

**Horseheads Central School District
Special Joint Board Meeting of the Board of Education
Horseheads Multi-Media Center, High School South Wing
March 16, 2015**

Present(Horseheads): Apgar, Conklin, Jacobus, Johnson, Lynch, Strollo
(Elmira Heights): Blish, Callas, Harris, Lepak, Sullivan

Also Present: Bailey, Bracey, Buzzetti, Christiansen, Coghlan, Marino,
Patterson, Scaptura, Sechrist

Absent(Horseheads): Boulas, Brinthead, Sadler
(Elmira Heights): Willard, Wolowitz

Call to Order: Horseheads Board President Brian Lynch called the Special Board Meeting of the Horseheads Central School District Board of Education to order at 5:00 PM. Elmira Heights Board President Harry Blish called the Special Board Meeting of the Elmira Heights Board of Education to order at 5:01 PM.

Horseheads Board President Brian Lynch welcomed the Elmira Heights Central School District Board of Education and the Public to the Special Joint Board Meeting of the Horseheads Central School District and Elmira Heights Boards of Education. Brian turned the meeting over to the Western New York Educational Services Consultants, Thomas Coseo, Roger Gorham and Doug Hamlin who presented updates of the Feasibility Study, an Overview of the November 17, 2014, Business/Relator's Forum, an Overview of Contracts with Town Assessors in the Elmira Heights and Horseheads School Districts and Responses to the Board of Education Questions generated at the July 22, 2014, Joint Board of Education Meeting.

Thomas Coseo gave an overview of the work that the Community Advisory Committee(32-member Committee) has completed to date. Tom stated they are a wonderful group to work with who fully read the materials that was sent to them. Their commitment level is extremely high and everyone is fully involved and extremely vocal about their concerns as the process continues to move forward. Tom stated they have done an excellent job representing the community and what the Study is about.

Tom reviewed the following areas: Current Fiscal Conditions, Enrollment Projections, Curriculum and Instruction and Athletics and Extra-Curricular Activities. Throughout this process there was a lot of comparison of each District including an analysis of the District Fund Balances, reviewed District Salary and Benefit Expenditures, examined detrimental staffing and program cuts resulting from GAP elimination adjustment and reviewed the impact of Consolidation Operating and Building Incentive Aid and a comparison of several District indices including wealth factors and various NYS aid ratios,

Roger Gorman provided the Board with an overview of the Enrollment History and Projections of both Districts noting a ten-year enrolment projection using Cohort's Survival Methodology was used looking at six years of history of survival from first grade to the next year projecting ten-years out with the same enrollment. The analysis suggested that the student enrollment is very, very stable in both Districts for the foreseeable future and approximately 5,100 students in a

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Consolidated District in 2016-2017 and approximately 5,100 students in 2024-25 which enables you to predict what the staff needs will be. However, Roger noted if there were external factors such as a large housing development was built or a new industry came to the area, it would become a major factor in these numbers. Roger stated it is within 100 students ten years out from now when a Consolidated District would start in 2016-2017.

Doug Hamlin presented an overview of the Curriculum and Instruction portion of the Study reporting on educational opportunities and how they would be either sustained or enhanced based on Class Size, Elementary Program, Music Programs, Middle School Exploratory Course, High School Course Offerings, Special Education Placement, Student Performance and Graduate Outcomes. Doug stated that the majority of the changes will take place at the High School due to the fact that Horseheads follows Block Scheduling, whereas, Elmira Heights is more traditional. Doug stated that Middle School is pretty scripted what students must take. Although there are differences how they are taught, it won't be a tremendous impact to the Consolidated District. Concern was expressed as to what would happen with the Elementary Program as it is not an easy comparison as not every program is the same. It was stressed that we need to make sure that we take advantage of the combined expertise to offer more opportunities and enhance elementary school specials as we provide the best of both Districts. Doug stated the consolidation of Grade Configuration will be by facility and a new "brand" will be developed that attracts new residents to the community as new opportunities are found that will enhance programs.

Challenges include the recognition that the Consolidated District will become one District. Transition issues include Elementary School Programs, Middle School Exploratory Offerings and the High School Schedule. Doug stated although there are some Transition Issues such as the two Middle Schools offer courses on a different sequence and the two High Schools schedules don't match. These issues will need to be worked out over time so that students come together on the same track; it would not happen the first year, therefore the New District may need to get some waivers.

The Consolidation of District Opportunities Methodology Extra-Curricular Activities and the Facilities were discussed. It was noted that every athletic team in both Districts would be considered, the current combined participation to maximum team sizes in the Consolidated District, the participation gain/loss needs to be determined and the appropriate coaching staff based on participation levels will need to be evaluated. It was noted that there is room for team growth, many teams will not reach current combined participation levels and there is less student opportunity for high demand teams such as soccer and basketball. It was stated that the only way to increase participation is to add new sports such as field hockey or ice hockey. The Consolidation would allow opportunity to re-structure the athletic program and an alternate/intramural program. Extra-Curricular Activities provide diverse opportunities for student interests at a relatively low cost. The Districts offer a variety of activities, some similar; however, many activities could be reduced or eliminated due to budget constraints. The Consolidation presents a larger "critical mass" of students and their interests and the consolidation of students and staff creates opportunity to maintain traditions/create new ones at minimal expense.

The CAC and consultants toured the educational facilities in both Districts. The Committee reviewed Building Condition Surveys, current capital needs and various building capacities. It

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was noted that both Districts have significant capital assets and in the past five years Elmira Heights has invested \$11.4 million in capital construction and Horseheads has invested \$5.6 million. Various grade level configurations were explored for an Elmira Heights/Horseheads Consolidated District. There was clear consensus for a Grades 9-12 High School at the current Horseheads site. There was preference expressed for a Grades 6-8 Middle School at the Sing Sing Road Site and four K-5 Elementary Schools, one of which would be located at the Cohen Facility. It was noted that analysis is still on-going and that there is still a difference of opinion as to how the Thomas Edison site will be used.

