



Westlake Board of Education

Board Notes from Thursday, April 3, 2014, Special Meeting

Vision Statement

The Westlake City School District will provide a dynamic, student-centered, 21st Century learning environment. Our district will be characterized by high achievement, actively engaged learners, mutual respect, shared knowledge, pursuit of new skills and capabilities, collaborative learning, willingness to take action, a team commitment to data-driven continuous improvement, and tangible results.

Mission Statement

We Educate for Excellence ... Empowering all students to achieve their educational goals, to direct their lives, and to contribute to society.

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

1. Russ Ezolt: Thank Dan and Carol to meet with me and hear my views. Very disappointed in the contract. From what I understand the salary is pretty much flatlined. What I'm really upset about is the five-year forecast. I'm looking at 2013. Total revenues \$48 million, cost is \$51 million. Large amount is employee retirement and insurance benefits. I don't know how you can afford that when you are overbudget. If the city of Westlake used your method of funding, with the winter we had they'd probably go to the voters for a bond issue. Everybody gets it done within a budget. I don't know why you don't make provisions to cut what needs to be cut to stay within your budget.
2. Dave Albert: while there are number of fiscal things I don't agree with in the new contract, one thing I didn't like was the noncompliance with the Third Grade Guarantee. I have two children in the district, one who will soon be a third grader. The state mandated assessments and credentialing. These are minimum standards. I can't understand why the union would want that in the contract. Having teachers that meet or exceed the minimum threshold should be the standard. I ask you to strike that language.

BOARD ITEM

1. Approved the Westlake Teachers Association contract

- a. Carol Winter: I want to thank the Board's negotiation team. We really did consider input from the community. The levy loss in November was a message from the community. That was very important to us as we went through this process. Along with that, each Board member does spend individually a lot of time researching all of the factors that go into negotiating a contract. That allows us to make informed decisions. We look at salary and benefit trends. We're not only looking at salaries and benefits, but working conditions, language issues, etc. Based on that information, the Board's goals were clear – redefine savings in personnel while making sure student services were protected. We want the needs of our students to be met. We were under orders to balance the appreciation we have for our teachers and the services they provide to our students, with continued efforts to save taxpayer dollars and continued investment in our schools. It saves \$2.3 million over next 4 years, saves up to 13 teachers, our teachers across the board showed they are willing to work with the Board to alleviate the financial challenges we still are facing. In this contract, it shows the teachers were willing to take another hit to salaries and benefits to meet the needs of our students.
- b. Dr. Keenan: There were 7 language items, but the bulk of negotiations were on financial items.
 - i. One-year contract per our ability to certify a contract due to our financial situation.
 - ii. Reduction in force addressed.
 - iii. Provisions adjusted regarding leaves.
 - iv. School calendar will continue with 3 professional development days
 - v. Teacher workload – adjustment in collaborative time
 - vi. Credentialing – the new test created is one of several ways to be credentialed for the Third Grade Guarantee. It costs money and adds no value. Gaining a master's degree and additional training does add value, but they must be credentialed.
 - vii. Resident educator program/mentor program
 - viii. Thank the teachers association. I was happy with the focus and the fact we could meet for three days and come to an agreement.
 - ix. For the third consecutive contract there are concessions in insurance. Spousal carve out now applies to all teachers. Gives up to \$175 to spouses who have to pay their own insurance. We save several hundred thousand dollars with this.
 - x. Salary schedule for third consecutive year, teachers have conceded to things they already negotiated to have. First time a 0%, then -2.5%. Teachers will remain on the 2011 pay schedule in 2014 and into 2015. For teachers at the top of the schedule, they will make 2% less take home pay because of additions to retirement and insurance changes. The intent of this is to make sure we stayed in check with our resources. For the third year we have a concessionary contract.

