

Board of Education
LakeVille Community Schools
Minutes
SPECIAL MEETING
Thursday, April 20, 2017
LakeVille Middle School
11107 Washburn Rd. Otisville, MI 48463
Media Center

- A. President **Holly Selesky** called the meeting to order at **7:03 p.m.**
Holly Selesky led the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. ATTENDANCE

Board Members Present:

Holly Selesky	Chad Carriero
Ken Burkhardt	Branden McDowell
Jodi Strother	Tiffani Ferrier

Administrator Present

Mike Lytle	Tom Ruitta
Mary Haslinger	Mike Banyas
Carrie Strait	

Absent

Jim Baier	

C. ADJUSTMENTS/ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Tiffani Ferrier moved the Board of Education to approve the agenda as Presented. **Branden McDowell** seconded the motion.

The motion carried 6-0.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public Comment were made by a community member, a 2016 Graduate and a staff member on behalf of Mrs. Haslinger.

E. APPOINTMENT OF PRESIDING OFFICER

Tiffani Ferrier moved the Board of Education to appoint William J. Blaha as the presiding officer to rule on procedural/evidentiary matters unless overturned by a majority of the Board, but the Board retains exclusive authority to evaluate and judge the facts and make other findings as required by these proceedings. **Branden McDowell** seconded the motion.

****Roll Call Vote****

H. Selesky – Y, C. Carriero – Y, K. Burkhardt – Y,
B. McDowell – Y, J. Strother – Y, T. Ferrier – Y.

The motion carried 6-0.

F. MEETING FOR EMPLOYEE NON RENEWA OF CONTRACT FOR ECONOMIC REASONS

Tom Riutta Interim Superintendent Comment

Economic Overview

The Lakeville Community Schools over the past five years has faced overall declining revenues resulting in continuing series of cuts – no raises for staff, privatization of groups and staff, i.e., transportation and custodial; layoff of staff (not just teachers), eliminated alternative education program; downsizing through attrition. (Significant cuts have been made – looking at building closures)

2016/2017 School Year

- Due to far ranging cuts in the past we have maintained a fairly stable Fund equity of 8.2% projection is \$958,036 maintaining fund equity is no longer an option because the size and scope we had in the past are no longer available.

2017/2018 School Year

- Projected loss of 69 students (graduating

students and incoming kindergartens)
* foundation of \$7,511 loss of \$518,259 due to enrollment loss; in addition –increasing health care costs, retirement, utilities, technology - approx. cost - \$83,000

- If the district did nothing fund equity will decrease below 5% - which would trigger possible state oversight/ intervention
- In order to balance the budget and to avoid state oversight for the 17/18 year the district needs to cut \$600,000.

Plante Moran Study

District engaged Plant Moran to do facility utilization study – part of that utilization study includes past, current and projected enrollment trends and community data. Lakeville currently has five operating school buildings. The projected data Plante Moran will be providing to the community on May 9, 2017 will show that in order to reach the state target of 85% utilization rate, the district must close two buildings which would result in education of students in the remaining three buildings. Future implementation date(s) are currently being discussed. Future decisions will be made with community involvement, board oversight and administrative recommendation with Plante Moran.

Proactive Planning

Currently we have four Principals for the five buildings – if we close two buildings at most three Principals will be needed – therefore we need to reduce one principal effective July 1, 2017.

Reduction of one Principal we will save \$133,286 of the \$600,000.

Projected trends therefore require proactive District planning for Lakeville continue viability, which factors include:

- Enrollment , fund equity , staff salaries frozen, administrative staffing levels and cost compare, building closures and Plante Moran study recommendations, state intervention at 5%,

Conclusion/Recommendation

Based upon the economic forecast impacting the District, this recommendation of the non-renewal contract of one administrator is appropriate, reasonable and not arbitrary or capricious, prudent financial management.

The recommendation for the elimination for the current high school principal, Mary Haslinger was driven by economic factors with application of seniority, qualification and applicable board policies.

Mrs. Haslinger continues to remain employed under her current contract through June 30, 2017, and it should be noted that Mrs. Haslinger has achieved Lakeville K-12 tenure and would have the right to return to the classroom for the 17/18 school year.

Mary Haslinger – High School Principal Comment

I spent a great deal of time contemplating whether or not to take this opportunity to speak to the board about the impending decision to not renew my contract based on Interim Superintendent Riutta's recommendation. I was at the board meeting March 28th when you voted unanimously to accept his recommendation and it was incredibly hard to sit and listen after you tabled the vote on the football coach because you wanted more information, but you had no questions or discussion about eliminating an administrative position from the district.

I am not here to fight for my job; quite honestly, I'm not interested in continuing to work for an organization that treats people the way I've been treated here as I have tried to figure out why I am not allowed to finish this school year in the high school. This is what has gone on...

