

**WILLOW RUN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**  
**Ypsilanti, Michigan**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**April 19, 2007**

The regular meeting opened at 6:30 p.m. at Willow Run Middle School, 235 Spencer Lane, Ypsilanti, MI, 48198, with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Those present were:

Claudette Braxton, President  
Andreas Blakita, Vice President  
Brenda Clay, Secretary  
Travis Greer, Trustee  
Clifford Smith, Trustee  
Dorothy Stewart, Treasurer  
Sheri Washington, Trustee

Members of the Administrative Council Present Included:

Ron Ciranna, J.D., Superintendent  
Melvin Anglin, Principal, Willow Run Middle School  
Rosalind Coffey, Principal, Holmes Elementary School  
Dr. David Houle, Controller  
Todd LaPrairie, Supervisor, Buildings and Grounds  
Laura Lisiscki, Principal, Kaiser Elementary  
Bryan Schroeder, Assistant Principal, Willow Run Middle School  
Mike Schubart, Athletic Director  
Lana Tatom, Director, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment  
Regina Williams, Curriculum Coordinator

**Willow Run Middle School Report**

Mr. Anglin welcomed everyone to Willow Run Middle School and introduced the middle school staff. He then introduced Ms. Jackson and Ms. Tillerson, whose students gave a presentation sharing the stories of five powerful women in history: Sojourner Truth, Coretta Scott-King, Maya Angelo, Princess Diana, and Phillis Wheatley.

Mr. Anglin continued the middle school presentation by outlining some of the things going on at the school, including the "Jets Journal", which is the middle school newspaper, the NAAPID events that featured career choices, and the Gear-Up Program, designed to increase educational aspirations and to provide scholarships for students.

The presentation also included a presentation of videos from students in Mr. Still's Digital Imaging and Technology Class and an interactive math lesson by Mr. Parinello and students.

Ms. Casey Quigley shared the highlights of the Language Arts Grant Collaboration with the University of Michigan, the School Improvement Plan, the school's curriculum plans, teacher's Professional Growth Plans and the essay contest of the month, which the winner of picks the restaurant of their choice and gets to enjoy having lunch with Mr. Anglin.

Ms. Braxton thanked the students for the fine job they did with the presentation they gave. She asked if the Professional Growth Plans will be completed by each teacher, or for the school as a whole. Mr. Anglin explained as each staff member is evaluated, they set parameters and time lines that each teacher will meet. This will help move toward the middle school's goal of having a web-site for each classroom, as part of the class server next year.

#### **Citizens' Time**

Ms. Fawn Martin, Willow Run parent, spoke about the Dollars for Scholars Luncheon held this past Tuesday, which allowed students to interact with corporate people and those from colleges. She said they also met Allen Candy, an attorney specializing in Government Relations. Information to prepare the students to enter the workforce was also shared at the luncheon.

Mr. Stanley Stewart, Willow Run resident, said he also attended the Dollars for Scholars Luncheon and praised Ms. Martin's efforts in working with the students. Mr. Stewart questioned why when Mr. Young has raised \$250,000 for Willow Run students, no administrators, or anybody else from Willow Run attended the luncheon. He said somebody should have been there.

Mr. Stewart also questioned the figures Dr. Ciranna passed out at the last board meeting regarding the number of students lost in the District. He said when the middle school opened; there were 2,772 students in the District, 708 of them at the middle school. This year's September count showed 572 students, with the number dropping to 532 by the February count- a loss of 176 students, since the opening of the middle school. Mr. Stewart pointed out this equals over \$2 million in lost revenue.

Mr. Stewart said we have lost students, not only at the middle school, but at the elementaries and high school as well. Mr. Stewart pointed out the 2004-2005 loss of 294 students was a combination of 216 at the middle and high schools and 78 at the elementary schools. Mr. Stewart,

referencing these numbers, said the District should take a look at the middle and high schools as well as the elementary schools.

