

**West Valley Central School Board of Education  
Official Minutes**

**Regular Meeting August 11, 2020 via ZOOM meeting due to COVID restrictions**

Members Present: Niesyty, Ploetz, Kent, Klahn, Davis, Harmony, Frank  
Others Present: Amodeo, O'Brien via ZOOM, Boberg, Gugino via ZOOM,  
Bryan Hansen

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Regular Meeting called to order at 7:04p.m. with Ploetz presiding.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE to the UNITED STATES FLAG**

**III. Administration of the Oath of Office to appointed Board Member (BOE CLERK)**

- Bradley Frank was sworn in as an appointed Board member until the next election.

**IV. Moved by Harmony, seconded by Niesyty to ADOPT the amended AGENDA**

Additions: Personnel item (H), (I) and (J), statement will be read after Personnel item (G)

Deletions: none

Changes: none

7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

**V. Correspondence/BOE information**

During this session board members stated how happy they were to see so much support for the school. Charles Davis and Darla Kent said that it has not been said the BOE want to merger, tuition out, annex or close the school. The board wants to take a look at the efficiency study and dig deeper into the facts. Mike Harmony, Gary Niesyty and Heather Klahn stated that they declared their desire to keep the school open and its benefits.

Heather Klahn read letters from residents and sent text messages that she received to the whole board. Correspondence was in support of the school and wanting more transparency to what decisions the board is making.

Heather Klahn asked the board to share letters and email messages from concerned community members. She forwarded the emails to all the current board members for viewing. Stated she had multiple letters, she read the following letter.

Dear Commissioner Tahoe:

We are writing to you as life-long residents of West Valley, New York. This letter is a complaint against the West Valley Central School (WVCS) Board of Education. All six of our children and some of our grandchildren graduated from WVCS and we are deeply invested in the vitality of our small rural community. Our central complaint against the WVCS Board is that several members, including its leadership, are actively undermining

the very institution for which they were elected to represent, steward, hold accountable and ensure student success. In fact, many of these members transferred their own children to neighboring school districts, yet still hold substantial influence and decision-making authority on behalf of all their constituents with their children still in WVCS. The issue at hand is the declining enrollment of the school over the part many years. Like many rural communities in New York and across the country, shifts in agriculture, economics and opportunities have profoundly impacted West Valley. Of course, WVCS has always been a small school district, now it is much smaller. Nonetheless, from what we understand as residents, our school taxes have remained flat, the district has a balanced budget with a reserve and there is no threat of action by the state resulting from data that would suggest that WVCS is not sustainable. At the same time, we're aware that we certainly need to think creatively about how to continue to provide a high-quality education for West Valley's children.

The school board's responsibility is to WVCS and the community, not to govern from the stance of what individual choices they make for their own children and families. We are sure there are challenges to grapple with, as there are in all school districts, around opportunities for students, and that there are many creative solutions should the community actually be engaged. The zero-sum predetermined approach that the current board is taking to close or merge WVCS with a neighboring school district seems irresponsible at best for current and future students and families, and the long-term vitality of West Valley as a community.

Thank you very much for reading about our complaint and concerns. We look forward to hearing back about how the state may be able to address this situation.

Respectfully,  
Richard & Jacqueline Conrad

She had more letters and Tim Ploetz asked if she could just summarize the letters. The one letter she had was long and from a very concerned student, he is upset and feels that, he is definitely not being heard and doesn't like the fact that the board is trying to close the school. There was another letter from a student that is also very concerned.

## **VI. BOARD COMMENTS**

*Within this section of the agenda, the Board of Education or Administration may take the opportunity to comment on matters of interest or concern.*

Charlie Davis speaks up and states that no one sitting on this board wants to merge or close the doors of the school. The only thing that he has heard from the six board members is we want to take study and exam items from the study and dig deeper into the facts. Things have been recommended on how we should go forward as a school, but no one has made a decision. No one sitting around this table has uttered the words of closing or merger since I have been on the board since July 1<sup>st</sup>. He also stated that he has read all the emails that have been received and the letter that was sent to the commissioner. I don't disagree with one thing, any of them say. I was voted into this

position by a lot of people, I was around the town listening to the residents and I won their votes to get this position, and I've never once said it. I really would love it if the community would have a little bit of faith in us. Listen to the board meetings, actually listen to what we're stating. As far as community involvement we did ask for that during the efficiency study. He doesn't know why we are being painted in the way we are. Board members feel that they are being transparent. Now that we have some of the information, we can start to make decisions. Mike Harmony states that he has never said this and wants this school here for his daughter and other students for the small school setting. Heather Klahn states that just coming in here for the meeting tonight I was stopped by community members asking that the board do not make knee jerk decisions. They feel that we are not giving out correct information and you know I get it. I wanted to get on the board to help this school and community. All these emails and letters are saying the same thing. The community does not feel they are being heard, they are obviously hearing, feeling or interpreting something that but not be factual. It is our job to give correct information and listen to the public. People of this community are proud of this school and I feel that is why we have such a presence here tonight and it is sad that it takes something so drastic to get their voice heard.

