

**WATERFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Special Meeting Minutes

March 28, 2018

OPENING

A Special Meeting of the Waterford School District Board of Education, held at Pierce Middle School, 5145 Hatchery Road, Waterford, Michigan, was called to order by President Himmelspach at 6:00 PM.

PLEDGE

The Board of Education and participants stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Members Himmelspach, Piggott, Sutherland, and Torres
Absent: Members Halls, Barghahn, and Petrusha
Others: Keith Wunderlich, William Holbrook, Danielle Corbeil, Lisa McFee, Carly Stone, Nadine Milostan, Kristie Moore, Frank Benning, Crystal Church, Shannon Clark, Terry Harden, Denise Sokol, Nickie Antoon, Makenzie Benning, Brooklynn Longacre, Melissa Coopersmith, Sherri Ellsworth, Rena Ellsworth, Vicki Widman, Alissa Skorieczny, Kaye Burrill, Sarah Gadzinski, Anne Kurse, Laura Smith, Debra Cooper, Jennifer Knipper, Michelle Sullivan, Donna Path, Kathy Sych, Dave Reimus, Angela Miller, Michelle Loisel, Kaila Partlo, Lou and Cindy Hill, Mary and Elanor Ressler, Megan Yang, Adam Stephens, Sylinia Kirsch, Beth Dannewitz, McKenna Plunkett, Christina Palmer, Nick Caroway, Amy Holmes, Tamara Pittman, Cathy Cowger, Jennifer Jones, Matthew McClure, Josh Thompson, Amber Davis, Branna Doetsch, Connie Rudd, Linda Sutton, Jeff Lund, Dianna Tracy, Melissa and Rich Chittick and Mason, Kinyota Bonds, Faith Scott, Randi Scott, Kandice Bonds, Karin Schermerhorn, Erica Rolack, John Puleo, Ryan Egres, Tom Egres, Samantha Wagman, Robin and Rudie McGregor, Karrin and Tim Smith, Lisa Pittman, Malisa Shaw, Krystin Pearsall, Steve Partlo, Holly Cummings, Gyla Demetrak, Patricia Thomas and others who did not register.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS RELATIVE TO BULLYING

Brooklynn Longacre: Expressed appreciation that this is not an easy matter and spoke about specific situations in schools regarding discipline, student bullying progressing from verbal to physical and concerns about communication, coordination between schools and consequences. He requests a formal action plan.

Frank Benning: Reflected that there has always been bullying but now there is no action when a child is assaulted. He expressed feelings that these things are pushed under the rug.

Nakia Vickery and Rachel Chambers: Juniors at Kettering High School shared ideas on how to address bullying situations in schools working with the school and student leadership through an ap. The students will talk with leadership and receive help as friends. Administration would oversee this and if it goes well they would like to see it implemented around the district. They also discussed cross level assistance, where high schoolers would come to visit with the elementary students who are struggling.

Don Bortz: Discussed experience with bullying and that you need to hit them back. His daughter was getting sexually harassed and he told her to hit them back. Prepare yourself to defend yourself.

Kaila Partlo: The high school students had an excellent idea. Issues are being personally addressed. It's important to work with the Board and let them help us. There needs to be consequences and better communication. As it relates to the Task Force, I'm raising my hand. Inquired about what is going to happen

after bullying occurs and what will we do to prevent it. There are other programs and apps using technology. Work together with the District for the best solution.

Brianna Doetsch: Senior at Waterford Kettering shared personal experiences and problems, beginning in elementary school, with bullying and assault. She stressed that we can't lose kids – take more action.

Mark Slezak: Spoke regarding his nephew, Andrew Griffith.

Marilyn Meissner: Bullying is not uncommon. Other districts have found a way to deal with it. Trust is a factor. There are wonderful teachers in Waterford but there is an environment that is supporting this behavior. Victims need to be heard and there needs to be follow-through.

Rosemary Istratoff: This issue deserves attention, providing statistics relative to school shooters, bullying, a mental health and people to watch their guns, talk to kids and stay educated.

Lisa Kane: Thank you to the staff for continued support, including Stepanski and Schoolcraft teachers who have been so helpful to our families. This starts with the parents, teaching them resilience, confidence, and love. Bring students into the conversation. Parent involvement is critical. At the last school dance, only three parents volunteered but there were 10 staff members. Stay involved and take advantage of the PTA.

Alicia Ellsworth: I believe in you guys to make change. Thank you to mom for helping me through this situation.

Megan Young: Missed the first meeting. It's heartbreaking to hear the stories. When and how are we going to memorialize those who have taken their life? Would like to see an event or fundraiser in honor of the students and their family.

Kristen Wagner: Thank you everyone involved. We have to listen to our children and speak from our own experience. As a parent of a child with mental illness, starting at Stepanski through Pierce, I have been pleased with complete support. Remember, there has been legislative action recently about restorative practices and discipline. Both sides have a right to an education. Find ways as a community to come together and address.

