. I think it's Dr. Keenan's job to make that determination. I think going into negotiations is a matter of trust. Our teacher salaries are 17th highest in state, our average salary over \$70,000 a year. When we put a notice out for a teacher position we have 250 applications or more. I can't believe if we trim salaries across the board 5% we would see a reduction in applications. I agree we have to work through this together. I think we've made progress and may have a good chance at saving \$1 million through concessions. Not sure I believe that goes far enough. I agree there's a place for negotiations and you can't negotiate a contract out in the open. I don't think our fellow board members have laid out what they want to achieve out of this. I'm not sure I'm ready and prepared for negotiations. As early as February 2009 we were being told to expect large educational budget cuts. In December 2009 we were discussing whether to rebuild our schools. In June 2010 we were dealing with an expensive contract that I wasn't comfortable with. Since 2000 our operational costs have increased 15% due to personnel. Our school district has 540 full-time employees, 1/3 earn over \$70,000 per year. Cost to educate a student in Westlake is \$12,500 per year. To do so in a similar district is \$10,800/year. While we do have higher transportation costs and special needs costs than most similar districts, we also have areas where costs are lower (administrative costs). Once hired teachers have lifetime tenure. Teacher salaries based on longevity, not merit or performance. Teachers are not laid off by merit or performance. April 18 meeting, WTA offered next to nothing. Our system has too much cost and little accountability. We're not dealing with the situation in a way we should. We have seen a massive redistribution of wealth go to salaries. Our system allows and permits a redistribution of wealth from our best teachers to our least performing teachers. The WTA's position at the last meeting, it bordered on arrogance to not offer something. Solutions: I don't think we should hide behind negotiations. We need to reduce salaries across the board 5%, more health contributions, no more seniority. I'd trim salaries and benefits now, do merit step increases. Otherwise we'll do the band aid approach. We don't need to reduce staff and programs. I'll work with my board members in good faith on anything.
 - i. Winter: I base my level of trust on actions and how people have voted whether or not to support the programs and students of this district. People know where we stand. To sit here and talk in public about what we'll go into and discuss in negotiations puts us in a bad position. We need to get together and sit down

and talk about this. I think it's my responsibility to listen to what needs to be said and listen to my board colleagues.

- ii. Sullivan: I have supported virtually all district spending recommendations. I disagreed with spending \$84 million to build new schools and I disagreed to award contracts with firms that had clear conflicts of interest. The third is all-day kindergarten.
 - iii. Mays: I think we were told to prepare for a 10% cut of basic aid from the state, and it was much worse. I don't think any of us were psychic and were prepared for large cuts. I hope you enter into executive session to talk about all of those things and your opinions. None of these things you mention can be resolved unless we open up contract negotiations.
 - iv. Cross: I support the will of the majority. We all know these meetings are scripted and there is no real discussion. If you think this is a five-ring circus here, wait until you see behind closed doors. I would like the public to hear what's on the minds of our elected officials. The deal is done, we get how it works. We are in the minority. I'll sit in the sessions and bargain in good faith.
 - v. Sullivan: I don't think I'm refusing to go into executive session. I would like to hear what we'd like to get out of this. I'd like to know what you want out of this. Show some leadership.
 - vi. Mays: showing leadership isn't talking about what you want out of negotiations. The worst thing you can do is negotiate in public. You don't set your floor and ceiling and you don't indicate what you are looking for. I think all of our thoughts have been out there. There are things we agree on and things we disagree on.
 - vii. Sullivan: I'll go into executive session if that's what we vote on.
 - viii. Cross: I would like a vote on this and will vote no on going into executive session.
- 2. Tuition-based all-day kindergarten
 - a. Motion to offer all-day kindergarten with the tuition option: Yes (Rocco, Mays, Winter), No (Cross, Sullivan). Motion carries.
 - 3. Seeking concessions
 - 4. Approved a resolution to approve a field trip by the Environmental Club to the Cincinnati Zoo (paid for through student fees).

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

- 1. Harry Applegate: Mr. Cross, I've been a resident of Westlake 47 years. I've been attending board meetings for over 30 years. The public will support the Westlake City Schools as long as there is not rancor going on with the board. I'm glad you and Mr. Sullivan finally stood up and said you were after reducing teacher salaries. It makes no sense to not go into negotiations. You say teachers are not worth what they are paid. I resent your stating that the teachers aren't worth

what they're paid. As far as laying off by seniority, that is no longer true because you have to be certified to teach a certain age group.

