

MINUTES OF THE  
December 8, 2008

Regular Meeting  
of the  
Berne-Knox-Westerlo CSD  
Board of Education

The regular Meeting of the Board of Education of the Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District was held on December 8, 2008, in the District Office.

Members Present:     Helen Lounsbury                     Michelle Fusco (Arrived at 6:02 p.m.)  
                              Maureen Sikule                             Sean O'Connor  
                              Jack Harlow

Others Present:       Kimberly LaBelle                     Brian Corey  
                              Timothy Holmes                     Fred Marcil  
                              Agnes Zellin                         Carol Willsey  
                              Audra Rys                            Sue Bogdan-Ritty  
                              Jim Lemire                           Neil McConnellee  
                              Leo Bartell                          Ed Rash  
                              Mike Sikule                         Resident  
                              Mark Raven, Reporter             Zach Siemone, Altamont Enterprise  
                              Chrissie Margiotta

The meeting was called to order by the President, Mrs. Lounsbury at 6:00 p.m.

**Executive Session**

At 6:01 p.m., motion was made by Mr. Harlow, seconded by Mr. O'Connor to enter into Executive Session to discuss Contract Negotiations, Employment of Particular Personnel, and CSE/CPSE Recommendations. Motion was carried. 4 yes.

Mrs. LaBelle and Mr. Holmes were present during executive session.

Mrs. Fusco arrived at 6:02 p.m.

**Return to Public Session**

At 7:00 p.m., motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to return to public session. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

The meeting was called to order by the President, Mrs. Lounsbury at 7:03 p.m. Mrs. Lounsbury welcomed all present.

## Pledge of Allegiance

Superintendent Schrade led all in the pledge of allegiance.

## Consent Agenda

Mrs. Lounsbury noted that Item 5e – Approve Tenure Appointment was being with drawn from the consent agenda and tabled until the next Board Meeting.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education held on November 17, 2008, as attached. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Education held on November 19, 2008, as attached. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to appoint the 2008-2009 Winter Coaches, as per the attached memorandum. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to appoint Carolyn Cornwell as a Substitute Bus Driver, effective 12/09/08, provided she meets all the rules and regulations of the Commissioner under Article 19A of the Vehicle and Traffic Laws. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to approve the Emergency Conditional Appointments, as attached. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to accept the resignation from Joshua Baker as 2008-2009 Assistant Wrestling Coach, due to unexpected health issues, as per the attached memo. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to accept the Budget Transfers, as attached. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to approve Change Order No. RC-001 in the amount of -\$5,750.00 to the contract with Henderson-Johnson Co., as per the attached. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow that the Board of Education has no objections to the recommendations of the Committee on Special Education and the Committee on Pre-School Special Education, and approves the authorization of funds to implement the Special Education programs and services consistent with such recommendations, as attached. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to approve the 2008-2009 Custodial and Facility Charges, as per the attached memorandum. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to approve the 2008-2009 School Bus Rental Charges, as per the attached memorandum. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to approve the Resolution authorizing Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District to participate with other School Districts in the Albany-Schenectady-Schoharie-Saratoga BOCES to bid jointly for Chevrolet Suburban Vehicles, and also approves the Resolution to Standardize, as sanctioned by General Municipal Law Section 103, Paragraph 5, on the following: Chevrolet Suburban Sport Utility Vehicles for student transportation, as per the attached Resolutions. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to approve the Future Agenda Items, as enclosed. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Fusco, seconded by Mr. Harlow to approve the Dates to Remember, as enclosed. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

### **Public Discussion**

When asked about her experience in the Westerlo School, Mrs. Bogdan-Ritty said that teaching there was an unusual teaching experience, which offered interesting opportunities.

### **Committee Reports**

In regard to the Elementary Shared Decision Making Committee, Mr. Corey referred to the December 1, 2008 Meeting Minutes.

Mr. Marcil distributed minutes of the Middle School Shared Decision Making Committee Meeting held on December 1, 2008. He noted the need for a community member to mentor students, perhaps helping with homework. The use of a high school student was also mentioned. Mr. O'Connor suggested the need be posted on the BKW Website. Mr. Schrade stated that the Acting High School Principal is working on the High School Shared Decision Making Committee, and is in need of more members. Mrs. Fusco recommended that those who participate in the various Shared Decision Making Committees be recognized at a future awards ceremony.

