

Summary of Minutes
Special Meeting-General Purposes
January 29, 2018

President Joseph A. Caffrey called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Superintendent Brian J. Costello led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Board Secretary Thomas F. Telesz called the roll.

9 MEMBERS PRESENT: Evans, Galella, Geiger Patla, Quinn, Susek, Thomas, Walker, Caffrey

President Caffrey stated:

- The chair wishes to announce that the Board held an Executive Session prior to the Special Meeting-General Purposes of January 29, 2018.
- THE SUBJECTS DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION RELATED SOLELY TO MATTERS OF EMPLOYEE RELATIONS, LABOR NEGOTIATIONS, AND/OR THREATENED OR ACTUAL LITIGATION.

At this time President Caffrey informed everyone that tonight the Board is holding a special meeting to solicit public comment on the proposed acquisition of 80 acres in Plains Township known as the Pagnotti site. President Caffrey noted that at this time he is going to turn the meeting over to Dr. Costello and ask all board members to sit in the reserved seats for Dr. Costello's remarks followed by a presentation from the design team.

Report of the Superintendent

Good Evening,

The Wilkes-Barre Area School District is committed in providing students an educational foundation that allows them to excel in all aspects of society. Graduates of Wilkes-Barre Area Schools are not only prepared for post-secondary education, but are also leaders within the community, armed services, and possess the necessary skills to be productive members of the workforce. The District takes tremendous pride in the success of our students and will continue to strive for excellence. However, with success also comes challenges.

One of the challenges that has been documented for several years within the Wilkes-Barre Area School District is the District's facilities that are in either in need of repair or have become functionally obsolete. The District has completed multiple studies in regards to our facilities;

In 2002 there was a Feasibility Study provided by EdVise, in 2007 another study by HighLand & Associates and in 2014 the Recent Feasibility Study by A&E Group, Borton & Lawson, Leonard Engineering, William, Lewis, Kinsman Architecture. All of these studies have identified deficiencies in our buildings and in our educational model. However, these studies have also identified solutions that come with a variety of price tags— some that are beyond our means.

Summary of Minutes
Special Meeting-General Purposes
January 29, 2018

Over the past Four Years, the School Board has taken action on this challenge. Faced with budget restrictions, the District initially determined that a consolidated school on the North Washington site was the most fiscally responsible solution that would create a unique educational opportunity where the High School was integrated into the downtown community within walking distance of local colleges and businesses. Although this plan met the needs of the District both educationally and fiscally, District stakeholders raised concerns including location in the flood plain and size of the property. However, that plan became no longer viable in 2016 after the Wilkes-Barre City Zoning Board denied the request to have the new building constructed on North Washington Street., where Coughlin High School currently occupies. According to the Solicitor for the Wilkes-Barre Zoning Board the denial included concerns about the crowd density, traffic congestion, parking availability and child safety. Although the zoning board decision was unexpected, new opportunities became evident.

Over the past year, the District has been studying alternate sites, Sites that address many of the concerns that were presented to us with North Washington Street. Sites that were out of the Flood Plain, Sites that will provide ample parking, sites that will be able to provide future expansion for years to come and yes a site that can support educational excellence in a state-of-the-art-facility on a Campus like Setting. The one site capable in providing all of those qualities and characteristic is the 80 Acre Pagnotti site.

At this time:

Members of the Design Team, Patrick Endler, Jude Cooney, Samuel Steiner and Dan Nealon, presented a review of the studied sites.

Citizens Comments

1. Corey Hanson
2. Michael Namey
3. Joanne Tenneriello
4. Richard Holidick
5. John Suchoski
6. Andita Parker-Lloyd
7. David Wilson
8. Kimberly Borland
9. Ruth Borland
10. Gabby Richards
11. Bob Evans
12. Jack Nolan
13. Sam Troy
14. Debbie Pride
15. Lois Grimm
16. Robert Brannon
17. Earnest Searfoss

Communications from Citizens

1. The Pagnotti site is the best option, close to the City, could be a true campus that could accommodate all your facilities, athletic fields. The possibilities with an 80 acre site are endless.
2. Wilkes-Barre Area School District is what it is because of students, staff and graduates. The Districts History is its strength not the buildings.
3. Consider fixing existing High Schools. Tax base cannot support a new high school.
4. The WBASD paid for a design for a school for a specific site that approval for zoning was not obtained prior to paying for design of school.
5. The Board approved approximately \$900,000 for a design of high school and testing of a site they have not purchased. The Board is gambling with taxpayer's money.
6. SOS has repeatedly requested to meet with the Board.
7. Has research been done by the Design Team in regard to previous mining at the Pagnotti site?