On March 15, I received a phone call from the interim superintendent (Tom Riutta) and he told me I was being laid off at the end of the year due to budgetary constraints because they needed money to pay the new superintendent. The interim superintendent told me that the decision was not based on evaluation, but solely based on seniority. He also told me that he was going to have me finish the rest of this school year in the administration building as the "special assistant to the superintendent" but he did not explain how he arrived at that decision. A few days later, I received documents in the mail that stated that my contract was not being renewed and Tom noted that I should contact him if I had any questions. I did have a question, and when I contacted Tom via email he answered

the question and told me to address any further issues with Lisa Hendrickson. As Lisa is not an administrator, I asked for a meeting with Mike Lytle prior to my return from leave to discuss my not returning to the high school this year. He didn't have any solid information as to why I was not to return to the high school and I respected the fact that he came into the district and inherited this "situation." I spent my first week back to work following my leave in the back office of the admin building with little to nothing to do, so I requested to meet with Mike again. I informed him that sitting in the back office, hidden away from the kids and my job as the high school principal was sucking the soul out of me. He told me he was thinking of ways for me to be able to spend time with kids. In our conversation, he mentioned that he had spoken with Holly, so I sent Holly a text requesting to have a meeting. That text was not acknowledged in any way, so on Tuesday I asked her face to face if she received my text. She said she did and that we would meet "tomorrow" which was yesterday. I have yet to hear from Holly, so I still have no answers. Given the fact that I am under contract through June 30, 2017, to be the high school principal, my evaluation was not negative (I haven't seen it, but was told it was not and that my contract nonrenewal is strictly financial for next year and there are no budgetary savings in refusing to allow me to return to the high school this year, and I have received no explanation as to why students, parents and staff should be underserved for the remainder of the 2016-17 school year as I sit in the administration building, I should be at the high school in compliance with the contract I signed.

I am frustrated about the nonrenewal of my contract and about the manner in which this was handled. When I left to have my knees replaced, there was no indication that I would not be welcome back in the district. A couple weeks after surgery, when I called to check in at the school, I was informed that the administrators were told by the interim superintendent to have no contact with me while I was out. I naively thought this was out of respect for the recovery process; however, one a month after surgery I received a call that I was being laid off and I would not be returning to the high school this year, so the communication ban seems to have deeper roots. I have yet to receive any sort of explanation for why I am sitting in the back office at the administration building hoping and waiting for a task to complete rather than doing my job at

the high school, despite my efforts to contact the right people to receive that explanation.

It takes every bit of fortitude I can muster to drive into this parking lot, past the school that is full of kids with whom I've connected, to enter the admin building to sit alone at the back of the building and do little to nothing to fulfill the contract I signed. I am a valuable resource to kids, parents, and teachers. I am the highest paid building administrator in the district; there is nothing in my file indicating that I am a risk to students or staff in this district; yet I am banned from serving the students, families, and teachers in this district s the high school principal.

I will accept the nonrenewal of my contract if all the steps to get to this point followed the evaluation laws and met appropriate timelines. I don't like it, I don't think it's good for the education of our students, but I will accept it. What I struggle to accept is the fact that I cannot finish the year in my contracted position, working for kids. Reporting to the administration building to sit in that back office doing nothing to directly benefit our current students, drains my soul each and every day. This is not why I became an educator. I have never been so marginalized.

During my time in this district I have experienced more than what many high school administrators experience in an entire career, and through it all I continued to show up, push forward, and to act with honesty and integrity even at the end of last year when I knew that my assigned task was to complete an investigation that put me at risk professionally. In all that I have experienced, and all that I have accomplished and/or attempted to accomplish, I have maintained my determination and integrity, although the sequestering I'm currently experiencing certainly implies that in some ways my professionalism and integrity are in question. I have refused to allow the circumstances of my job change who I am as a person and as an educator. I've been challenged for sure, I've shed a whole lot of tears, but I am a smart, resilient, and professional woman; I put kids at the center of my educational decisions, and I will land on my feet.