Kinyota Bonds: Grandchildren attend Waterford School District. Never had problems in Pontiac but there are issues at Donelson Hills. Discussed specific issues at Donelson Hills involving her daughter and grandson. She requested a release from the District for her grandson.

Dianna Tracey: Proud of the students who presented the solution. Grandmother in the District. Son had bullying issues and parent group gathered to pray for the students, parents and staff. Fighting is not problem solving.

John Puleo: Thank you for having this meeting. Has six children, five in WSD. This is a parenting and schooling issue. It's not a perfect world. They had an issue on the way to the bus and the principal called. Wants to get families involved.

Angelio Rios: Came to Michigan in 2008 from Puerto Rico. Discussed issues from previous district and also Waterford School District. His son hates school and doesn't want to go. He told the teachers to please make his son fall in love with school again. Be one voice for our future.

Crystal Church: Discussed issues which escalated in elementary school. Something needs to be done. Her son said be helpful not hurtful.

Makenzie Benning: Shared personal experience with bullying and harassment at school.

Brooklyn Longacre: Discussed personal experience with an environment of bullying and harassment at school which resulted in a school transfer.

Amber Davis: Loves WSD but has had problems. She shared details and discussed the need for better communication all around and pulling her child out of school. We need the staff and board to have eyes open and staff and parents need to care.

Robin McGregor: Waterford School District is the best place on earth. The Board wants to make a difference. There are programs in the buildings that are making a difference. We are Waterford and we will rise above this.

Jennifer Jones: Discussed an issue between her kindergartener and a fifth grade student. The school and social workers have been great so far but she isn't sure. She also commented on the right to know the name of the bully and consequences. Stop blaming the victim.

Leah Langlois: Concerned that our children have suicidal thoughts. She wants to stand up for other mothers who don't have the courage. Parents need to show kids to care about others, love and respect. Wants to see change and enforcement.

Melissa Chittick: Spoke to a personal matter involving her child.

Richard (last name unclear): There is a huge problem throughout the country. We need to educate about bullying – write it on the walls, letters, etc. It is not tolerated. All need to work on this together.

Peter Marik: Moved to Waterford six years ago and has children in Farmington Schools and a step-daughter in this district. Spoke to experiences in Farmington. Public needs to oversee the Board.

Anna Torres: Spoke to concerns on this issue, and the responsibility parents have. We must work together to find great ideas. Waterford is in a unique position to become a leader on this issue.

Tresa Galloway: School administrator, teacher and parent in Gross Point Schools. She spoke to the issues of bullying her son had in school and the importance of developing relationships with staff, other parents and our kids. She developed a program for Gross Point Schools.

Malisa Shaw: Spoke to the different experiences she has had at the various levels during her child's education. Parents need to know the consequences and support available. She expressed concerns that teachers don't have respect from kids.

Kristie Moore: Schoolcraft Elementary is proactive and already moving forward Launching Schoolcraft to Greatness. She expressed her concerns with the meeting held previously. This is an opportunity to show everyone we can fix it. Parents need to be more involved in the schools.

Nickie Antoon: Graduated from Waterford Schools, children graduated from Waterford Schools and now has grandkids here. The administration and board love our kids. Come together, don't blame.

Logan Coopersmith: Discussed experience he and his siblings had in the district. After a personal tragedy the support was overwhelming. Open your eyes and work together.

Ryan Egres: Spoke to the personal experiences he had as a student with bullying early on and the positive impact the high School Link Leaders had. Believe in change and fight for it!

Zoe Nalepa: The Board, teachers and principals do their best. Students learn from watching and hearing adults. Give them something good to see and hear as they create their personality. She suggested taking teacher recommended high school students to visit elementary students to show them that kind is cool.

BOARD DISCUSSION RELATIVE TO BULLYING

Member Sutherland thanked everyone who attended, shared their courageous stories and cared enough to advocate for our community. There is divisiveness and anger in our world right now and schools are not immune to this and we see that you are hurting. That we are doing nothing is not a fair assessment. There is no they, only us. We are proactive but can always improve policies, consequences and prevention. Anger doesn't fix this, only kindness, relationships and respect. We need to model for our students. It's on us to make Waterford a place where students feel safe and loved. We need your help.

Member Torres thanked students, parents and community members for attending. Students deserve a nurturing and safe environment. It was impressive to hear the students talking about empathy. He spoke to his role in the juvenile court system and seeking to help kids become something fantastic in this life. The Board takes this position seriously. We need to work together. He is willing to stay for anyone who wants to talk after this meeting. Hold us accountable and reach out to us. We want the best for this community.

Member Piggott thanked those who attended and reached out via social media and email. Thank you to the students for your courage to speak out. He offered comments on all of the great ideas coming out to help address this issue. Don't be afraid to contact us. This is making a change and working together we can be powerful.

Member Himmelspach thanked everyone for attending and discussed what's next, including the development of the Task Force charged to review policies, training and best practices and provide recommendations to address the issues raised.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by President Himmelspach at 9:03 PM.

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Board Secretary