It was noted that the consolidation of Employee Contracts for both Districts would require the negotiation of new contracts. This would be a little more difficult as Horseheads has eleven Bargaining Units, whereas, Elmira Heights only has three. It was also noted that the new Board of Education and Labor Unions would be free to negotiate contracts that vary from the existing contracts in either District.

After a thorough review of comparative Transportation Data from both Districts including staffing, expenditures, regular runs, vehicles and Board of Education policies, it was noted that extensive cooperation of transportation services currently exists between the Districts, therefore, consolidating the programs would be relatively easy in a reorganized District. It was also noted that Elmira Heights has a strict transportation eligibility policy, whereas, in Horseheads there is 100% bussing noting that with a new consolidated District 500 students in Horseheads would not be eligible for bussing. There would be fifty students on a bus with about ten more bus runs which would cost \$600,000 with the addition of ten drivers and busses to meet that requirement.

The CAC thoroughly reviewed comparative Food Service Program Data from both Districts including staffing, expenditures, revenues, lunch count and pricing, noting that both Districts participate in the GST BOCES Food Service Program and contract with GST BOCES for service and staff in the area of Information Technology.

Overview of the November 17, 2014, Business/Relators Forum

On November 17, 2014, the Consultants and Horseheads Superintendent Dr. Ralph Marino and Elmira Heights Superintendent Mary Beth Fiore met with members of the Elmira Heights and Horseheads community, including representation from Eaton Electrical Corporation, Hardinge, Inc., Hunt Engineers, Architects and Land Surveyors, Swift Glass Company, Inc., Realty USA, Keller William Realty. It was noted that Elmira Heights growth is limited, whereas, in Horseheads it is a little more favorable because Corning Inc. is still hiring.

Overview of Contacts with Town Assessors in the Elmira Heights and the Horseheads Districts

WYNESC Consultants gave an Overview of Contacts with Town Assessors in the Elmira Heights and the Horseheads Districts noting that the Elmira Heights Central School District total taxable assessed value has remained relatively unchanged since 2009. Most of the new growth has occurred in the Town of Big Flats. The Horseheads Central School District has averaged approximately 2% annual taxable assessment growth since 2009.

Responses to the Board of Education Questions Generated at the July 22, 2014, Joint Board of Education Meeting

The Consultants reported on the Responses to the Board of Education Questions Generated at the July 22, 2014, Joint Board of Education Meeting.

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Questions/Comments from Board Members

Board President Brian Lynch thanked Western New York Educational Services Consultants, Thomas Coseo, Roger Gorham and Doug Hamlin for a very thorough presentation. Brian also thanked the Consultants and the Community Advisory Committee for all of the hard work they have put into this huge undertaking so that both Boards will be able to make a decision in June. Brian stated it is nice to see the enrollment is stable which is very beneficial when looking ten years into the future and further stated he appreciates the Committee looking at all the details and the “brand” of the Districts which is very important.

Board Member Doug Johnson inquired if the Community Advisory Committee identified what buildings(elementary schools) would be closed. Currently, there are five elementary schools between the two Districts and the Community Advisory Committee indicated that Cohen would remain as part of the Plan, so which buildings would be closed in Horseheads? Thomas Coseo stated we have discussed it and are not ready to confirm which building(s) at this point; however, it is a topic for tonight’s CAC meeting. Tom stated there is a majority that feels comfortable making a recommendation and want to allow an opportunity for some input to make sure all the questions have been answered and rationale has been provided. Doug also inquired if there was a majority recommending the combination of Grades 6-8 at the Sing Sing Road Building, also was there a Grades 7 and 8 model considered. Tom stated two of the three groups are in favor of this. The other group was more in-line with having two Grade 5 buildings. However, there were pros and cons for both. Tom stated a Grade 7 and 8 school was not considered. One of the things looked at in term of choosing a grade-level building was a sense of community, a two-year building vs. a three-year building. In a two-year building, the students just start to become familiar with the school community at the end of the first year and then are there for only one more year and then gone to the next school. In a three-year building a strong sense of community is built which was one of the preferences the CAC expressed early on.

Board President Brian Lynch stated when the group looked at reducing one elementary school, was there a discussion to go to a couple Super Large Elementary Schools even though there would be construction costs involved? Tom stated that this was discussed but generally we talked about an elementary building with 500 to 600 pupils which would require one principal and an assistant principal, however, the Committee wanted the neighborhood school environment. There was consensus to close Broad Street and Center Street.

Questions/Comments from the Public

Felix Kapron, of Big Flats, stated that he is very impressed by the work done and the depth and the thoroughness of the Study and believes that larger school districts are more efficient than smaller districts and is hopeful a merger would occur as it would mean a tax break for the local residents.

Adjournment

Moved by Apgar, seconded by Strollo.

RESOLVED, that the Horseheads Central School District Board of Education adjourn from its Special 5:58 PM.

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

Boulas
Brinthaup

Conklin

Cont’d

Jacobus
Johnson
Lynch

Sadler

Strollo
MOTION CARRIED

Moved by Callas, seconded by Lepak.

RESOLVED, that the Elmira Heights Central School District Board of Education adjourn from its Joint Meeting with the Horseheads Central School District Board of Education at 7:35 PM.

| <u>Ayes</u> | <u>Noes</u> | <u>Abstained</u> | <u>Absent</u> |
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Blish
Callas
Harris
Lepak
Sullivan

Willard
Wolowitz

MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully Submitted By:

Candy L. Maine

Candy L. Maine, District Clerk