

**Horseheads Central School District  
Special Board Meeting of the Board of Education  
Thomas A. Edison High School – Community Room  
February 24, 2014**

**Present:** Boulas, Brinthaup, Conklin, Jacobus, Johnson, Lynch, Sadler, Strollo

**Also Present:** Abrunzo, Bostwick, Christiansen, Hillman, Marino, Williams

**Absent:** Apgar

**Call to Order:** Elmira Heights Board President Harry Blish called the Elmira Heights Board of Education Meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Horseheads Board President Brian Lynch called the Special Board Meeting of the Horseheads Board of Education to order at 7:02 PM.

**President's Remarks:**

Elmira Heights Board President Harry Blish welcomed the Horseheads Board of Education and the public to tonight's meeting. Board President Blish stated the purpose of tonight's meeting is to discuss short- and long-term ways the two Districts can share services and consolidate to save costs while preserving their educational programs. Harry stated each Board will vote on three resolutions: Resolution to Participate in the Local Government Efficiency Grant Program to Undertake a Consolidation Feasibility Study, Resolution to Accept the Work Plan(Timeline) for the Consolidation Feasibility Study and Resolution to Form a Joint Board Planning Committee. Harry stated that a few meetings were previously held with the Board Presidents and Superintendents of both Districts in preparation for tonight's meeting.

**President's Remarks:**

Horseheads Board President Brian Lynch thanked the Elmira Heights Board of Education for inviting Horseheads to attend tonight's meeting to further explore moving forward with a Consolidation Study and vote on the next steps for both Districts. Brian stated that the Horseheads Board has known for the last couple of years that we are facing a deficit, as Elmira Heights, is facing the same, and both Districts realize that we will not be able to do this for much longer; therefore, we are now looking at other options.

**Elmira Heights Presentation**

Elmira Heights Superintendent Mary Beth Fiore presented a Power Point Presentation consisting of the Tentative Program Work Plan(Timeline) for the Consolidation Feasibility Study. Mary Beth presented the Project Description, the Project Components, the 11 Tasks which consist of the following: Task 1: SEQRA Review(March 2014), Task 2 – Develop Request for Proposals and Consultant(April – June 2014), Task 3 – Form Citizen Advisory Committee(July – September 2014), Task 4 – Project Initiation(October 2014), Task 5 – Reorganization Plan Development(October 2014-June 2015), Task 6 – Submittal of Draft(Month 13), Task 7 – Presentation to School Boards(September 2015),

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Task 8 – Public Meetings(October – November 2015), Task 9 – Advisory Referendum or Petition(December 2015), Task 10 – Statutory Vote(January 2016) and Task 11(Month 18) – Grant Project Close-Out. Mary Beth stated that these are the Steps that New York State expects us to complete as we go through this process. Mary Beth stated that this will be a 18-month program as it will take a lot of working together to make sure that it is the right decision for both Districts' long-term interests. Mary Beth stated that anytime throughout the process either District can vote to drop out which would result with the complete end of the Study. If the Study is fully completed, the Community will then be the deciding factor. Public Informational Meetings will be held in November 2015 with a Straw Vote being held the following month to gauge community support. If that vote is approved, a Final Public Vote would be in January 2016 and if that passes, the Districts would be dissolved by July 1, 2016.

Horseheads Board Member Karen Boulas inquired regarding the timeframe for Tasks 6 and 7. Why is there a four month lapse? Elmira Heights Superintendent Mary Beth Fiore stated that the State has to have time to review it and make sure that what the gains would be before we can move on with the process. This also gives us a little leeway if a task would take a little longer than anticipated. We really want it to be done correctly; we don't want to rush through it. Mary Beth stated that this is a "tentative timeline."

Elmira Heights Board Member Lisa Benedict inquired regarding the first "Straw Vote" in Task 9. If one of the District's vote or both votes are defeated(voted down), is this over? Elmira Heights Board President Harry Blish stated that if either Party votes "No," the Study is then done. We would not be able to go any further. Harry stated that there are multiple times when it could be defeated and then it stops there. Lisa inquired if it would make more sense to have one vote before the process is started. We are talking about 16 months before the Straw Vote occurs which is a lot of time and work. Harry stated that we are dealing with a lot of material and anything that is submitted to Albany does not come back quickly. The State has a lot to go through which will give us time to make sure that everything is in place. We have to be very careful to follow the State Educational Regulations as we owe it to our public to give them the correct figures. The people need to see what it would look like if we reorganized and if it will work with the figures we have.

Elmira Heights Superintendent Mary Beth Fiore stated that we have to remember that both Districts are in a deficit and there will be a time in the future when we will be faced with financial solvency. Presently, we are heading towards educational solvency. Mary Beth stated that there are multiple steps where the Boards can stop it or the community can stop it.

