

CHARTIERS VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT
MINUTES OF THE WORKSHOP/SPECIAL ACTION MEETING
OF THE
BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES/DISTRICT ASSEMBLY ROOM

May 8, 2018

1.0 Meeting Opening

A. Call to Order

The Workshop/Special Action Meeting of the Charters Valley Board of School Directors was called to order at 6:37 p.m. by Mr. Mazzarini in the District Assembly Room.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

C. Roll Call

Present

Mr. Tony Mazzarini, President
Mr. Darren Mariano
Mr. Jeff Choura
Mr. Eric Kraemer
Mr. Mark Kuczinski
Mr. Robert Kearney
Mrs. Julie Murphy
(Via Phone)
Mr. Brian Kopec
Mrs. Sandy Zeleznik
(Via Phone)

Also Present

Dr. Johannah Vanatta, Superintendent
Mr. Scott Seltzer, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Don Palmer, Solicitor
Dr. Jillian Bichsel, Director of Curriculum

Absent

D. Public Comments

Diane Pedersen thanked Dr. Vanatta for clarification and the commentary on the proposed budget. With that being said, I would like to express our concerns in the forum on what we saw. As a parent of both a 7th and 9th grader, I've experienced firsthand the value of well-staffed schools, dedicated teachers and reasonable class sizes as well as diverse course offerings. Often music and the arts are the first courses to suffer. As I'm sure you know, many studies have shown measurable declines in the quality of education when components such as class size and the arts offering are affected. If you make the cuts that we saw, there will be a perceived if not real drop in quality. It also remains unclear to me how we are currently in the financial position that we are in. Regardless, I still don't believe that cutting 20 to 30 % of the staff is the way to go. In summary, I ask you to please consider other options.

Veronica Windsheimer said, I am the parent of three students in the district. I have two high schoolers and a middle schooler and I'm here to backup what Diane Pedersen had to say. My children came home last Friday, and their table was a buzz. They started hearing some rumors around the school that teachers were going to be let go. My middle schooler heard some teachers talking about the fact that they were just hired and now

they may be let go and it caused a lot of anxiety in my household. Two of my children are involved in the arts program and as Diane was saying those are usually the first to be dropped. I just wanted to say, they are very important to the Windsheimer family, and I hope that we are able to do this budget in such a way that those cuts don't happen.

Martha Kagle said that she has two sons, one in 8th and one in 10th. They are both involved in theater in school and I certainly don't want that cut or teachers. As people retire and you don't replace them it's at the expense of our students. I agree with everything that Diane and Veronica said before me, and I just wanted to make sure that you are all aware of our concerns about what has been voiced recently. And, I would just like to ask the question, what happened to the twenty five million dollar surplus that we had a few years ago. We were told before they were building the schools, that it wasn't going to raise our taxes at all, and now we are having a referendum in May concerning our security, which should have always been in the budget. Right now there isn't a lot of security in the schools, anyone can come in the back way. I realize it's something important to do, but to raise the taxes to do it, it should have been something that was in the budget to begin with. Now to be in a three million dollar deficit, I don't know where the money is and I wanted an answer to that question.

Mr. Mazzarini said that he would be happy to address some of those questions. We set aside the twenty five million dollars for the construction project. Understand that if we didn't have that money, that would have been even more that we had to fund. That was a huge savings that we set aside ready to go towards the projects. When you talk about not raising taxes, there is no infinite day where you can say, I'm never going to raise taxes again. I've been on the board 5 years now, and I know for a fact that we have only raised taxes one time in that five years, and it was a minimal raise. We are still the lowest millage rate in Allegheny County. That can only go on for so long, until you start seeing things like cuts in staffing and cuts in programs. So, you can't do it forever. There is no infinite time that you can say that we're not going to raise taxes, so you have to be realistic about what you have to do from both sides of the equation. I think this board and our staff here has done a magnificent job of trying to make that all work without raising taxes. When we talked about the security issue, this was something that was brought to us, by concerned parents regarding what needed to be done. We probably as a district spend more on security than most. We have in-house officers with firearms in our buildings. Most districts do not do that. We put a half a million dollars alone on those guys, not to mention the rest of the staff in our district. To say that we don't already have that in our budget, we do. What we're trying to address is additional security by the request of our parents. When you start thinking about those things, they are permanent expenditures and all of these things add up to long term fixed costs. In order to do that, there is only one way to do it. The slide that Mrs. Cordisco presented at the last meeting was alarming, had we have seen it first, we would have never let her do it. It was part of her presentation that we hadn't seen yet. Business Managers always look worst case scenario. They have to build from somewhere, but at the end of the day we hope that we can get this budget very, very close without cutting staff or without cutting programs moving forward. Please rest assured, that is our goal. This board is very transparent as well as the district. Please if you have any questions, reach out, I will be happy to answer any questions you have.