The compelling reason I decided to speak in an open meeting tonight to bring to light the ramifications of this decision with regard to our kids, families, and teachers who

are already underserved in this district

- one social worker – spread too thin – not accessible to all who need her
- counselors have duties that take them away from time with kids (testing, scheduling, dual enrollment, online classes, and more)
- teachers subbing on prep hours so they are not an accessible resource for kids
- meetings pull administrators from the building and district regularly – one administrator covering two buildings means twice as many meetings, twice as much time away, and many students, parents, and teachers underserved in her absence
- Teachers deserve to have an educational leader who will challenge and support them as they work to improve their practice. Less oversight = less professional growth=fewer educational opportunities for students

- Kids need time to develop relationships with adults. There has to be consistency to develop trust and the belief that adults are there to help.
- Kids are constantly assessing whether or not an adult is worthy of their trust and a relationship has to be forged before students share the real issues...
- Many students have to overcome the disappointment of trusting adults, but not getting the help they needed. When they make the decision to reach out, someone has to be there...there are not many second chances.
- This week alone, as I have been out and about, kids have asked me when I would be back. I told them I am back and working at the administration building. They asked about my contract not being renewed and asked who would be the principal. I told them Mrs. Fazer would be the middle school principal and the high school principal and they immediately said the job was too big for one person. They get it,

and in these brief conversations the students indicated that they didn't know where to go to get answers and that they were not able to talk to anyone in the office and they had been waiting more than a week. I simply listened and offered any guidance I could provide.

This is why I am speaking today. The job is too big for one person.

Reducing the number of adults who are directly responsible for kids is not right for the students in this district. I'll admit, being told I am no longer welcome in this district was a hit to my ego, but I'm getting through that and as previously stated, I will land on my feet, but the bigger struggle is knowing that the kids and families in this district will not be adequately served by reducing the administrative staff. I've come to terms with leaving, but SOMEONE needs to be in that high school full time and SOMEONE needs to be in the middle school full time.

This may be a small district, but the needs of our kids and families are big, and taking a front line administrator out of the building will leave those needs unfulfilled. By removing a first line administrator and spreading one person over two buildings with the large number of kids who need trusted adults, we are cheating the very kids who are being educated in this district.

In my short tenure at LakeVille:

- Listened to kids as they cried over lost fingers, pets, classmates, friends, best friends, boyfriends/girlfriends, enemies, cousins, siblings, grandparents, and parents.
- As they revealed abuse, neglect, hunger, homelessness, a need for shoes and/clothing, molestation, rape, mistreatment from others, concerns for the safety of friends and others, and more
- Listened to parents, grandparents, and guardians who were struggling with their children, whose children had passed away, who had lost homes, jobs, partners, made placement decisions for

- their children in order to get them the help they needed, and provided advice when requested
- Listened to teachers who had ideas, problems, heartaches, had lost loved ones, and faced changing family dynamics, who made the difficult decision to leave the district or change careers, welcomed and mentored new teachers in the building as they adjusted to our environment, and challenged them to grow as educators
 - Problem solved, connected to services, shared hugs, referred to law enforcement or protective services, worked with state police and CPS, directed toward professional development opportunities, stretched comfort zones, held high expectations and personal accountability.

All of this happened due to a trust that had been developed through being present, available, and taking time to listen – Truly being there for those I agreed to serve when I became an educator. This is not unique to me as an administrator: it's what true educators do, and losing an administrator in this district will leave kids, families, and teachers to fend for themselves when dealing with these critical issues.

Another essential aspect of the school administrators' job is stretching and supporting teachers and moving curriculum and instructional practice forward. The Instructional Framework the district adopted requires each administrator to dedicate a great deal of time and energy in being the instructional leader in the building. This framework demands that administrators spend significant time in classrooms and in direct communication with teachers with regard to the quality of instruction to which students are being exposed and the educational opportunity afforded them. Reducing the number of administrators involved in this process will further tax the remaining administrators and further reduce the time available to help students and fulfill the role of instructional leader in the building. The bottom line is that kids get shortchanged again – this time academically.

One person is simply not enough to provide appropriate

support to both the middle and high school, because while I was busy taking care of the issues mentioned previously along with completing the many other tasks that are part of the job of the high school principal; the other building administrators were doing similar work in their own buildings. By reducing the administrative staff, many things are going to be left undone, and many kids and families will be left on their own in their time of greatest need. Our kids will need to compete against kids from all over the world once they leave LakeVille – if they are underserved emotionally and educationally here, they will be greatly handicapped when they attempt to enter the work force.

There is already a shortage of hours to get everything done and there is no way to adequately serve this community when you eliminate an administrative position.

As I stated earlier, I am not here to fight for my job for next year. I am perplexed as to why I cannot complete my job this year. I did not rally the troops prior to this meeting, and I did not expect much of an outcry from the community over the decision to cut an administrative position. I did expect that the community be appropriately informed that the meeting was taking place. Quite honestly, I'm not sure the kids, teachers, and community fully grasp the enormity of this decision and the negative impact it will have on the schools. I did have a few people reach out to me and say that the district has a history of driving people away, and that they are used to dealing with it. The fact that they are used to doing without is incredibly sad. Our community needs MORE to get ready to compete in the world, not less. Education is the great equalizer and in making this decision, these kids are not getting an equal chance.