- c. Mark Pepera: based on our ability to certify the duration of the contract. It does help the board further achieve their goals of financial savings and preserving student services. With regard to wage freeze, the savings over overall contract will be \$2.3 million. That is a significant help to our forecast. We'll still have a deficit situation in FY2015. As far as insurance savings, we do a lot of benchmarking to other districts. Our employees contribute 15% of premium which is on the higher tier for the area and region. From a spousal mandate situation, it is very advantageous to have that spousal mandate. We will effectively move from 22% of staff to be on that mandate to 53% of staff with this contract. That will equate to savings of an additional \$240,000 a year. We were one of the first in the area to implement that spousal mandate. We will garner additional savings as a result of the contract. We receive a 15% reduction on our premium or \$220/month on a family premium. That is a significant additional influx. It is a favorable arrangement for the district and will favor our financial outlook. I will factor it into our financial forecast and provide an updated view of the forecast. These savings will carry forward from year to year. I commend you on the forward thinking in that regard, the best way to achieve long-term savings.
- d. Tony Falcone: this agreement saves the district a substantial amount of money. The teachers have indicated they are working with us to address our financial hardships. This represents another concession deal by our teachers. The teachers are required to contribute an additional percent to their retirement this year and next. I'm pleased with this contract. There is a lot more for us to do, challenges to be met. This is fair to the community and the teachers we value very much. I want to thank both negotiating teams.
- e. Barb Leszynski: when the teachers took a 2.5% pay cut, that was unique. I do want to add my appreciation to both negotiating teams. I think most of our community appreciates the work our teachers do and the need to have strong schools in Westlake. The City of Westlake is funded differently than the schools. Until our lawmakers do something to change funding, we have no choice. I'm very appreciative we will save teachers in the classroom. I think it's a good contract, it's fair.
- f. John Finucane: I think it's fiscally responsible for the district. The two sides worked together to move the district forward. It shows a true partnership exists between our teachers, administrators and community. It's good to know reasonable people can work together to find a solution to a problem.
- g. Tom Mays: It's important to emphasize this board has strived to be on the cutting edge with educational offerings, savings, restructuring debt. We've been no different in the way we lead to negotiate contracts. It's another example of WCS to ensure the educational excellence of the district is maintained, and what the community expects from this board. Our administrators scale decreased for all incoming administrators, and they have taken freezes on their salaries as well. Not only did it save significant dollars for the district, but it was evidence of forward thinking. We were not able to find any other districts where the district negotiated a reduction in salary as well as an increase

in premiums paid for health insurance and prescriptions. It seemed like most local districts were giving increases. I'm thankful to our negotiating team did what we asked them to do – negotiate a contract fair to our staff but looked forward into what we could do for our forecast. We would have loved to have gone for more than one year. When you fail two levies you are bound by what you can legally certify. I think the savings are just another example of how we continue to save and how we try to impact the district on the educational side as well as being fiscally responsible.

- h. Carol Winter: The short length of time it took us to negotiate this contract is telling. It shows there is a partnership that exists. I appreciate that the teachers understand the fiscal challenges we face and appreciate we are in a better place to meet our short and long term financial and academic goals.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