Michelle Sedlak said, I have been coming to these meetings for two years, sometimes the only parent and sometimes the only one who spoke. But, I am glad this got people here for the discussion, because a lot of what I have been saying has fallen on deaf ears. I'm pretty sure I said eighteen months ago that we were going to be house poor. A brand new building and no furniture to put in it. Everyone said it would be ok, and now that the slide has come up, it's not ok. We're talking about metal detectors, so it looks more like a prison. How about smaller class sizes where the teachers get to know each individual student and what is going on with them. How about the process where we do refer

students who need extra attention and need extra care. That's where we are failing and that's where we're failing in security too. One of the most recent shootings in February, the kid was kicked out of three schools instead of getting the mental help that he needed. That's where it starts, put up all the metal detectors you want, but come up with a better way if they're that despondent. If you want to talk about security, let's make it district wide security including this building, we need a lot of things, but once again, we're house poor. Last year when we didn't take the index, I almost fell off my chair. We are the lowest millage in Allegheny County, we don't come close to anybody. Even people that are paying higher taxes, like Carlynton, are performing better than we are and we don't want to hold ourselves to these standards? I think that really needs to be looked at and since you're taking the communities input into your decision, let's seriously take their input into this decision. Ask the community what they want, obviously not higher taxes, but I don't also want to be only to sell my house for sixty thousand dollars because I live in a neighborhood where I can't get a kid to graduate. So, once again, I'm asking you to take that into consideration.

Heather Downey said that she was the one that stirred the pot publicly to get some people here, because we're people who trusted and all of the sudden there is that big red flag. Now, we need to put everything on the table. Where I live, there is a whole bunch of new construction, big houses, more taxes. I'm fine with paying more taxes so that my kids get a better education and other kids. The new construction also means more kids, so not only do we have to think about who's there now, and what they have to deal with, going through a metal detector and hopefully a smaller class. Whatever the case may be, think about the influx and hopefully they will keep coming because our district will be a solid district.

Mr. Mazzarini addressed some things that were brought up. I really appreciate your comments because it does make our board and our administration realize that there are some things that we need to do better and one is to communicate. We know that this communication piece has been a struggle without a communication person. It also becomes frustrating from our side, because we know things are way better than described in some of the information that we saw going around on Facebook. I would just like to say that when I look around our district, I see wonderful things. I see property values that have been going up consistently and I see new construction and people wanting to come to our district to live, work and educate their children. So, I can say to the public, you have to be responsible when you put things out there on social media, that you don't damage yourself, because that's what can happen. Its self-inflicted wounds on a lot of occasions where people go back on social media trend and say what were these people talking about. I take full responsibility for the communication that was done, we need to do a better job, but at the same time, I just ask everybody to please be responsible when you're putting things out there, because they never go away. My wife's a realtor and I know what every neighborhood in this district is worth. I know five years from today going backwards, we've probably gone up 30 to 40% in some areas. I know we're getting new construction and those tax dollars are going to be great, but when you think about what our millage is versus the new construction, the pace doesn't keep up. Once we get our new communications person, trust me we will do a better job of communicating, that is a priority. I thank everybody for their comments.

E. Recognitions

2.0 Superintendent's Reports/Presentations

Dr. Vanatta said that the Bridgeville-South Fayette Rotary club hosted a MS Recognition and Scholarship Luncheon and that several MS students were recognized and two CV HS students received scholarships.

