

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 101, BATAVIA, KANE COUNTY, ILLINOIS
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
HELD OCTOBER 11, 2011

SPECIAL MEETING A Special Meeting of the Board of Education, Batavia Public Schools, was held at H. C. Storm School, 305 N. Van Nortwick, Batavia, Illinois, and was called to order by President Link at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL On roll call the following Board Members were present:

Cathy Dremel	Joseph Purpura
Jack Hinterlong	Jayne Resek
Gregg Hodge	Kathleen Roberts
Ronald Link	

Also present: Superintendent Barshinger
Associate Superintendent Romaneck
Assistant Superintendent Monn
Chief Information Officer Inglese
Chief Academic Officer Newkirk
Principal Hichens
Principal Sikorski
Principal Girmscheid
Principal Skomer
Recording Secretary Walker

VISITORS: 30

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE President Link asked Kane County Chronicle Reporter Eric Schelkopf to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

CELEBRATING SUCCESSES Debbie Cange, PTO President for H. C. Storm, highlighted the organization's activities. She noted that the PTO will be hosting a clothing sale and just finished a successful *Walk to School Week*. Storm's annual book sale will be held during the week of conferences. There will also be a poinsettia sale. With help from a grant, the PTO is working on buying new playground equipment. They are hoping to have it in place in the spring.

Karine Picchetti, PTO President of Alice Gustafson School, spoke about activities at the school. She stated that AGS fundraising efforts have focused on parent and student activities. AGS holds an ice cream social, movie nights, a fun fair, gator field day and a school dance. The PTO also sponsors the walking club where students walk around the gym three days a week. They also are involved in clothing sales, art appreciation, the Sunshine Math Club, book club and book fairs. Mrs. Picchetti said, "We focus on one community coming together at AGS to make us whole."

Debbie Whelpley spoke about the PTO activities at Grace McWayne. "It is exciting to share a fantastic staff and principal. We have changed the mission statement to support the school by making the environment thrive in an educational but fun environment." McWayne's Walk-a-Thon will be held on October 21st. The goal is to raise \$17,000.00. Each McWayne family was asked to raise a minimum of \$150.00. The Walk-a-Thon is also looking for corporate sponsors. Mrs. Whelpley said they have nearly reached their goal which will enable them to buy a rock climbing wall. Other fundraising activities include a cook book, book fair and Winter Wonderland.

LISTENING POST

Associate Superintendent Romanek facilitated the first Listening Post in which audience members were asked to respond to four questions. This is a chance for Board Members to hear from the community. They will listen but not engage in a dialog.

A. What are the greatest challenges or issues this school district has to address over the next five years in order to provide a quality education for all students?

Lynn Smola, 604 Alberosky Way: Mrs. Smola asked how the district will provide quality education with reduced funding and increased costs? The district needs to define what quality education is and prioritize 5 to 10 areas. "Thirty-one kids in one class is not giving a quality education to anyone. Get people involved earlier rather than later. The Listening Post is awesome." She suggested forming parent committees to work together for solutions. She also asked the Board not to raise taxes.

Frank Gondorchin, 1240 Giese Road: He stated that his property taxes have gone down. “Neglecting our children is not worth \$70.00. Are we abnegating our responsibility as a community to insure that students are educated? There is a lot of anti-tax rhetoric. Schools are one of the things that make Batavia a great place to live. Investing in our community generates returns for all of us.”

Ellen Knautz, 707 Houston Street: Mrs. Knautz stated, “The district needs to insure that the reason many of us moved to Batavia is still a good reason to be here. It has an excellent education system.” She added, “My taxes as a parent have gone up in several ways.” She cited how fees for choir, workbooks and extra-curricular activities have increased. “As a parent, it feels like a tax to me.” She asked the district to maintain quality without over taxing the community.

Jill Harder, 1129 Bradford Circle: Mrs. Harder feels that cutting out full day kindergarten does a disservice to those students in a half day pre-school. She asked the administration “to think outside the box” to come up with solutions.