## **VII. PRESENTATIONS**

none

## **VIII. REPORTS**

A. Principal, Daniel Amodeo reported on the schedule for students and the different plans we need to have ready for opening day. There is the virtual schedule, hybrid and in person teaching. Matt LaBrake and I completed it after the 10<sup>th</sup> draft. With possibly bringing students back in person we had to make sure the 6ft rule applied throughout each room and what the maximum number of students that could be in a room at a time. Within our schedule we will have (3) lunch periods to make sure we are social distance. A transportation survey was sent to student homes to see is transportation will be needed by the school or is the parent providing transportation. This will help identify possible problems or maybe solutions. The virtual plan is something that we have already completed. But with everything there is always something that can be improved. Hybrid plan is a little more complicated and we still have some unanswered questions. One of the things we are looking into is the Educational Rights Privacy Act. The important thing that we are going to start is having (3) ZOOM meetings at various times with parents to answer some of their questions and address their concerns. In the remote option, what we did in the schedule is pretty much the same structure that we did last year when we went on remote instruction. We were caught off guard and we did a pretty good job of getting kids devices, accessing internet connection and putting instruction together. We have had much more opportunity to prepare for this year, and the expectations are much greater. In other words, the state is requiring our instruction and the contents to be just as if you were in school. Therefore, the expectation of this requirement is going to be for students that

have remote instruction, like stated is the education bill. Bryan Hansen created a reopen 2020 on our website. We would start school on September 14<sup>th</sup> with students, have (4) superintendent days before students return to school - September 8, 9, 10 and 11<sup>th</sup>. We will have to update our school calendar.

B. Business Official, Ann O'Brien reported that we will need a special meeting on August 17 to adopt the tax warrant. On the 17<sup>th</sup> we will review the warrant, each of you will sign and then the tax bills can be printed and mailed out. We need to renew the personal touch contract extension and there is a motion on the agenda. In the past three years we have participating in providing preschool services for student here in the district. The county does compensate us for those services that we provide. Wanted to let the board aware of receiving three Small Claims assessment reviews. The owners are asking for a reduction in assessment and this is something the town would handle.

Darla Kent asks Shawna Gugino, Director of Special Education is there any updates in special education? Dan and I have been working very closely together with the scheduling piece I think he pretty much covered that. As far as CSE meetings go and CPSE meeting we still have to hold them by ZOOM, there is not an option for a parent to come in person. And I understand that you know for some of our families, it is very frustrating and I will continue to pursue guidance on that in order to try to implement those in person as soon as it is safe and allowed by the state. Because I do understand that it definitely changes the tenor of the meeting when you can be in person and you can share documents. The meetings in person are just more welcoming. As far as evaluations go the guidance that came out from the state. At the beginning of COVID, was that you need to try to conduct evaluations as best you can, however you cannot do them in person. So this puts districts in a bind. It is difficult at this point to do PT, OT and speech evaluations also. New guidance from the state, if they can be conducted during summer school hours they can be done in person. If not, they can be resumed at the start of school. She has talked to our parents and they are good with waiting until school starts, and then we're going to do those in person so that we can have the most comprehensive and appropriate information. However, that does not preclude a student from getting services so if a student was currently getting services, or if a student was referred based on a physician's note or was a transfer in from another school district with an IEP already in place, we would still be continuing those services come fall, regardless of evaluations are up to date. We can use anecdotal information from staff were able to use data from last year's classroom and kind of make those determinations. In order to provide those services and then we go back and we do a real evaluation. And then we're able to have a meeting and then update the IEP should we need to, so no students will be unable to acquire or participate in services due to the fact that we weren't able to do evaluations, it is not going to be punitive on them in any way shape or form. That is kind of where we're at with that so we're just planning out those evaluations and the timelines and the things like that, that we are going to need to address and we were running CSE meetings, we resume to get a few things in place for

fall so I will have recommendation on, I think it's on the 24<sup>th</sup>, the, the next formal board meeting there will be a batch of recommendations for the beginning of the school year.