Mrs. Fusco stated the Administrative Restructuring Committee is exploring options/ideas, and is not ready to report at this time.

### **Program Focus**

Mrs. LaBelle gave an overview of the roles, responsibilities, and duties of the Elementary Curriculum Coordinators and the Department Chairs. Work is being accomplished through the Capital District Writing Project where collaborative efforts are being initiated to coordinate K-12 curriculum. Present were ELA Elementary Curriculum Coordinator Sue Bogdan-Ritty and English Department Chair - Audra Rys; Social Studies Department Chair Jim Lemire; Science Department Chair, Neil McConnellee; Elementary Science Curriculum Coordinator, Agnes Zellin; and Elementary Math Curriculum Coordinator, Carol Willsey. Each one spoke of their duties, course offerings; budgeting; scheduling; career planning; Academic Intervention Services; New York State mandates, especially NYS testing at various grade levels; professional development. All expressed the importance of collaboration and sharing of ideas and concepts between subject areas, as well as between grades levels. A common theme presented was the importance of literacy, reading and writing in test taking and life skills in each of the disciplines. The significance of smooth transitions from grade to grade starting at the elementary level is essential to achieve success at high school, college level, and future life situations.

Dr. Harlow offered his personal science equipment and services to Mrs. Zellin for use with the elementary science program.

### **Member Comments**

Dr. Harlow stated that although last year was difficult for many reasons, he wanted to take the opportunity to thank everyone, the administrators, staff, and teachers for a good job, that the Board appreciates their efforts, and wished all happy holidays.

Mr. O'Connor will speak to Mrs. Lounsbury regarding coordination and continuity in preparing one year to next (grade levels) transition as a possible future agenda item.

Mrs. Sikule will meet with Mr. Marcil, Athletic Director, regarding concerns and possible revisions/additions and enforcement of the Athletic Code of Conduct, especially as it pertains to sportsmanship.

### **New Business**

Motion was made by Mr. Harlow, seconded by Mrs. Fusco to preliminarily approve Board Policies #1340; #1341; #1342; #1343; #1344; #1345, as attached.

Mr. Schrade noted these job descriptions were derived from Albany County Civil Service, but the Board had previously asked to have them added to Board Policy.

Dr. Harlow suggested that in order to prevent future misunderstandings, that if the entire Board is in agreement and wants a task performed, a formal motion should reflect the intent/pleasure of the Board to have action taken on certain items or requests. Mrs. Fusco suggested this be added to the Board Ground Rules Committee assignment.

Mrs. Sikule suggested the following as potential changes to proposed policies: a statement added to each policy - "must meet all applicable prerequisites"; in regard to Policy #1343, that workday hours not be included in the policy; in regard to Policy #1341, add to duties - assign substitute bus drivers for all extracurricular trips; change wording regarding "representing and negotiating with employees on contract negotiations". Mr. Schrade will have wording revisions available for the second votes.

Mrs. Fusco questioned that the Assistant Transportation Director report to Director of Transportation. Mr. Schrade would like to see the wording remain, should the School District fill both positions.

Motion was made by Mr. Harlow, seconded by Mrs. Sikule to amend the motion on the floor to approve Board Policy #1340 - Duties of Transportation Supervisor, with suggestions/recommendations. Motion was carried. 5 yes. (First motion)

Motion was made by Mr. Harlow, seconded by Mrs. Sikule to amend the motion on the floor to approve Board Policy #1341 - Duties of Assistant Director of Transportation, with suggestions/recommendations. Motion was carried. 5 yes. (First motion)

Motion was made by Mr. Harlow, seconded by Mrs. Sikule to amend the motion on the floor to

approve Board Policy #1342 - Duties of Head Custodian, with suggestions/recommendations. Motion was carried. 5 yes. (First motion)

Motion was made by Mr. Harlow, seconded by Mrs. Sikule to amend the motion on the floor to approve Board Policy #1343 - Duties of Food Service Manager, with suggestions/recommendations. Motion was carried. 5 yes. (First motion)

Motion was made by Mr. Harlow, seconded by Mrs. Sikule to amend the motion on the floor to approve Board Policy #1344 - Duties of Maintenance Supervisor, with suggestions/recommendations. Motion was carried. 5 yes. (First motion)

Motion was made by Mr. Harlow, seconded by Mrs. Sikule to amend the motion on the floor to approve Board Policy #1345 - Duties of Senior Automotive Mechanic, with suggestions/recommendations. Motion was carried. 5 yes. (First motion)

Motion was made by Mr. Harlow, seconded by Mrs. Fusco to adopt the attached Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District 403(b) Retirement Plan Document, subject to its terms and, the terms of any other agreements as deemed appropriate, attached hereto and made a part hereof, and the Adoption Agreement and the selections made therein, as amended and restated effective January 1, 2009. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Mr. Holmes stated an attorney had reviewed the Plan Document, and approved it with minor wording changes.