Holly Herman, 605 Winnebago Trail: Mrs. Herman is concerned with the future of the kindergarten program. She feels that cuts in kindergarten would only be the beginning and fears that they would lead to further cuts down the road for first and second graders.

B. What should the financial priorities be for our school district during the next five years?

Jennifer Wall, 1631 Hadley Drive: Mrs. Wall stated that property values have gone way down, which affects the amount of taxes going to the schools. “If we keep raising taxes people won’t be able to afford to live here. People need to pay for what they are getting.” However, she would hate to see music programs eliminated because people can’t afford them. The district needs to maintain the right balance between taxes and fees.

Lynn Smola, 604 Alberosky Way: “We have a \$2.4 million deficit. Something has to change.”

Holly Herman, 605 Winnebago Trail: She encouraged the Board to keep class sizes small. “Teachers’ salaries are the biggest part of a school district’s budget but teachers has the greatest impact on students. I would agree to pay more to have a child participate.” Mrs. Herman is also concerned with the large class sizes at the middle school. “They are way too high for any teacher to do their best.”

Ellen Knautz, 707 Houston: Mrs. Knautz agreed on the importance of lower class size. If the classes are too large, the individual time between the teacher and students is reduced. She also cautioned to be careful to provide services equally to serve the entire student population.

Mandi Moss, 1551 Darby Court: Mrs. Moss is concerned that the half day and full day kindergarten programs are not equal. The transition into first grade is “more shocking” for half day students than for full day.

Karine Picchetti, 1051 Danforth: She encouraged the Board to look at things differently, to make sure every stone is turned over in the process and to not make the easy cuts.

Christine Breiten, 1448 Holbrook Lane: She encouraged the Board to look at options that benefit everyone. “There is a huge chunk of people who are not here to speak for themselves. Class size benefits every student. It is the most bang for your buck. I caution you about the class sizes at the middle and high schools. It is just as harmful for them to sit in a large class as it is for the little guys.”

Jill Harder, 1129 Bradford Circle: Mrs. Harder is concerned with the teachers’ pensions and wonders if taxpayers are paying for them. She suggested offering merit pay for good teachers, but not to base it on test scores.

Frank Gondorchin, 1240 Giese Road: Mr. Gondorchil indicated, “I am not going to move if school taxes are raised \$70.00 per month. Take a look at the data and judge what is the real world. A lot may complain but look at the real impact.”

C. What are the most important skills, appreciations and abilities students need to know or be able to do, to be prepared for college or career?

Elaine Mainzinger, 943 Orchard Court: Mrs. Mainzinger is in favor of more choices for rigorous courses which will enable students to be more competitive when applying to colleges and universities. She added that the movie *Race to Nowhere* made her think about priorities. She realizes that it is difficult to make AP classes work with the block schedule.

Christy Kulczycki, 601 Winnebago Trail. She is also a proponent of the music and arts classes. “Art and music make students better prepared for college and life. Don’t cut too much. Focus on the most important rather than offering a little bit of everything.”

Gigi Shankland, 956 Lund Lane: Ms. Shankland is an advocate of the arts, especially the music program. “So many paths are available at the high school. Kids learn in different ways. Being on a team helps children become creative thinkers and problem solvers.”

Ellen Knautz, 707 Houston: “Academics should be a top priority. Music and sports help children get better in social intelligence and character.”

Marsha Swift, 601 Sennet: “Multiple Intelligence came from McWayne and is the greatest gift to our family. It teaches our son outside of the school program. We need to honor how he is wired and willing to pay for those kids who are different.”

Jenn Nekolny, 1893 Flagstone Lane: “Focus on skills and abilities. I see the special classes and world language as academic classes as well. A teacher exposing students to history and culture is different. I can’t do it that way at home. I am disappointed about

Spanish. I don't feel the community realized Spanish was being pulled. It is important to show kids the global impact when they are young and can experience it first-hand."