Summary of Minutes
Special Meeting-General Purposes
January 29, 2018

8. Request for the results of the climate study that was done in the WBASD.
9. G.A. R. students should not be kept out of the new school. All students should have equity in their education.
10. There will be monitoring of redistricting in order to make sure students are not placed in certain schools depending on their racial or economic background.
11. The Board has failed to show the public sufficient evidence that a consolidated school in Plains is the best educational choice for WBASD.
12. Architects are notoriously poor estimators and the architect's estimates have never been validated.
13. SOS has repeatedly requested you bring in another opinion in regard to the condition of Meyers and the costs associated with renovation versus a new consolidated high school.
14. The Board has not been transparent and the public is forced to submit Right To Know Requests.
15. The Board needs to establish a District wide comprehensive master plan in order to gain various scenarios for development.
16. There should be study of proposed site to determine how the District's proposed plans impact neighborhoods, traffic, etc.
17. SOS believes smaller neighborhood schools are best.
18. Why is the Board not willing to consolidate Coughlin students who are in the Coughlin Annex at Meyers High School where there is plenty of space? Coughlin students who are in the annex are being used as pawns to pressure the public into a consolidated school.
19. Board needs to provide documentation supporting the proposed K-6, 7-8, 9-12 versus the existing K-8, 9-12 format. WBASD is seriously lacking in leadership, rigor, accountability, choice and community engagement.
20. Keeping G.A.R. students out of the consolidated high school will cause problems for athletes.
21. Students have been neglected by decisions made by the Board and voters for not holding the Board accountable.
22. Curriculum was not mentioned in any plans presented in regard to consolidated high school.
23. Changes need to be made in the way students are taught, equip the teachers with resources in order to teach the students, adapt to the demographics of the students within WBADS.
24. If you do not consolidate all three high schools, it is segregation.
25. Students have never been a priority when making the decision for the consolidated high school.
26. SOS is actively pursuing an application to open a public not-for-profit charter school at the Meyers High School location.
27. There is not a realistic transportation plan for the consolidated high school.
28. WBASD has a significant student population of disadvantaged students and they need to be close to an Elementary school in order to pick up their siblings after school because their parents are working.
29. The Board needs to remember that neighborhood schools are important.
30. Extremely short notice to the public of this Special Meeting, which is deliberate.
31. What is the rated pupil capacity for the new school?
32. What is the aggregate building expenditure so far this year?
33. Opposition to consolidated high school is due to concerns regarding lack of educational environment and educational environment depends on neighborhoods.
34. The District needs to focus on educational values and not on new shiny buildings.
35. Are there plans for a library at the new consolidated school?
36. The Board has never stated that consolidation is better educationally.
37. Smaller schools are more cost effective in terms of construction, maintenance and outcomes.
38. The Board needs to do the right thing educationally for students and the right thing in regard to cost effectiveness for tax payers.
39. G.A.R. needs to be included in consolidated school.
40. Questions in regard to Plan Con.
41. Is the District able to afford the new school at the Pagnotti site?
42. Is tonight's meeting an Act 34 Meeting?
43. Better communication is needed between the Board and the Community.
44. Is Meyers High School safe?

Summary of Minutes
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January 29, 2018

45. Money being spent on the Pagnotti site is a waste of money.
46. Is the Board going to address the overcrowding that currently exists in our schools?
47. In a larger school setting all athletes are not going to be able to participate.
48. Is the geotechnical report available for the Pagnotti site?
49. If the Board worked for a company they would be fired.
50. Cost of the Pagnotti site is too high.
51. Test scores for the WBASD need to be addressed.

Superintendent, Dr. Costello, Board President, Joseph Caffrey, Attorney, Raymond Wendolowski and Architects, Patrick Endler, Jude Cooney, Dan Nealon, and Samuel Steiner responded to Citizens comments and questions.

NEW BUSINESS

At this time Ms. Patla asked the following questions:

1. How much to date has been spent on the Pagnotti site?
2. How much has the Board approved to date to be spent on the architects for planning on the Pagnotti site?

Tom Telesz, Board Secretary/Business Manager responded to Ms. Patla's questions and stated that so far on the site study: \$48,000, \$83,000 on borings and \$45,000 on the environmental study.

Solicitors Report

Attorney Wendolowski thanked everyone for attending this evenings Special Meeting for General Purposes.

President Caffrey adjourned the Meeting at 8:25 PM