Regarding the criteria listed for consideration in closing a building, Mr. Stewart said it is missing the quality of education as a point to consider. He said the District needs to take a look at the quality of education, as well as the rest of the criteria in making their decision.

President Braxton called the meeting to order at 7:29 p.m.

**Approval of the Agenda**

#06070401 Ms. Clay moved that the Board of Education accept the agenda as presented. Ms. Stewart supported.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried

**Approval of Minutes**

#06071402 Ms. Clay moved that the Board of Education approves the minutes as presented from the regular meeting of March 15, 2007, and as amended from the work/study session of March 29, 2007, to include spelling corrections and as amended from the special meeting of April 4, 2007, to include the motions Ms. Stewart wanted placed on the agenda for reconsideration, as they were originally presented at a work/study session, not a regular board meeting; Approval of Purchase – Additional Cost – Mirrored Hard Drives, Approval of Purchase – Network Cooling System, and Approval of Out-of-State Field Trips – Toledo Zoo. Mr. Smith supported.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried

**Approval of Payment of Bills**

#06070403 Ms. Stewart moved that the Board of Education approve the following General Fund checks, check #43974 through and including check #44260 with the exception of voided checks as noted on page 13 of the General Fund Check Register for the amount of \$2,360,322.70; and Building & Site checks #1477 through and including check # 1479 for the amount of \$113,567.20. Mr. Greer supported.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried

## **Communications**

### **Athletic Boosters**

Ms. Clay, President, Willow Run Athletic Boosters, introduced the Athletic Boosters, saying they are a very small, but strong and powerful group and shared the attached presentation. Mr. Carl Saddler also shared some of the difficulties the Athletic Boosters are faced with. Ms. Braxton asked Dr. Ciranna to set-up a meeting with the Athletic Boosters to work these issues out and to report the results of the meeting back to the board.

### **Administrator Recognition**

Ms. Thornsberry, high school teacher and advisor to both the yearbook and "A Shift in the Paradigm", the student newspaper, shared at the Michigan Interscholastic Press Association's Annual Awards Ceremony, Lana Tatom was awarded the Administrator of the Year Award for her work in helping the newspaper staff mail "A Shift in the Paradigm" to the entire 48198 zip code area, as well as for her support of the yearbook.

Ms. Tatom thanked Ms. Thornsberry for nominating her for this award saying the high school paper is a fabulous newspaper and Ms. Thornsberry and the student staff are doing an excellent job. She said she is accepting the award on behalf of the newspaper staff, the School and Family Community Partnership group and the entire Curriculum Department, including Ms. Penny Morgan, Ms. Deidre Thornsberry, and Ms. Regina Williams.

Dr. Ciranna said he attended the ceremony, which 1,200-1,500 high school students from around the State participated in. He said this award is reflective of Ms. Thornsberry's commitment, adding out of 524 school districts in the state, only 12 won awards. He then presented Ms. Thornsberry with a plaque of appreciation for her hard work and dedication to the paper.

### **Criteria for Closing a Building**

Dr. Ciranna said Mr. Stewart is correct, academic performance should be a part of the criteria considered in making the decision to close a building. He said the plan to close a building will be fine-tuned to give exact dates, when the specific building to be closed is decided upon. He explained the Focus Group developed the decision-making criteria.

Dr. Ciranna said the recommendation for closing will be made on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, with a formal presentation being made to the board on May 17<sup>th</sup>, and he cannot, in good conscious, recommend closing a building, without informing the staff and students of the building, because we are dealing with human beings, with feelings and emotions.

Dr. Ciranna added the District is down 600 plus students since the 2000 school year.

Ms. Stewart said the criteria for the decision to close a building should include the considerations of community-use of the building, parental involvement at the building, and first of all, the quality of education received at the building.

Mr. Blakita said regarding the timeline, a formal motion being made at a regular board meeting in May, would be the proper timeline.