- The kids deserve more.
- Their parents deserve more.
- The teachers deserve more.
- The community as a whole deserves more.

I want to thank my support network for being here tonight. These are the people in my life who have taken care of me when I carried home the burdens of my kids at school. They listen to me cry after spending the day at the funerals of our kids, or listening to kids who had shared the horrific things that have happened to them at home, and after I stayed late with kids who were removed from their

homes and placed in foster care, and more. They listened as I vented my frustration over what kids have to put up with to get ready for each day and to get through each day. They also celebrated with me when good things happened to our kids and futures start to come together. I consider myself a strong woman and I need this full network of people surrounding me to help me get through the rough patches...our students are learning to be strong and they need as big a network as possible to support them, to catch them when they need to be caught, and to celebrate with them with it all starts to come together. Kids should never be shortchanged in the business of education, and eliminating an administrative position in this district does just that.

- Mr. Blaha offered a second opportunity to Mr. Riutta for comment – He denied
- Mr. Blaha offered a second opportunity to Mrs. Haslinger for comment – She denied
- Mr. Blaha offered an opportunity for the Board of Education to ask questions– there were none
- Mr. Blaha turned the meeting back over to President Selesky

G. ACTION REGARDING CONTRACT NONRENEWAL

Chad Carriero moved the Board of Education to approve **WHEREAS**, the Board received a recommendation from Interim Superintendent Thomas Riutta for nonrenewal of the contract of Mary Haslinger, Lakeville Memorial High School Principal, pursuant to MCL 380.1229(2); and **WHEREAS**, Mary Haslinger has a contract which expires on June 30, 2017; and **WHEREAS**, the recommendation for consideration of nonrenewal included a written statement of reasons for nonrenewal for economic reasons and not performance concerns; and **WHEREAS**, the Board adopted on March 28, 2017 a Resolution for the Consideration of Non-Renewal of the Administrative Contract of Lakeville Memorial High School Principal Mary Haslinger, and

WHEREAS, Ms. Haslinger was afforded an opportunity to address the Board on April 20, 2017 to discuss the written statement of reasons for nonrenewal pursuant to MCL 380.1229(3). This meeting was held in open session at the request of Ms. Haslinger.

WHEREAS, Public Act 289, being Section 1229 of the Revised School Code states:

(2) If written notice of nonrenewal of the contract of a person described in this subsection is not given at least 60 days before the termination date of the contract, the contract is renewed for an additional 1-year period.

(3) A notification of nonrenewal of contract of a person described in subsection (2) may be given only for a reason that is not arbitrary or capricious. The board shall not issue a notice of nonrenewal under this section unless the affected person has been provided with not less than 30 days' advance notice that the board is considering the nonrenewal together with a written statement of the reasons the board is considering the nonrenewal. After the issuance of the written statement, but before the nonrenewal statement is issued, the affected person shall be given the opportunity to meet with not less than a majority of the board to discuss the reasons stated in the written statement. The meeting shall be open to the public or a closed session, as the affected person elects under section 8 of the open meetings act, Act No. 267 of the Public Acts of 1976, being section 15.268 of the Michigan Compiled Laws

WHEREAS, after a review of the entire record, the Board found that the reasons for the nonrenewal of the contract of Ms. Haslinger are neither arbitrary nor capricious.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Board of Education determines that economic constraints and proactive planning requires Ms. Haslinger's current contract which expires June 30, 2017 not be renewed.

2. Ms. Haslinger shall be given written notice by Superintendent Michael Lytle that the Board of Education has nonrenewed her contract for the 2017-2018 school year as soon as possible but in no event later than April 30, 2017.
3. All resolutions and parts of resolutions insofar as they conflict with the provisions of this Resolution be and the same hereby are rescinded.

Branden McDowell seconded the motion

****Roll Call Vote****

H. Selesky – Y, C. Carriero – Y, K. Burkhardt – Y,
B. McDowell – Y, J. Strother – Y, T. Ferrier – Y.

The motion carried 6-0.

H. ACCEPTANCE OF RULINGS OF PRESIDING OFFICER

Tiffani Ferrier moved the Board of Education to accept the procedural/evidentiary rulings of the presiding officer, William J. Blaha. **Branden McDowell** seconded the motion.

****Roll Call Vote****

H. Selesky – Y, C. Carriero – Y, K. Burkhardt – Y,
B. McDowell – Y, J. Strother – Y, T. Ferrier – Y.

The motion carried 6-0.

I. ADJOURNMENT

Tiffani Ferrier moved the Board of Education to adjourn the meeting at **7:50 p.m.** **Jodi Strother** seconded the motion.

The motion carried 6-0.



Ken Burkhardt, Secretary
Approved May 9, 2017