Stacy Kanan, 39W474 N. Hyde Park, Geneva, IL: Mrs. Kanan is a technology professional but feels there is too much of a focus on staying up-to-date with technology. It can be costly and none of us had technology when we were in school. I do not believe it is critical to a quality education. She also suggested being creative in programming by consolidating courses.

Frank Gondorchin, 1240 Giese Road: Mr. Gondorchin makes the argument for both music and sports. He stated that taking violin in the 4th grade gave him the discipline and ability to be a good football player.

D. What could the school district do that would increase excellence in the educational system?

Christy Kulczycki, 601 Winnebago Trail: Mrs. Kulczycki feels that not offering full day kindergarten is a step backward since more districts in Illinois offer full day than just half day. "Kids are ready for it. There is no negative research. If parents can pay to offset the cost I don't want to see it go."

Marcia Swift, 601 Sennett: She stated that some of the teachers are good communicators but others could do better. She would also like to see excellent teachers compensated.

Elaine Mainzinger, 943 Orchard Court: She feels that Batavia is doing a great job with the music program, but music itself is a curricular subject, not extra-curricular. Batavia is doing a lot for those students under budget constraints. The Batavia Fine Arts Centre is a testament to the community for the arts.

Ellen Knautz, 707 Houston: Always focus on transparency and over communicate. "For the most part I applaud the administration on how quickly they are able to respond to requests. Look at the budget; the more transparent you are the less things fall through the cracks." She also asked why there are more

articles in the paper regarding Batavia's budget problems than for surrounding districts.

Jennifer Wall, 1631 Hadley Drive: Mrs. Wall is co-president of the Music Buffs and believes the fine arts in general are extremely important. 26% BHS students are involved in a music program. In National Honor Society, 48% of those students are part of a music program. "Fine Arts are such an important part of helping kids develop. Don't short change them."

Christine Breiten, 1448 Holbrook Lane: "There are many different perspectives but a common pride in the community and school district. Tonight is a fantastic step. Keep open communication with parents. You can't go wrong." However, she did add that she was blindsided by the foreign language cut.

The next Listening Post will be held on January 10, 2012 at Louise White School at 7:00 p.m.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

President Link thanked Associate Superintendent Romanek for moderating the forum. He also thanked everyone who turned out tonight along with Tony Malay and the BEA "for making Batavia a premiere district and enticing teachers to come from other districts and to stay in the district." He also thanked the administration for doing their job as well as they do with a 30% cutback. He added that Illinois is 49th out of 50 states on how they prioritize education. It is one of the few left funded by property taxes. "Contact your politicians. I don't want to see this decay over political nonsense. There have been issues over four years and no resolution." Regarding budget issues he said, "Other schools may not be as transparent as we are in Batavia. A lot of school boards won't do this; it is too risky."

BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Board Member Hinterlong thanked the public for coming and encourage them to talk to their neighbors and seniors who also support the schools. "Seniors are on fixed incomes and I want to hear from them. I also want to hear from students about what is important to them. The issues coming forward are going to be tough to handle. As a Board we need to remain fiscally responsible. I believe the budget should be in balance."

Board Member Hodge also thanked everyone for coming. He added that he attended the Re-dedication at the high school last Sunday. "It was a wonderful afternoon and an obvious example of community support." He added that he enjoyed the fact that this meeting was held at a school. "It puts things back into perspective."

Board Member Roberts agreed with her fellow Board Members. She said, "For the 20 years I have been on the Board I have always used the decision making model of putting kids first."

Board Member Purpura stated that there are a lot more voices out there to be heard. "There are a lot of people who don't have kids that we should be hearing from. I hope to get more people out on January 10th."

Board Member Resek said, "This type of forum is so invaluable. But don't let it be the only time we hear from you."

Board Member Dremel concluded, "I am really gratified to see the honesty tonight. Everyone was incredibly gracious even if they didn't agree. The pride in the community is evident. I encourage everyone to come out in January."

ADJOURN

Moved by Dremel and seconded by Roberts to adjourn the meeting of the Board of Education at 8:43 p.m.

Jack K. Barshinger
Secretary

Ronald A. Link
President