2. Tony Falcone: Mr. Cross you mentioned a constituency that would suffer, the public. As long as you and Mr. Sullivan are on this board, the constituency that will lose will be the students. I am a product of this system and feel strongly about them. I'm going to take a seat on this board in the fall. I'm in it for the kids. What are you in it for?
 - a. Sullivan: I'm not sure the question is a proper one. There is a huge misconception about what a school board member's duties are and his or her role. Too many people have been led to believe that this is basically a child advocacy position. It's wrong. In order to make people feel not welcome, members of this board have distorted the role of board members. The position of a school board member is much broader and carries more responsibility. The school board is a trustee position in order to weigh competing claims of special interests. It's a board member's responsibility to act independent. People serve as trustees in an infinite variety of positions on nonprofits. I'm one of those people. I'm a taxpayer, I've earned that right, I meet the residency requirement. That should be enough. I was elected here. I laid out my qualifications and my desire to serve and I was elected. That should be enough.
 - b. Cross: One of my many roles of the board is to offer financial oversight. I've learned tough questions about our finances are not welcome by my fellow board members. I resent the characterization you have to have kids here to be committed to this community or school district. I believe every person out there, these are their dollars. We have a right to question how those dollars are spent. I think we provide a strong service to this community so decisions make stronger schools.
3. Ellen Wolf: as you go into executive sessions to discuss negotiations for concessions, are administrators included in that? Will Dr. Keenan be considered to make concessions? (Yes).
4. Joshua Rintamaki: Since there has been a vote, does that mean there will be tuition-based all-day kindergarten? (yes). If that is happening, when are parents of kindergarteners going to be informed that it's happening. (We should be able to put something out tomorrow in regards to our team. We'll put a letter on our website and make sure we inform as early as tomorrow.) As a resident of Westlake, obviously there is a split in the school board. I'm happy to see Mr. Cross and Sullivan stated what they wanted. From both ends, it would be nice if all of you reached across the table from both sides. Find a way to work together. It's our kids. Don't be yelling and condescending to each other. That's not how you're supposed to behave.
5. Carrie Rendziak: there seems to be a lot of dissention. When I came to the last meeting, I was very disappointed Mr. Cross and Mr. Sullivan would not even listen to what the unions had to say. Even dealing with children you have to listen. I understand you have your personal opinions you feel strongly about. Your personal opinion is not worth any more than my personal opinion. Your responsibility with your vote is to act on what the voters want. We're rehashing the same things and it doesn't hurt anything to listen. To not listen is doing the community members who elected you a disservice.
6. Harry Applegate: it makes no difference where anyone's children go to school. I wish it was never brought up and hope I never hear it again. Let's not use it as an issue against each other.

7. Bob Plantz: I feel tonight's meeting is a measurable step forward, there is still acrimony. I commend Mr. Sullivan and Cross for being articulate about their positions. I have a better understanding of your point of view. I am not saying I agree, but have a better understanding. If you enter into discussions with the union about concessions, what's the connection between that and reopening the contract?
 - a. Dr. Keenan: We are seeking concessions. When discussing this with the associations we could be asked to achieve those concessions through negotiating other items. You don't necessarily have to reopen negotiations. I'm seeking here's a number we need to do this, are you willing to agree. I think the concern they are expressing is there's a contract agreed to and the only way to get concessions is to have their members take a vote and agree. They could ask for more items that the board may or may not agree to. The question is what they are willing to do? That's what those conversations are about.
 - b. Plantz: is a concern is if you start discussions with the union there may be a quid pro quo. Is there an agenda you are concerned that could happen?
 - c. Sullivan: Yes. It doesn't seem realistic the union is going to offer concessions without wanting something in return.
8. Duane VanDyke: we have to pay for schools somehow, through property, sales or income taxes. In Westlake we have a broad tax base. There's no other magic way out there to pay for schools. You are 5 board members but there are 31,000 residents. While I think there may need to be changes in the way things are operated, we also have people whose livelihoods are on the line. There are people who go home and are worried about their jobs. I'm not so sure you can say SB5 will pass or fail. Now is the time you should go and talk to the unions, see where they stand and try and come to some consensus. Concerned when I hear over 30 students per class. The rhetoric on this board gets way too high. You have big problems to deal with. You need to tone it down a bit. It doesn't get the problem solved.

Motion to allow Dr. Keenan to seek concessions: Yes (Mays, Rocco, Winter), No (Cross, Sullivan).

The Board adjourned to executive session for the purpose of conference with attorney involving tax valuation dispute and preparing for bargaining sessions with public employees. No action was taken following the executive session.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: The next meeting of the Board will be Monday, May 23, 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>