Ms. Washington urged that when the day and time comes to close a building, we need to have a plan in place regarding where students will go when the building closes. She said she would like this to be a part of the plan matrix for making the decision. She said we better be very careful of making the decision to close a school, and be prepared to deal with the outcome. She added due-diligence needs to occur, because we do not want to be in the same position in six-months. She said the strategy, should match the vision.

Ms. Braxton told the board members, if they have specific criteria they would like included in the decision-making process to get the criteria to central office.

Ms. Stewart pointed out the board does not have the option of making a decision on May third, unless, the meeting is listed as a regular board meeting in accordance with District policy. Mr. Blakita encouraged a motion be made on May third, saying this is important.

Mr. Smith said he voted not to close an elementary school and offered a copy of his recommendations, to anyone who wants one, saying they can e-mail him at [cls3156@aol.com](mailto:cls3156@aol.com) and he will send them one. Mr. Smith said we need to realize where we are and how we are situated, adding if we close a building, we are going to lose students.

Mr. Greer, said he agrees with Mr. Smith and Ms. Stewart, in that we need to make sure the best decision for this District is made, adding we need to make sure our research is done. He said if we rush this, we are going to lose students, but we can control how many we lose, by making the best decision for the District.

#### E3 Award – Thurston E.C.D.C.

Ms. Donna DeButts and Ms. Barbara Wallgren, of the Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce, said this is the 10<sup>th</sup> year for the E3 Awards, one of which is presented to each of the three local school districts. This year's award for Willow Run Community Schools is being given to Thurston E.C.D.C. for

the many programs they have combined to create a family and a community within their building.

Ms. DeButts explained the criteria used in the award's selection process looks at how the program enhances the educational process, and encourages parent, student and community involvement along with how it helps improve schools. She said along with the trophy, which will be presented at the Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce' First Tuesday Breakfast, on May first, at 7:30 a.m., recipients also receive a prize of \$150.

**Approval of Policy – 1170 - Board Vacancy**

#06070404 Ms. Clay moved that the Willow Run Board of Education approve Policy 1170, as first presented on Thursday, March 15, 2007. Mr. Blakita supported.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried

**Approval of Easement – Holmes Road**

#06070405 Ms. Clay moved that the Willow Run Board of Education approve the Public Road Easement and the Storm and Road Drainage Easement as requested by the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Washtenaw, for which the District shall receive a total of \$105. Mr. Smith supported.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried

**Discussion**

Mr. Davis, Washtenaw County Road Commission, explained the easement, which is actually a Quit-Claim Deed, will grant to the county a triangular piece of land measuring 50 feet , located at the corner of Midway and Holmes Roads. This land will allow the county to configure the corner to better control vehicular turns.

**General Fund Budgetary Control Report**

Dr. Houle placed the General Fund Budgetary Control Report on the projector for the board to see during the meeting. The report was not discussed, but was included in the board packet for review.

**Approval of Overnight Field Trip - Kettering**

#06070406 Mr. Smith moved that the Willow Run Board of Education approve an overnight field trip to the Leslie Science Center for the fifth grade at Charles F. Kettering Elementary, for May 31-June 1, 2007. Mr. Blakita supported.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried.

**Approval of Out-of-State/Overnight Field Trip**

#06070407 Mr. Blakita moved that Willow Run Board of Education approve an overnight/out-of-state field trip to Chicago, Illinois, for the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade bands, to participate in the “Music in the Park”, from June 1-3, 2007. Ms. Washington supported.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried

**Approval of Out-of-State Field Trip – Toledo Zoo**

#06070408 Mr. Greer moved that the Willow Run Board of Education approve an out-of-state field trip to the Toledo Zoo for Head Start students on May 25, 2007. Mr. Smith supported.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried

