

October 5, 2023

Dear Public Comment Participant:

I'll take a turn answering your questions from last night's meeting. Let me know if I've missed any!

1) *Three thoughts on District Historical Archives: Community Committee input, Local Library as potential repository, and Videotaping the items*

As you probably observed, this is a topic important to me. The Archive Committee of Kathie Spiers, Vickie LoBrutto, Jim Griffin, and myself are pretty decent historians and have put a lot of time in on this project. My goal is to insure we don't backslide to the former condition once we are no longer active.

I'm not sure we're at a point where the Community Committee would be helpful but I'll keep that in mind as the shape of a game plan emerges. There are legal requirements as to what the District MUST retain (Minute books, for example). But I do appreciate the idea that the local libraries might be a potential repository. (There is a bit of territorialism among the towns on this topic) As for crafting digital records, we had considered that and found it quite expensive. There is a LOT of stuff. We met with both the Dutchess County Historian and the NYS Archive personnel for guidance; again, a pricey project. BTW, the minute books have been digitalized by the Orange/Ulster BOCES and, with permission, are available in a digital format. That was done on a State grant, and I've spent hours there.

Overnight, Dr. Timm and I have discussed moving the collection to the High School and crafting a project to include students in both preservation and use.

2) *Why the approval of the Cafeteria agreement now?*

As I stated last night, the annual cost factor should be examined during the budgetary process, not three months into the fiscal year. But quite simply, it's not feasible to pull out now and craft a replacement program in the middle of the school year. After the last meeting, I crafted a list of questions and thoughts and forwarded them to Laura Rafferty. When last done in house, the program didn't have to deal with some of the changing landscape of food service requirements and Larry Anthony is an extraordinary program leader. We need to ensure cost effectiveness and equity among the three partners going forward. It may be as simple as a few adjustments in Pine Plains. But a 59% increase over two years, without investigation, is not workable.

3) *Filling the Vacant Board Slot*

While the Board has not formally addressed this, the informal commentary to date is a strong feeling that over the past couple years, with some diverse opinions in the community on controversial topics, it is probably better to leave it to the community to decide at the next election. The absence of a seventh member has not hamstrung the decision making of the Board. Your comment that an appointee would benefit from the experience is interesting but presupposes that the appointee would, then, be elected in May. New York State requires all first-time Board members to take a twofold course on a) Legal responsibilities and limits of a Board Member and b) Financial and fiduciary responsibilities. The Board is also committed to creating a methodology to bring new Trustees up-to-date as quickly as possible. I suppose if the Board found the lack of a seventh member hindering, it would have to adjust its thinking.

4) *Contract extension for an unnamed individual (Dr. Timm)*

Firstly, I believe it would have been permissible to mention Dr. Timm by name. Superintendents are more open to name in Board Meetings than other employees.

In New York State, Districts are required to give their Superintendent a (initial) contract of no less than three years and no more than five years. It has become common practice, after a successful year, to extend that contract by a year. The situation with Dr. Timm was a bit unique.

As Dr. Handler's time at PPCS was winding down, the Board was highly interested in promoting Dr. Timm to the Superintendency. The "market" for Superintendents is, cyclically, not particularly impressive. And, I have participated in three Superintendent "searches" and they are painful and imperfect. We had a long look at Dr. Timm and felt we already had a great candidate. While Dr. Handler still had time left on his contract, we learned that Dr. Timm was being considered elsewhere; thus, we offered him a contract that, essentially, overlapped Dr. Handler's. Once cleared of that, we felt it important to square up Dr. Timm's contract to that five-year requirement. This Board has immense confidence in Dr. Timm and wants to give him the time necessary to achieve his goals. I can't stress enough our confidence in his leadership and ideas.

5) *Tax Certiorari return for NE Family Holding*

This is a regular issue of Board life, and the District maintains a reserve fund for such tax issues. NE Family Holding fought their property assessment and were successful in lowering that assessment from, roughly, \$7 million to, roughly, \$4.9 million. The meter on tax liability starts when they file for relief. In this case, the process took two years and the refund was approx. \$45,000..... somewhat larger than we normally see.

Interestingly, the school district has no say in the certiorari process. Arguing, legal action, and settlements over assessments take place between The property owner and the Town's Assessor.

6) Other

I believe Mr. Griffin answered your question as to community input on Board Goals and Mrs. Fredericks answer your inquiry as to the "new" agenda item asking for other Board comments. Dr. Timm is better qualified to answer your question on Gender curriculum.

District Response

The Pine Plains Central School District uses curricular materials designed to implement the NYS Standards in each content area. The following content areas gender and sexuality:

Science: Reproduction is introduced in Middle School. Students study reproduction and how genetic information is passed on to offspring. In High School, students learn about the process of adaptation through reproduction and how this process contributes to evolution.

Health: Sexual health is introduced in middle school and is continued in high school. Topics such as the potential danger of sexual activity and sexually transmitted diseases are introduced. Sexual orientation is introduced in middle school and sexual responsibility appears in the high school standards.

Students in fifth grade attend an assembly regarding puberty and parents have information sent home about this. We are also required by NYS law to provide education for students to identify threats of sexual abuse.