

**Horseheads Central School District
Special Joint Board Meeting of the Board of Education
Thomas A. Edison High School – Community Room
June 22, 2015**

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

Also Present: Bracey, Buzzetti, Coghlan, Marino

Absent(Horseheads): Brinthead

Call to Order: Elmira Heights Board President Harry Blish called the Special Board Meeting of the Elmira Heights Board of Education to order at 6:02 PM. Horseheads Board President Brian Lynch called the Special Board Meeting of the Horseheads Central School District Board of Education to order at 6:02 PM.

Elmira Heights Board President Harry Blish welcomed the Horseheads 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. Harry turned the meeting over to the Western New York Educational Services Consultants, Thomas Coseo, Roger Gorham and Doug Hamlin who presented an Overview of Key Findings and Recommendations of the Feasibility Study for the purpose of the possibility of the Consolidation of the Elmira Heights Central School District and the Horseheads Central School District, an Overview of Responses to the Board of Education Questions generated at the July 22, 2014, Meeting and Insights from the Community Advisory Committee.

Presentation By Consultant-Western New York Educational Service Council

Presentation—Feasibility Study for the Purpose of the Elmira Heights Central School District and the Horseheads Central School District

Thomas Coseo stated that the Team would not have been able to complete this report without the extraordinary assistance from both Superintendents and the staff in both school districts. Tom stated it has been a pleasure to work with them and also commended the members of the Community Advisory Committee who have done an excellent job representing both communities and stating their advice and insights were invaluable in helping us to make our recommendations.

Tom stated that they were able to answer the essential question that “Yes, educational opportunities would be sustained or enhanced for all students at similar or reduced costs to the taxpayers by combining the Districts.” Tom stated the Study authorizes the Board of Educations to proceed with voting on the recommendation and if they move forward the Boards and the Communities will be responsible to make the final decision through a straw vote and a referendum.

The Consultants gave an overview of the Key Findings and Recommendations of the Study focusing on Enrollment History and Projections, Curriculum and Instruction, Athletic Programs and Extra-Curricular Activities, Facilities, Support Services, Employee Contracts, Staffing, Fiscal Condition of the Districts,

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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 that were generated at the July 22, 2014, Joint Board of Education Meeting.

Community Advisory Committee Insights

The Consultants reported on the Insights noted by the Community Advisory Committee.

Final Thoughts**Elmira Heights Board of Final Thoughts/Comments/Questions**

Elmira Heights Board President Harry Blish inquired regarding Broad Street School and if it is going to be used in the Plan? Harry stated his concern is that Horseheads is actively trying to sell it and wanted to know if the costs were figured in the final projections? Tom Coseo stated the projections were done for only one year, 2016-2017 and we assumed Center Street Elementary School and Edison High School would be used during the transition of the remodeling of Horseheads High School. We did not know the final facts regarding Broad Street so we did not calculate a savings on electricity or heating yet. Harry inquired regarding the necessity for new textbooks and ordering new athletic uniforms and if they were reflected in the Study? Harry stated that if we have to purchase new textbooks at our current size the cost is relatively \$60,000 to change textbooks. If we combine Districts, were the financial costs to purchase textbooks included as a factor? Doug Hamlin stated “No, we did not calculate the State Aid as a percentage increase of what the combine State Aid is for both Districts, nor the replacement of having to order all new textbooks”. Harry stated another issue is the cost of the uniforms which will be a substantial cost to the New District. Harry stated that he believes that some of the figures used to project the budget are flawed, do not truly reflect the expenses and will not project out the way the Study says it will project out and stated for some of our students the academic additions would be a plus but the overall picture has to be looked at, not just a portion of it. Harry inquired if the Building Aid(95%) is to be used only on instructional purposes or could an athletic field be built? Tom stated that a field could not be built and right now the Districts cannot sustain the level of spending that is currently in place. Whether the Districts consolidate or not, both Districts will have to address some of these issues. Now the Boards have full discretion and what contracts they plan to negotiate with its employees; however, the Districts cannot sustain the current Contracts indefinitely. Tom stated that certain segments of the Contracts can be grandfathered of a group or changes over a period of time.

Board Member Harvey Harris inquired regarding the kids and stated as a former coach, “No coach is going to be willing to give up 26 kids in either District”. What happens to the kids who are not chosen to play a sport? The parents are going to be worried about their kids and what will be offered to them. We cannot forget about them. Tom Coseo stated the New District would offer extensive programs that would be available to all the students. You would look at the percentage, number of students who participate to know where the majority of the students are in relationship to athletics. Tom stated part of the reform is to look at the nature of the programs that are offered and bring in alternatives for other students' interests, may be characterize it more as Life Sports. Tom stated there will be short-term disadvantages which will change the culture of athletics, an identity that is closely held in both Districts and stated the communities will adapt to these changes.

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Board Member Chris Callas inquired if there was data stating the rate of students who graduated or went on to college in Districts that have previously merged. Doug Hamlin stated, "No, we do not have it as it is very difficult to analyze." Doug stated there have been so few consolidations in the past few years that there are no definite studies showing success or failure rates.

Board Member Michael Lepak inquired as to what will happen to Edison High School? Tom Coseo stated as of right now there are no proposed plans for the facility because it is too small to accommodate the needs of a Joint District. Tom stated that it was suggested that it could be used as a Magnet School; however, the new Board would have to make that decision.