The League of Women Voters hosted their first annual student registration opportunity. This event was organized by Mr. Harhai's Civic Classes and we hope this will be an annual event with our district.

I'd also like to thank the Chartiers Valley Education Foundation for their generous donation of \$5000. The monies will assist in supplementing the cost of AP testing and also in AP professional development.

Congratulations to the CVHS Parkway West CTC students for the performance on the NOCTE, with 76% of those students scoring an advanced rating and 94% overall scoring proficient.

Lastly, I would like to address a growing concern throughout the community regarding last Month's budget presentation. I want to be very clear, I know that this is concerning and a point of contention amongst us. Fiscal responsibility is of the utmost importance to the Chartiers Valley School District. Annually, it is our responsibility to ensure that the districts resources and the tax payers finances are being utilized to the fullest benefit of the district, specifically our students. When a budget is initially proposed, it is not unusual to be over projections. It's like a holiday wish list. We go through the process and through time we work to balance that budget. The slide listed regarding said reductions was that if the district considered no other means. So that was the worst case scenario, if we don't look at anything else. That being said, our acting Director of Finance and myself are conducting our due diligence to go through the budget and get that number to balance. So, although that looked very scary in a public presentation without comment, that again, was without consideration of any other action. So, please know that the ultimate goal is to bring a very closely balanced final budget to the board in June. A balanced budget is the goal. Not to impact our programs and not to impact our students and not to impact our current staff. On Tuesday, May 22nd we will have another budget update and you'll see this as we go through the process.

3.0 Consent Agenda

3.1 Motion to approve Minutes of School Board Meetings of: April 10, 2018 and April 24, 2018.

3.2 Motion to approve Human Resource Report.

**Motion to approve items 3.1 and 3.2 listed above.
MOVED by Mr. Choura, seconded by Mr. Mariano.
On a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

Mrs. Murphy said that she really appreciated the timeliness of the publication of the minutes. I've seen a real improvement in the turnaround on those, and I just wanted to say thank you.

4.0 Action/Discussion

4.1 Motion to approve Monthly Construction Report.

Mr. Day said that Phase 2A for the High School had a really good month. Rycon is working on the May update. Phase 2A is full steam ahead, and we have a variety of work happening. The roof is 95% complete on the high roof. Masonry work continues inside the building, particularly on the firewall in between the new addition and the pool and the gym. MEP, mechanical, electrical, duct work is all happening. The fireproofing continues, they're getting closer, they should be finishing up in another couple weeks. As you can see the exterior framing and the insulation system is started and ongoing. They started the concrete slab-on-grade last week and we're prepping for another pour.

In the Middle School, the punch lists are dwindling, they're doing a really good job there. The back check is probably going to happen in the summer time to make sure that everything has gotten done and it's in satisfactory condition. The kitchen is done and the punch list complete. There are a few warranty items that we've been working on with the vendor. The commissioning started two weeks ago and the functional testing is ongoing.

Mr. Mazzarini asked Mr. Day to explain the commissioning.

Mr. Day said that the Commissioning Agent is a separate vendor from ourselves. Basically they go around and test that the mechanical system is functioning as designed. That process for the Middle School started about two weeks ago. They go through and do different scenarios of temperature changes, fluctuations in the outside air and so forth. They'll test all the rooftop units and anything that provides heating or cooling. HF Lenz has done this for many years, they've done it for my company, PJDick, numerous times and they were hired by the district to commission two buildings that you're getting through this construction project.

Mr. Mazzarini said they also make sure that our warranties are in place, once the products are functioning properly.

Mr. Day said the best part of the services they provide, once we go through the functional testing, they verify that all the warranties are in place and you have an electronic database for every single piece of equipment that got tested and the results.

We still have a little bit of money on that project retainage and I'll keep you up to date as that progresses month to month.

We have started to get some operation and maintenance manuals. That's really the status of the work at both the High School and Middle School. The financial status, there are a couple changes on the agenda tonight and I've provided the update with the contingency that's part of the budget.

We have two change orders from Merit, one for the High School and one for the Middle School. There are seven items that you had them do at the end of the job. The majority are errors and omissions and one owner generated. Most of these were done on time with material and have been completed works in place, so this is just the value of all seven items.