### **Unfinished Business**

Discussion regarding the potential use and/or sale of the Westerlo School Building ensued. Mr. O'Connor feels the sale of the building would be a mistake, the building is an asset if treated correctly. He went on to say that the presence of the Helderberg Christian School fulfills the need for a school for the residents of Westerlo. He believes the School Board should maintain the School without harming the fiscal stability of the School District. It was mentioned that it does not make sense, logistically, to transport kids to Westerlo from Knox. In the interim, the Board needs to find ways to have the building temporarily occupied and get the most out of the building. If the District cannot afford to upkeep the building or make major repairs deemed necessary, the Board should consider sale, rather than let the building deteriorate. It was suggested the Helderberg Christian School needs to pick up more of the expense, perhaps incorporate these into future rental options. Mr. Harlow feels the School is a treasure to the Westerlo Community, but the determination of the Building's future should be put to the District Residents as a referendum.

Mrs. Sikule suggested that the ideas of the Westerlo Committee be itemized, exploring the top two choices for usage of the Building; also, due to the large population of special education students, consider what plans we have for these groups in the next five years; there would be large cost savings to bring students back to the District, which might offset costs of re-opening the building. If pursuing a sale of the Building, doing a title search is imperative. Mrs. Lounsbury was of the belief she had seen documentation at the Berne Historical Society stating that if Westerlo joined Berne and Knox, that the Westerlo Building would always be used as a school. Mr. Harlow said if there is a legal agreement, we should know that. Mr. Councilman Edward Rash, Town of Westerlo, stated the Town is very interested in the property if put up for sale, wants first refusal. The building would remain a focal

point of the Town. This would be forever a landmark, a historical location, kept original with the use of grant monies to refurbish and maintain.

Motion was made Mrs. Lounsbury, seconded by Mr. Harlow authorizing that a title search of the Westerlo Building be authorized. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Motion was made by Mrs. Sikule, seconded by Mr. O'Connor to conduct a facility evaluation needs to determine classroom needs for the next five years.

Discussion ensued. Mrs. LaBelle stated there are tentative plans to bring back two special education programs to the District for the 2009-2010 school year. Mr. Harlow stated that we need to identify all costs, including the Westerlo School. Mrs. Sikule stated she would not support selling the Westerlo Building, and then authorizing a new building project for space, if no plans were adequately done for projecting classroom needs, feeling the Board Members need to exercise due diligence. Mrs. LaBelle cautioned against making a decision on the Westerlo Building based on Special Education needs, and also stated five years would be too difficult to project. Mrs. Sikule asked that the focus of the projection not simply be on the special education population, but classroom needs for the entire student population.

Motion was made by Mrs. Sikule, seconded by Mrs. Lounsbury to amend the motion on the floor to three years, versus five years. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Mrs. Lounsbury suggested tabling Item 11b – Board Goals; Item 11c – Community Forum Summary; and Item 12d – Late Bus status until the next Board Meeting in January. There was a consensus among the Board Members.

Motion was made by Mrs. Sikule, seconded by Mr. Harlow that the Board receive from the Administration a detailed list of major repairs needed with a timeline associated to each. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

Mrs. Sikule reiterated the need for a title search; three year plan for District student population available for the February meeting. She cautioned that the lease with Helderberg Christian School expires this year, and a decision should be made by the Spring of 2009.

### **Public Discussion**

Mr. Bartell expressed his opinion that a title search will show that the Westerlo property had been donated to the School District. Mr. Schrade noted that the deed shows the property had been paid for.

### **Adjourn**

Motion was made by Mrs. Sikule, seconded by Mr. O'Connor that the meeting adjourn. Motion was carried. 5 yes.

The meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Denise J. Martin  
District Clerk