Elmira Heights Board of Education Clerk Colleen Dengler inquired regarding the tax rate in Horseheads going up which would give Horseheads a financial advantage, however; what are the educational benefits for Horseheads? Tom stated they are harder on the surface to identify. He stated it is clearly the students in Elmira Heights who will be offered an expanded educational program of what is currently being offered, whereas, in Horseheads the financial factor in the improved facilities will equate to better learning.

Board Member Michael Lepak stated he came here with an open mind and now questions how is having more kids in one building going to help them? He stated he has had a lot of experience with kids and also taught kids and has seen the experience of putting more kids in one building which has not been successful. Furthermore, there aren't even any kids present to voice their concerns or opinions.

Elmira Heights Board President Harry Blish inquired regarding the redistricting of the Center Street Elementary School population with the Cohen Elementary School population. Harry stated students with the most disadvantages are being put in one school(Cohen) which is a concern taking students from their neighborhood school. Roger Gorham stated it was discussed that boundary lines could be re-drawn so that there is a more equitable population attending Cohen Elementary School.

Overall, Elmira Heights Board President Harry Blish stated the problems that will need to be solved being a New District will be greater than the problems we have now and unless there are changes at the State level we will be in the same position again. Down the road in six years State Aid money will start to dry up and we will be short on revenues. The only way to get more is to cut staff and programs then we will be in the same position again, only as a New District not two separate ones.

Horseheads Board of Education Final Thoughts/Comments/Questions

Board Member Karen Boulas asked for clarification regarding who would decide which Bargaining Units the employees would join. Doug Hamlin stated that it depends on how the employees decide they want to come together and noted that the new District cannot have two separate Bargaining Units for the same group of employees. As a group of employees, the existing Bargaining Units will make their pitch to try and get all of the employees to join one Bargaining Unit. The process will unfold as the employees

choose to move forward. The New District will have Unions supporting all the support staff as the Districts presently do now, it will just be a change in the representation.

Horseheads Board President Brian Lynch inquired regarding the four elementary schools that were mentioned and if there was any discussion to increase the size of the buildings so that the schools can be similar in size. Could the Building Aid be used for building on to those schools? Tom Coseo stated yes, this could be an option; however, it would be for the new Board to decide. Brian also inquired if the new combined tax rate could be dropped to match the Horseheads rate if it were higher? Tom stated yes, it is a small number and both Districts have the option to change the number.

Board Vice-President Pam Strollo inquired regarding the rationale regarding cost per student on Page 213 of the report. Pam stated when looking at the current cost we each have, there is a 13% increase for Horseheads and a very slight increase for Elmira Heights, what assumption is beyond the deficit? Tom Coseo stated we did the budget projections and we assumed a savings of \$1.5 million in staffing and another \$350,000 in other savings (BOCES and non-staff). Once a new Board looks at all the parameters there are other savings that might be possible to help create what the total budget would be. Tom stated that upon further examination the New Board could look at the State Web Site for ideas how the budget could be completed.

Board Member Karen Boulas inquired regarding the different grade levels per building and how much longer would a student have to remain on a bus and also how many buildings would a student have to attend throughout their educational career? Also, what benefits will the kids receive? Tom stated our recommendation to go with Option 1 or 2 because they have fewer transitions with approximately a ten minute increase riding the school bus. Students will only have two transitions in their educational career as they will remain three years at each building which the Community Advisory Committee was very adamant about.

Board Member Warren Conklin stated hypothetically if we choose to say we do this, "What do you see as the responsibilities of both Boards in the next few months?" Tom Coseo stated that the communication to the public would be the next step after both Boards approve the Plan. Tom reviewed the recommended timeline from the State and stated that both Boards would have to develop a specific communication plan that clearly outlines the pros and cons of consolidating in a very sophisticated way so that both communities are prepared for the Straw Vote on November 12th and if that passes by both communities, then they will vote on the Referendum on January 6th which will also need to pass by both communities.

Board Member Doug Johnson asked if we assume that Center Street Elementary School remains open for 2016-2017, how will it be staffed? Tom Coseo stated depending on how the building is used will determine staff that will be there. It may not be the present staff who are there now, but it will be staffed. Primarily, it is thought of as the overflow from the High School or maybe even District Offices. Tom stated in the interim the District offices could even move to Thomas Edison High School. The primary idea is for the students to attend the schools where they are except for Center Street. Tom stated the building aid is good for ten years and tapers off over time.

Resolution Regarding the Final Merger Study and the Next Steps in the Process to Move Forward

Moved by Lepak, seconded by Wolowitz.

RESOLVED, that the final merger study report by Western New York Educational Service Council be accepted and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the district take the next step in the process and move forward to an advisory (straw) vote of the community on the merger of Elmira Heights and Horseheads Central School Districts.

<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

Moved by Jacobus, seconded by Strollo.

RESOLVED, that the final merger study report by Western New York Educational Service Council be accepted and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the district take the next step in the process and move forward to an advisory (straw) vote of the community on the merger of Elmira Heights and Horseheads Central School Districts.

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

Brinthaup

Conklin
 Jacobus
 Johnson
 Lynch
 Sadler
 Strollo

MOTION CARRIED

Adjournment

Elmira Heights

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 7:52 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

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Horseheads

Moved by Sadler, seconded by Boulas.

RESOLVED, that the Horseheads Central School District Board of Education adjourn from its Joint Meeting with the Elmira Heights Central School District Board of Education at 7:52 PM.

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Noes</u>	<u>Abstained</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Apgar			
Boulas			Brinthaup
Conklin			
Jacobus			
Johnson			
Lynch			
Sadler			
Stollo			

MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully Submitted By:

Candy L. Maine

Candy L. Maine, District Clerk

