

MINUTES — SPECIAL MEETING FEBRUARY 23, 2010

- 1) A special meeting of the Hillsboro Community Unit School District No. 3 Board of Education was called to order by President Bill Clinard at the Unit Office at 7:00 p.m.
- 2) The following members of the Hillsboro Board answered present to roll call: Barbara Adams, Greg Bellaver, Trina Britton, Bill Jurgena, Earl Meier and Bill Clinard. Lynne Hutchison was absent.
- 3) Upon a motion by Earl Meier, and seconded by Trina Britton, move to appoint Bill Jurgena as acting secretary in the absence of Secy. Hutchison. Voice vote. Motion carried.
- 4) Agenda Item 2.0. Superintendent Update on Proposed Budget Cuts.  
Supt. Powell explained that this meeting was a continuation of the previous meeting the week before. The Board Members had asked for specific information and this had already been provided to them by the administration.
- 5) Agenda Item 3.0. Discussion of Proposed Budget Cuts.  
Pres. Clinard asked if there were any questions from the Board. There were none.
- 6) Agenda Item 4.0. Public Comment.  
Pres. Clinard opened this part of the meeting to the public. Former Board Member and Witt resident Doug Donaldson stated, "One community should not have to bare the lion's share of the responsibility for the budget crisis. Witt School is a very solid structure which enjoys community support from organizations such as Witt Lion's Club. The community loves and supports it's school. I don't believe we can fix this problem overnight. Supt. Powell said, 'Through simple attrition and some administrative adjustments, we can save nearly \$1,000,000.' That is half of the trouble we are in. It was also said, 'That the issues such as class-size and bus transportation would require further investigation.' Why make the recommendation with such devastating consequences without investigating these thing? There was talk of budget problems but no mention of facility closures until after the high school bill didn't pass. Many excellent teachers are going to be forced to leave our district. Bus drivers could become full-time employees because the routes get longer and they are spending more time on the road, which will make them full-time employees. The ISBE website recommends that maximum amount of time a student stays on the bus is one hour. Some students already ride the bus one hour with high school students. Teacher student-ratio will be affected. Increasing class-size is not a teaching tool. I have some proposals for the Board. Since Witt is the monetary burden on this District, I recommend letting the families from Witt send their students to Nokomis. I find that closing one of the facilities may have some merit. Therefore, I recommend that we close this building. Several other school districts have their unit offices in one of their school buildings. This would have little or no impact on the students in the district but will save money. Nobody said budget cuts would be painless but I say share the burden."
- 7) Witt Elementary Teacher's Union Representative Connie Harling spoke, "The faculty and staff at Witt Elementary are asking for one of two options. The first one is to keep Witt open. The numbers last week were contradictory. It cost \$79,000 to keep Witt open. The other \$586,000, which would be cut, is our salaries. This is not correct. We are tenured and can bump first and second grade teachers but the salary savings is then cut in half. There are other positions and salaries that can be cut because of attrition. The second option is don't rip apart our students and faculty. 'Children first' was always our motto and we feel it has changed to 'Whatever it takes.'"
- 8) President Clinard redirected the discussion by asking the audience for only suggestions.

- 9) Supt. Powell responded to the suggestions from Mrs. Harling, "The numbers, I gave with the \$586,000 in savings was not using the salaries of current Witt staff members. It was using the average salaries of non-tenured elementary teachers. The costs of the salaries currently at Witt are \$785,000 but what I have in savings is \$586,000. We are not saving the cost of all of those teachers."
- 10) Witt parent Danielle Brown asked, "That the children be considered."
- 11) Instructional Aide Pam Hopper asked, "Have you considered the referendum route and asking the voters to bear the burden that way. If we want to keep everybody on, keep all the buildings open, and keep programs as they are then go to the voters and ask if they are willing to pay the price. Is that something we can do? I think there are things we can do savings-wise as far as attrition. We have all seen ways we can be more saving. Is this a possibility? If the voters say, 'No, we are not willing to pay the price.' Then we all realize we can't spend money we don't have. Also, what is the status of the county-wide proposed sales tax? I read that is an option and it can be spread to all the school districts in the county based upon population. What is the Board's position on that?" Supt. Powell responded, "That county sales tax is exclusively for school facilities. You can't use this for salaries, but it would relieve the building fund. We are in the planning stages of a meeting in April. This proposition was presented to the school boards independently. It is a revenue source that can be used for construction, repair, maintenance, and renovation. It can't be used for salaries or some other things. This would not provide any relief to the Education or Transportation Fund. The Education Fund is the one that is the problem now. We are at least a couple of years away from that revenue."
- 12) Shawna Horn commented, "I spoke to Greenville's superintendent. When they realized money and the economy were coming to a point, it would break our schools, they opted out of using a special ed. coop. Instead they have taken that money, they get federally and have hired special education teachers through the school district. They then only pay for a coordinator. This has taken their cost for special education and cut it in half. The services have increased and the satisfaction of the parents has increased also." Supt. Powell responded, "The situation in Greenville is different from ours due to the labor contracts. If we would get out of the Mid-State Coop., instantaneously our Education Fund would take a hit because the Mid-State salary schedule is considerably lower than the District. The IEA money does flow to us through Mid-State. The stimulus money for administrative costs this year would have been otherwise assessed to member districts. We did gain between \$400,000 and \$600,000 of benefit this year. I have not done a comprehensive study of the implication of pulling out of Mid-State. It has been done by superintendents in neighboring districts and the district most similar to ours found there was no benefit and would cost the District more money. If I thought we could pull out of Mid-State, and continue good services and save money, I would be out. I also caution people who aren't happy with the services because there are other solutions to those problems."
- 13) Witt parent Sarah Eller asked, "What is the budget every year for sports? And what cuts are being made in this program?" Supt. Powell answered, "The total expense is \$327,000. The net expense is \$290,000. We are talking about raising sports fees, cutting some programs, cutting back on coaches, and reducing transportation costs."
- 14) Mary Myers added, "You can say what you want but the kids are going to be lost in the shuffle. My grandson goes to Witt but he will be so lost if he goes to Beckemeyer. You have the ability to make the difference."