**Approval of Out-of-State Field Trip – Toledo Zoo**

#06070409 Ms. Stewart moved that the Willow Run Board of Education approve an out-of-state field trip to the Toledo Zoo for Ford Elementary students on May 4, 2007. Mr. Smith supported.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried

**Approval of Out-of-State Field Trip – Ford Elementary**

#06070410 Mr. Greer moved that the Willow Run Board of Education approve the out-of-state field trip to Toledo, Ohio, for the Mud Hens School Day Celebration, on May 16, 2007, for the Cheney Student Council and Safety patrol and the Ford Peer Mediators, Safety Patrol and Student Council. Ms. Clay supported.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried

**Approval of Overnight Field Trip**

#06070411 Ms. Clay moved that the Willow Run Board of Education approve an overnight field trip for Zeaira Chestang, Willow Run Middle School 6<sup>th</sup> grader, to go to Washington D.C., April 23-24, 2007, as part of the After School Challenge. Mr. Smith supported.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried

**Discussion**

Ms. Janice Moses explained this trip is being sponsored by T-Mobile on behalf of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program. She said Zearia will be one of only three children ever to present at the Breakfast of Champions. Zearia will also be meeting Congressman Dingell and Senators Stabenow and Levin while in Washington D.C. She will present each of them with a charm designed by a student in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program.

**First Reading of Policy – 7400 – Instructional Materials and Media Center**

Mr. Blakita moved that the Board of Education carry Policy 7400 – Instructional Materials and Media Center forward. Mr. Smith supported.

No vote is required to carry policies forward for consideration.

**Approval of Out-of-State Field Trip – New York City, New York**

#06070412 Mr. Smith moved that the Willow Run Board of Education approve an out-of-state field trip to New York City for Willow Run High School ROTC students from April 26-29, 2007. Ms. Stewart supported.

Ayes: 6  
Abstain: 1 – Mr. Greer  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried

**Discussion**

Cadet Brody explained the cadets will visit Ground Zero, Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty and the Museum of Natural History while in New York.

**Approval of Contract - PESG**

#06070413 Ms. Clay moved that the Willow Run Board of Education approve the attached contract with PESG Sub Contracting, from April 17, 2007 through June 30, 2010, by and between the WISD and Professional Educational Services Group, LLC in the amount of 17% of the total contracted earned payroll during the initial term of this Agreement, for the first two-years, with the right to increase the administrative fee once per year at the start of the third full contract year, at a rate of no more than 2.50% annually. Mr. Blakita supported.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0 – Motion carried

**Discussion**

Dr. Ciranna explained the WISD Superintendents are looking at consolidating services to save money. Willow Run's savings if this agreement is approved will be \$60,000 a year, because substitute

teachers will no longer be employees of the District. This results in no State retirement, unemployment, or worker's compensation being paid by the District. Payroll for the substitutes will be done by the WISD. Dr. Ciranna said it is our hope to be able to expand this program to all substitute employees.

### **Approval of Contracted Services**

Mr. Blakita moved that the Willow Run Board of Education approve the attached Contracted Services Agreement Rider, to extend the Contract between Willow Run Community Schools and the WISD for the services of a Controller for Willow Run, from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2009 Ms. Clay supported.

### **Discussion**

Dr. Ciranna explained this is not a change to Dr. Houle's Contract; it is simply an extension of it.

Ms. Washington questioned how the board can be expected to vote on this Contract, without an evaluation of Dr. Houle to consider in making its decision.

Ms. Stewart said we need not tie ourselves to something this expensive right now. She said the District needs to have an outside person come in to evaluate our administrative costs.

Mr. Smith said this should be done at a study session where the board can get their questions answered.

Mr. Blakita said this is one of several positions needed in the District, no matter what is happening financially. He said this is a paramount position, which takes expertise and understanding; it is a very demanding job. Mr. Blakita agreed there should be a review of administrative needs, but said this position must be filled and Dr. Houle has proven himself competent.