Mr. Mazzarini said that when we're grouping these as a general change order, some are district generated and some are not, can you separate the ones that are district generated so that we know what those are.

Mr. Day said the other was the reusing of tech ed equipment rather than buying all new. Some of the pieces needed repaired or replaced to plug into the new outlets. That was not part of the project, we had Merit do that. That was a small cost to fix rather than to buy so much equipment for tech ed.

The High School one, is an error omission, it is a big value, but required by code. The windows that are going to look into the pool area from the common space are going to have fire shutters. The power and all of the connections for the fire alarm and cabling was not included in the bid documents.

Mrs. Murphy asked Mr. Day to explain the error and omission to the room.

Mr. Day said there are errors and omission that the design professionals will make that in theory should have been in the documents and should have been part of the design. Nobody's perfect and people are going to make mistakes, but the goal is to keep that E&O percentage low and minimize those mistakes. But if you had those in the documents preciously, you are going to pay for it anyway. You're getting value out of those changes, you need to do it.

Mr. Kraemer said building on that theme, knowing that some of the comments were concerning construction budget, there is an omission and or requested changes and unforeseen conditions when you're building from the ground up. There is a line item in the budget called contingency and so if you look at the agenda for every board meeting there is a 3.3 million dollar contingency number to capture all of those unforeseens that you don't realize you need until you get in there. We have that contingency and right now we're about 75% through the project and a lot of that risk is behind us and at this point we've spent about \$1.7 of that and we still have a significant amount sitting in that contingency.

Mr. Mazzarini said that PJDick was hired by the district to basically be our owner's rep and our construction manager. They have served the Pittsburgh community for a long time in this capacity. Jason and his team, basically have to look out for the district on our behalf when there are all of these questions that come up out on the field. With their expertise, I can say I've never been involved in a construction project this size and I do it for a living. It's been quite remarkable, actually being where we are at today based on the phasing of this project, the size of this project and the beauty in this project when it's all said and done. With their help and the guidance of this board and district, I am very proud to say that this district is in a very good spot. These buildings are going to be a showcase. We are building these buildings to further education and that is the focus. I want to thank Jason for the job that PJ continues to do and I thank everyone cooperating to move this along. I'm proud of what we're doing and I want everyone else to be as well.

- 4.2 Motion to approve Merit Electrical Group Middle School Change Order #06 as listed for an add of ten thousand two hundred sixty-five dollars and zero cents, \$10,265.
- 4.3 Motion to approve Merit Electrical Group High School change Order #09 as listed for an add of twenty-six thousand nine hundred eighteen dollars and zero cents, \$26,918.
- 4.4 Motion to approve April, 2018 Pay Apps Summary.

**Motion to approve items 4.1 and 4.4 listed above.
MOVED by Mr. Kearney, seconded by Mr. Kraemer.
On a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

**Motion to approve items 4.2 and 4.3 listed above.
MOVED by Mr. Kraemer, seconded by Mr. Kuczinski.
On a voice vote, the motion passes 7-2.**

Mr. Mazzarini asked if he could get an explanation for the “no” votes on the change orders.

Mr. Mariano said that his biggest contention and why he’s on the board is that buildings don’t teach, teachers teach students. Over the last several years, you’ve gotten rid of teachers and as some of the community members have stated we haven’t replaced them to balance the budget. All educators know that if you decrease class size, thus have more teachers, you increase student performance. So if we’re going to sharpen our pencils and make things better for everyone, then everyone should sharpen their pencil. The way to do that is not approve the change order. If it’s not in the original design, then you have to live with it. So, I’m not going to vote for any change orders going forward.

Mr. Choura said, that as you know, I’ve been against change orders since I’ve been on this board. And I really believe in my heart that when there are change orders, the district is the one that loses. If the architect or design team forgets something, I’m sorry they should have to eat that, not the district.

5.0 Public Comments

None

6.0 Adjournment

**Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 p.m.
MOVED by Mr. Choura, seconded by Mr. Kuczinski.
On a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Wiseman
Acting Board Secretary