**IX. CONSENT AGENDA**

A. Moved by Harmony, seconded by Niesyty to approve the unofficial minutes from the April 6, 2020 special meeting, April 21, 2020 regular meeting, May 11, 2020 regular meeting, June 1, 2020 regular meeting, March and April Treasurer's report, budget status, revenue status, extra classroom activities; March and April Warrants and March, April, May and June bank reconciliations. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

**X. PERSONNEL**

A. Moved by Frank, seconded by Harmony to approve Bryan Hansen as the Data Privacy Officer for the 2020/21 school year, stipend position. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

B. Moved by Niesyty, seconded by Kent to approve Chris Schiumo as the Athletic Director for the 2020/21 school year, pay according to the WVCS/WVTA contract. 7 aye, 0 nays, motion accepted

C. Moved by Frank, seconded by Davis to approve Diane Westfall as the Title 1 Coordinator for the 2020/21 school year, pay according to the WVCS/WVTA contract. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

D. Moved by Harmony, seconded by Niesyty to approve Dana Westfall as the Attendance Officer for the 2020/21 school year, pay according to the WVCS/WVSEA contract. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

E. Moved by Harmony, seconded by Davis to accept the letter of resignation, with regret, for the purpose of retirement for Amy Frank from her Family and Consumer Science teacher position, effective July 22, 2020. Dan Amodeo thanked Amy for doing a great job with our high school students to achieve better reading performance. She has a long history with our students and families and been a great asset for our school. She will truly be missed. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

F. Moved by Harmony, seconded by Kent to accept the letter of resignation, with regret, for the purpose of retirement for Pamela Casey from her Special Education teacher position, effective August 31, 2020. During the discussion part of the motion Dan Amodeo thanked Pam for doing a phenomenal job for the students, families and district over the years. Everything that we have ever asked her to do she stepped up and she has been great with the students, long history here with families, I consider a friend and a colleague and I just want to say that I will definitely miss her. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

G. Moved by Frank, seconded by Niesyty to approve a personal leave of absence for Aron Cole to complete his Administrative internship, from September 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020, according to the WVCS/WVTA contract. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

Tim Ploetz read the following: On behalf of the entire Board of Education, we would like to sincerely thank Eric for the dedication he has shown to the students, staff, community members of the West Valley Central School District during his time as Superintendent. Eric notified us that is was his intention to resign for purposes of retirement at the end of this school year. Upon reflection and consideration, we felt that in light of the upcoming changes ahead for our district, allowing Eric the opportunity to spend more time with his family now might provide the smoothest transition for all.

We will be immediately working with the CA BOCES District Superintendent to prepare for a search for his permanent replacement as well as determining an interim Superintendent in the short term.

We wish Eric well in his retirement and, again, wish to extend thanks for the time, leadership, and energy that he has given our district during the past eight years.

Personnel item (H) Moved by Harmony, seconded by Niesyty to the following, Resolved, that the Board of Education of the West Valley Central School District hereby approves the Separation Agreement between the District and Eric Lawton, effective August 10. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

Personnel item (I) Moved by Harmony, seconded by Frank to appoint Daniel L Amodeo PreK-12<sup>th</sup> grade Principal/Curriculum Coordinator as acting Superintendent beginning August 11, 2020 through August 17, 2020, compensation to be determined. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

Personnel item (J) Moved by Harmony, seconded by Frank to the following, Resolution, be it hereby resolved, to appoint Scott E. Payne, District Superintendent of Cattaraugus-Allegany-Erie-Wyoming BOCES, to serve as consultant in the search for Superintendent of Schools at West Valley Central School District. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

**XI. OLD BUSINESS:**

none

**XII: NEW BUSINESS:**

A. Moved by Kent, seconded by Frank to approve the contract between County of Cattaraugus and West Valley Central School District for Independent Evaluations for Preschool Handicapped Children to commence July 1, 2020 and terminate June 30, 2021. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

B. Moved by Davis, seconded by Niesyty to approve the contract between County of Cattaraugus and West Valley Central School District for Approved Preschool Special Education Related Services and Special Education Itinerant Services to commence July 1, 2020 and terminate June 30, 2021. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

C. Moved by Niesyty, seconded by Harmony to approve the food service contract extension with Personal Touch Food Services Inc. for the 2020/2021 school year. 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

D. Moved by Davis, seconded by Harmony to approve a list of technology items for surplus from the school inventory to be recycled. (complete list attached in the minute book). 7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

Moved by Kent, seconded by Harmony to go into Executive session at 8:28pm for the purpose of contract and MOA with no business afterwards.  
7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

Moved by Frank, seconded by Niesyty to come out of Executive session at 9:35pm.  
7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

**XIII:** Moved by Davis, seconded by Harmony to **ADJOURN** at 9:39pm  
7 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

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District Clerk  
Meeting minutes from transcribed dictation and audio