1. LBMS 7th and 8th grade math teams captured 3rd in Ohio at the Ohio Math League.
2. 3 LBMS students achieved AMC 10 achievement roll status.
3. LBMS had 14 writers named state finalists in letter writing contest from Library of Congress Letters about Literature Contest.
4. WHS senior Kristen Vellinga placed in 90th percentile on National German Test and will go on to compete for a national study abroad program.
5. WHS junior Laura McDiarmid won the Westlake-Bay Village Rotary speech contest.
6. 2014 Ohio Junior Classical League Convention gave several awards to our Latin Club, superior gold medal for service projects.
7. Hilliard elementary surpassed its goal to raise \$2300 for Harvest for Hunger.
8. Dr. Keenan read his resignation letter. Dr. Keenan has accepted a position as executive director with the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation. He will be with the district through July 31, 2014.
 - a. Carol Winter: I'd like to thank you for leading us through so many of those challenges and excitement, and help us realize some of our challenges can be turned into opportunities for our district. I feel honored I've been able to work with you for most of your tenure here. I have learned many great things about leadership from you. I've spent a lot of time doing research on school administration and superintendents. We are extremely lucky here. Even though this will be difficult for our community, superintendents' average tenure is 2-3 years. That is very telling about you as an individual that you've been here for 7 years. I don't know that I've met anyone with such a strong moral compass.
 - b. Tony Falcone: I've been in Westlake since 1976, as a K-12 student, citizen, and Board member. You are the best superintendent Westlake has ever had. I would be hard pressed to find anyone I admire more in any profession. We're devastated, but we need to find the next Dan Keenan. I hope the community understands we take that seriously.
 - c. Barb Leszynski: I hate to see you go but it's a great opportunity for you. Truthfulness and honesty. I apologize to you for the grief, rudeness and unearned remarks you've had to

put up with from anonymous groups. I do hate to lose you, I hope you can stay in Westlake with your family. Good luck.

- d. John Finucane: In my short time on the board and a resident for 9 years, I've had the opportunity to sit in the audience and up here. It's more insightful to see the behind the scenes you do to keep the district running. You'll do great in your new position. There will be at least 3 more months to talk through things.
- e. Tom Mays: 7 years ago we sat here and were looking for a strong leader. There's no better way to say we got the job right than looking at the fact that we are better off today than we were 7 years ago. What we were looking for at that time, you exceeded. Dan and I have had many conversations about a lot of things. There have been many local districts coming after Dan, wanting them to be their superintendent. He will now be able to impact hundreds of millions of students.
- f. Dr. Keenan: You won't have trouble finding a good person. Because of your vision and mission statement you attract great people. There will be people to build on that tradition.
- g. Carol: We will meet in executive session to talk about appointment of personnel. The Board will be working on this diligently, going through a good search process to find the right fit for Westlake. Thank you for your service to us.

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

1. Dave Albert: Wish Superintendent Keenan the best.
2. Mike Fern: Dr. Dan, best of luck. I feel compelled to express my disappointment with the process of the contract. Following two failed levies, I expected the process to be more open, to bridge the gap between the public and the board. I would urge you to have that conversation.
3. Liz Pirnat: Last year Westlake was the only district in the area that reported a reduction in teacher salaries. Cleveland.com has had several teacher negotiation contracts posted online and looking at their own information, teachers paying 15% for insurance is common. This contract is fair to teachers, district and taxpayers. If a teacher left to go to Rocky River, they would receive a 10% raise. Thank you for clearing up the credentialing on the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Anonymous rants are small. Come to this podium, state your name, address and case.
4. Lisa Hawkins: We move a lot. I research before we move. The first thing I always look at is the school district because it anchors the community. I also look at school leadership. I'm upset part of my investment is leaving. Five years ago I could find all of the budget information for the district, explanations, board meeting agendas/notes, easy to access. That was why we came here. Based on anonymous comments, I am getting flyers and spam emails. Each of them suggests the district is less than what they are, that our schools are being sneaky. It's dishonest and careless. If I did that same search today, what I would see are comments that Westlake is not what it is. I appreciate the forthrightness of what you have provided. Ohio contracts under the ORC are private. Appreciate you are readily available in the community.

5. Marge Widmar: Lived in Westlake since 1968. Former teacher. I've worked for a number of administrators. Dr. Keenan I'm sorry I've never worked for you. I thank the teachers for their cooperation.
6. Duane VanDyke: Thank you, Dr. Keenan. What impressed me the most is listening, talking, being collaborative and his involvement in the community. You've embraced the community and really became a part of Westlake.

The Board adjourned to executive session for the purpose of the employment of personnel. No action was taken.

Meeting adjourned.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: The next meeting of the Board is Monday, April 14, 2014, at 6pm, at Lee Burneson Middle School.

For more detailed information on these items, visit

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