Ms. Braxton said we need to get into the habit of making sure evaluations are done on all employees on a regular basis and she would like a report on whether he has been evaluated, or not.

Mr. Smith said he does not think we should go with a two-year extension right now, considering one-year is the norm with contracts.

Ms. Braxton reminded the board of the difficulty the District had in getting a qualified candidate to fill this position, which resulted in contracting with the WISD to get Dr. Houle. She added she is uncomfortable with a two-year contract, but we need some stability. Ms. Washington added we need some stability in performance.

Ms. Clay questioned if all administrator evaluations have been done, since we have to have things solidified by May 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Citizens' Questions**

Mr. Stewart pointed out the superintendent's contract calls for him to be evaluated by March 31<sup>st</sup>. When Mr. Stewart mentioned this to Dr. Ciranna, Mr. Stewart said Dr. Ciranna's reply was, "It looks like we missed the date." Mr. Stewart said you just cannot ignore his contract.

Mr. Stewart said he has sent a copy of the by-laws, regarding the Open Meetings Act to the County Prosecutor and this is now at the Sheriff's Department. He said he has named Andy Blakita, Brenda Clay, Claudette Braxton and Travis Greer in his complaint.

Ms. Tatom said regarding Dr. Houle's contract it is nice to have stability and she agrees evaluations and performance are important. She added she has worked in the Administration Building for three-years with three different Finance Directors.

Ms. Gibson said the Athletic Boosters are the best volunteer team of boosters and they need a lot more support than they are getting.

Ms. Bromberg asked the board to help the Focus Group, in making the decision on which building to close. She said the principals have told the Focus Group the board is elected to make decisions and asked how the Focus Group can be expected to rely on principals and union leaders to make an unbiased decision. Ms. Braxton replied the decision on which building to close is the board's and they are just asking the Focus Group for information.

Ms. Anita Smith commended Ms. Renita Gibson for the time and effort she put in to run the athletic web-site.

Mr. Wilde said the Robotics Team did very well at last weekend's competition in Atlanta. He also asked why there is no student representative on the board. Dr. Ciranna explained no one has expressed an interest in filling the position. Mr. Wilde and Mr. Greer both said they know of students who are interested. They will send these students to Dr. Ciranna.

Ms. McGill said she agrees a school needs to close, but she is not comfortable in making the recommendation of which one. She said the District needs to take into consideration the 10 recommendations made by Mr. Smith. She added we need to provide a quality education and save this District. She said this is a decision that should have been made much sooner and urged the board to be real cautious and strategic in making

their plan. Ms. McGill concluded her remarks by inviting everyone to the Kettering School Carnival on May 18<sup>th</sup>, from 6-8 p.m.

A member of the audience shared her concerns about the transfer of a student with disciplinary issues from Ypsilanti High School, to Willow Run High School and asked is the student going to be kept here? Dr. Ciranna said this is being investigated and if it is found the student falsified her records, or Schools of Choice information, she will be discharged from the District. The audience member then asked how people can become part of the Focus Group. Dr. Ciranna said the group meets every Wednesday, in room 411 of the middle school, from 9-11 a.m. Mr. Stewart asked if the Focus Group is open to anyone. Dr. Ciranna said there has been consistency for the first eight meetings, but anyone who wishes to attend will be brought up-to-date and anyone is welcome.

#### **Superintendent's Comments**

Dr. Ciranna said he and Mr. LaPrairie met with Kingscott and Barton Malow earlier in the day regarding the on-going problems and unfinished work of the 2001 Bond Project. All bids are expected to go out in the next three-four weeks. He added the land-use paperwork for the softball field has been filed with the State.

#### **Board Members' Comments**

Ms. Clay commended Mr. Anglin and his staff for the great job with their presentation.

Mr. Greer invited everyone to attend the Air Force Junior, ROTC's First Annual Flight Games at the Willow Run High School Gym, this Saturday, from 8 a.m. – noon.

President Braxton declared the meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.