Elmira Heights Board President Harry Blish stated the biggest concern is that the taxpayers have the material in front of them so that they are able to make an informed decision. We owe it to them. We cannot just consolidate. We need to plan ahead as we are all in the same situation.

Horseheads Board President Brian Lynch stated that he is in favor of the timeline. Brian stated it is very thorough and he likes the time that is allotted to choose a Consultant. Brian stated that it is very important to choose a Consultant who is able to give us the correct information. Brian also stated that Task 5 is a very important Task as the Consultant will take all of the material and data received from both communities through the Citizen Advisory Committee to create a draft of the Feasibility Study. Brian stated that he is optimistic that we will receive some money from the State to give back to the schools.

Elmira Heights Board President Harry Blish stated that at the last discussion we wanted the timeline to be realistic but flexible in case we have to adjust it. Now, we just need to see how it will work.

Horseheads Board Member David Sadler inquired regarding the timeframe of Task 5. David stated that Horseheads just completed a Study that the Consultant could use. Would it be possible to move everything up if we need to? Harry stated that this is possible which is why the timeline is flexible.

Horseheads Board Member Karen Boulas inquired as to why Tasks 2 and 3 are not going simultaneously and if it was due to flexibility. Horseheads Superintendent Dr. Ralph Marino stated this is correct. The Consultant has his own process and will also take information from the Citizen Advisory Committee and then, we will take our direction from the Consultant.

Elmira Heights Board President Harry Blish stated that we worked to be careful that it is done properly with someone who has the background and experience to do a good job. Our plan is to come up with two finalists and bring them in to make their presentations and have input from the public. We want to be as "transparent" as we can.

**2. Joint Discussion with the Elmira Heights Board of Education  
2.1 Resolution to Participate in the Local Government Efficiency Grant  
Program to Undertake a Consolidation Feasibility Study**

**Elmira Heights Central School District Board of Education Vote:**

Moved by Willard, seconded by Harris.

RESOLVED, that the Elmira Heights Central School District and the Horseheads Central School District hereby agree to participate in the New York Department of State's Local Government Efficiency Grant Program to undertake a Consolidation Feasibility Study.

Ayes \_\_\_\_\_ Noes \_\_\_\_\_ Abstained \_\_\_\_\_ Absent \_\_\_\_\_

Benedict  
Blish  
Brewer  
Callas  
Harris  
Sullivan  
Willard

MOTION CARRIED

**Horseheads Central School District Board of Education Vote:**

Moved by Brinthaup, seconded by Jacobus.

RESOLVED, that the Elmira Heights Central School District and the Horseheads Central School District hereby agree to participate in the New York Department of State's Local Government Efficiency Grant Program to undertake a Consolidation Feasibility Study.

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Noes</u>	<u>Abstained</u>	<u>Absent</u>
			Apgar

- Boulas
- Brinthaup
- Conklin
- Jacobus
- Johnson
- Lynch
- Sadler
- Strollo

MOTION CARRIED

**2.2 Resolution to Accept the Work Plan(Timeline) for the Consolidation Feasibility Study**

**Elmira Heights Central School District Board of Education Vote:**

Moved by Harris, seconded by Callas.

RESOLVED, that the Elmira Heights Central School District and the Horseheads Central School District hereby agree to follow the Tentative Program Work Plan(Timeline) for the Consolidation Feasibility Study as discussed

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Noes</u>	<u>Abstained</u>	<u>Absent</u>

- Benedict
- Blish
- Brewer
- Callas
- Harris
- Sullivan
- Willard

MOTION CARRIED

**Horseheads Central School District Board of Education Vote:**

Moved by Strollo, seconded by Jacobus.

RESOLVED, that the Elmira Heights Central School District and the Horseheads Central School District hereby agree to follow the Tentative Program Work Plan(Timeline) for the Consolidation Feasibility Study as discussed

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Noes</u>	<u>Abstained</u>	<u>Absent</u>
			Apgar

- Boulas
- Brinthaup
- Conklin
- Jacobus
- Johnson



**Adjournment**

Moved by Strollo, seconded by Johnson.

RESOLVED, that the Horseheads Central School District Board of Education adjourn from its Special Business Meeting of the Board of Education at 7:25 PM.

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Noes</u>	<u>Abstained</u>	<u>Absent</u>
			Apgar

Boulas

Brinhaupt

Conklin

Jacobus

Johnson

Lynch

Sadler

Strollo

MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully Submitted By:

*Candy L. Maine*

Candy L. Maine, District Clerk