- 15) Hillsboro Aide Jennifer Funk spoke, "I was affected by the Panama, Donnellson School closing but I lived through it. I think that paying for the salaries of special education staff should be looked into further. I hope the athletics aren't cut and I think the parents should take on more of the financial burden. Rather than getting rid of them all together. No matter what happens think of the kids first. I have one last question. If we are in such a budget crisis, why did we hire new people last year? I am a new hire and I had a solid job with Mid-State. Nothing was said about possible cuts last year."
- 16) Coffeen cook Donna Roper commented, "This is affecting every one of us in here. I want to know if Mr. Powell and Mr. Hacke are willing to take a cut along with us?"
- 17) Retired teacher Cassie Gunn said, "I retired from Beckemeyer in 2004, after 34 years of teaching. I subbed for a few years and decided to go back to work. I went to Witt. You don't understand what support that little school gets from the staff, the community, and everyone. Those teachers and the staff would do anything for those kids. It is a shame for you to close that school because it is a blessing up there."
- 18) Parent Penny Dixon added, "I have had kids in the District for fifteen years. I have had kids that were bored until they got into high school and then they were offered fine arts and things like foreign languages. These kinds of things kept them motivated. I understand French may be cut next year. I would like to suggest that you give the seniors the opportunity to finish their two years that they need for collage enrollment."
- 19) Shawna Horn clarified her statement regarding Mid-State, "My suggestion about Mid-State has nothing to do about my son but it does have to do with wasting money."
- 20) High School cook Brenda Mehlberg expressed her satisfaction in the education both she and her daughter received at Witt Elementary.
- 21) Parent Jacob Spensberger stated, "My son, with special needs, goes to Witt School. My concern is, when he goes to a bigger school, it is going to traumatize him. He will be lost."
- 22) Coffeen cook Donna Roper asked, "Is that what you are thinking that Witt will go to Beckemeyer?" Supt. Powell responded, "That hasn't been decided yet."
- 23) Beckemeyer teacher Marcy Fuller asked, "Is Beckemeyer really that bad of a school. I teach at Beckemeyer and I have 27 kids in my classroom, not nine, and I get paid the same amount of money. I welcome these special needs children into my classroom with a smile and open arms everyday. Beckemeyer is not that bad of a place."
- 24) PE Teacher Jan Fenton asked, "I really liked Mrs. Hopper's first question. I would like to know when we do offer suggestions where do they go and how do we hear back?" Pres. Clinard explained, "First, it would be directed to Mr. Powell to investigate, then to committee, then full Board."
- 25) Supt. Powell responded to one of the previous questions, "There were some projections put before the Board about some additional revenue, they could expect in the near future. Those projections were inadequate and the revenue is not coming in. In addition to that, there is the loss of state revenue."

- 26) Tax payer Mike Foster asked, "Have you considered litigating with the State of Illinois? If there are monies due you, they are obligated to forwarding them to you." Supt. Powell responded, "I hear a lot of work is going on through the Teacher's Union and the Administrators Association. I don't know of any district stepping forward to be the district that takes on the state."
- 27) Shawna Horn added, "As concerned citizens and taxpayers, we have the right to address our legislators and ask for more money. It is our responsibility to let them know we need help."
- 28) Board member Bill Jurgena replied, "There are several school districts that have form letters on their web-sites that you can fill out."
- 29) Agenda Item 5.0. Executive Session.  
Upon a motion by Secy. Jurgena, seconded by Greg Bellaver, move to go into executive session at 7:41 p.m. to discuss personnel. On roll call the following voted yes: Barbara Adams, Greg Bellaver, Trina Britton, Bill Jurgena, Earl Meier, and Bill Clinard. Motion carried 6-0.
- 30) Agenda Item 5.0. Executive Session.  
Upon a motion by Secy. Jurgena, seconded by Greg Bellaver, move to go out of executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel at 10:44 p.m. Voice vote. Motion carried.
- 31) Upon a motion by Secy. Jurgena, and seconded by Greg Bellaver, move to adjourn. Voice vote. Motion carried.
- 32) Meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Hillsboro, Illinois  
February 23, 2010

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Thomas William Clinard, President  
Board of Education

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Bill Jurgena, Acting Secretary  
Board of Education

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Date minutes approved