

UNIONVILLE-CHADDS FORD SCHOOL DISTRICT
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SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Minutes
December 5, 2005

The December meeting of the Unionville-Chadds Ford School Board was held on Monday, December 5, 2005 in the Unionville High LGI Room. Mr. Baker, President, called the meeting to order at 7:42 p.m.

The following members were present Curt Baker, R. Bruce Swayze, Kathleen Brown, Karen Halstead, Edward Murray, Timotha Trigg, Edward Wandersee, and Dr. Therese West. Also present were Dr. John Kenney, District Superintendent, Robert Cochran, Thomas Marinelli, Dr. Jim Price, Maria Schwab, Clif Beaver, Jim Fulginiti, Rick Hostetler, Rich Hug, Dr. Andrew McLaughlin, John Nolen, Chris Pollock, Charlene Stone, Bruce Vosburgh, Marie Wickersham, Gail Wolfel, Chris Caswell, substitute student representative, community residents, members of the press, and Denise Miller, recording secretary.

Mr. Baker stated that we would begin with comments from residents (three minutes per person) and finish this portion by 8:00 p.m.

Bruce Yelton, Pocopson Township resident, commented that he had received the district newsletter last week. He commented regarding several requirements for recreational facilities that had been put in place in past years

- Pocopson Township over 30 years ago – installation of trailers;
- Red Bridge Farms development – installed a baseball field;
- Northbrook – added an oversize soccer field with parking
- Toll Brothers – if approved, requires two basketball courts, a volleyball court and a trailer;
- Areas outside the district:
 - Anson Nixon Park / Kennett – four new fields
 - YMCA / Kennett – two to three indoor basketball facilities
 - SCCSA – spoke with school district about two years ago regarding property development at Unionville Elementary

He encouraged the district to work with the townships and other groups for field needs and not to operate in a vacuum.

**CALL TO
ORDER**

**MEMBERS
PRESENT**

**RESIDENTS'
COMMENTS**

Sharon Silverman, Birmingham Township resident, welcomed the new Board members and extended her thanks to all Board members. She commented regarding concerns over communication issues, particularly the sweeping philosophical changes with the 8th grade curriculum. Her sources are from whisper down the lane comments and not from her Board. She commented about discussion last year regarding the involvement of parents rather than their feeling that things are being imposed on them. They feel they're being hit over their heads when these things take place. Mrs. Silverman stated that you're much less likely to gain their support when things are going on behind the scenes. She asked that their thoughts and input be included, adding that it is part of their responsibility and they would very much like to work with them.

Katie Donovan, East Marlborough Township resident, commented that she shares a number of the sentiments regarding the 8th grade changes. It was mentioned at Curriculum Council but it was presented in a way as though the train has left the station so there would be no further discussion on the issue. It was a sweeping change that was predetermined and was presented as a done operation at the time. It was, however, brought up that there would be sweeping changes with the curriculum and it would go all the way down to the 6th grade.

It was moved by Mr. Swayze and seconded by Dr. West to approve the Minutes of the November 21, 2005 Regular Board Meeting (pp. 3.a.1-26).

Motion carried (8-0).

There were no items for Facilities this evening.

Mrs. Brown stated that there were no action items for Curriculum this evening. She provided an update regarding the Middle School Plan since there was no Work Session this month.

As some people may be aware, the middle school teachers have decided not to write the courses in the core areas that were provided for in the Middle School Plan approved last spring. The teachers believe that offering more choices to student would impact scheduling in such a severe way that the team concept at the middle school would be threatened. The teaching staff believes so strongly in this that they have refused to write the curriculum required to move ahead with the Middle School Plan.

She reminded the Board that the committee that developed the plan last spring was comprised of teachers, parents, administrators and Board members. This plan was presented to the entire Board and middle school staff. The study that was done prior to the committee's work pointed to a lack of choice and a one-size-fits-all approach at the middle school. The study results also pointed to a lack of readiness for high school and a lack of

**RESIDENTS'
COMMENTS
(Continued)**

**MINUTES
APPROVED**

FACILITIES

CURRICULUM

consistency between the teams. The Middle School Plan attempted to address these issues. Currently, the teachers are looking at other alternatives to address these complaints. She doesn't know what they are currently. Mrs. Brown asked whether the Board would like to reconvene the Middle School Committee or wait and see what the teachers provide.

Mr. Swayze commented that his preference would be to wait to see the teachers' plans.

Mrs. Trigg inquired about the possibility of the committee or the full Board meeting with the teachers. Mrs. Brown responded that she didn't know since Dr. O'Hern was not here this evening. We are not scheduled to meet again until January 9 2006. She wanted to know of any direction from the Board.

Mr. Wandersee commented that he feels there is a great enough impact that we should not rush into anything. We should discuss this at a Work Session with Dr. O'Hern's participation of what we are trying to do. He would tend to lean toward hearing what the teachers have to offer before we make changes. The whole climate study points out the fact that we're trying to work together and gather input and evaluate it relative to the objectives about which we feel strongly.

Mr. Wandersee suggested that it should be a Curriculum Committee decision in discussion with the Assistant Superintendent. He does not feel the School Board is in a position to make that decision. You worked with those people and should be able to work with the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent, and the Directors of Secondary and Elementary Education to determine if you want to do that again.

Mrs. Halstead commented that the teachers do have some thoughtful alternatives that are positive. They are the ones who have to teach them. Mrs. Brown stated that she understands but wishes we had heard them last spring and not now. Mrs. Halstead feels that some of the plans were there and we need to go slowly and thoughtfully.

Mr. Wandersee restated that it should go to the Curriculum Committee first and then to an open Work Session.

Mr. Murray commented that he also has some concerns regarding this. Given the climate survey and where we are, he is disappointed that there is great dislike at the avenue we have chosen. We need to be as open and responsive as we can be. We see anecdotal evidence every day of things we'd like to change; not wholesale changes in philosophy but proven academically challenging and rigorous ways to address this problem. It should be done as a team approach. We need to make sure that we prioritize and have a good system of evidence.

If there is a good way to do this, he wants to know what it is and why it is. If the way that the Board has gone and the Middle School Plan are flawed, he feels the Board and the public deserve to know why it is wrong. He is not opposed to any plan but someone better communicate better on both sides because a plan was approved nine months ago. Maybe there was not the right atmosphere for full disclosure but that time has passed. He doesn't know a lot about education but he knows there are certainly changes that we need. He would like someone to tell him what changes need to be made, why they are thoughtful and what steps we need to take. Certainly the teachers won't implement it if they don't want to. There are certain characteristics that we want to see as a Board that he doesn't believe are micro-managing or meddling. There are characteristics of a program that they want to see implemented and it can be brought from the teachers but not without certain core principles and we need to agree on that first.

Mrs. Trigg commented that she was not sure that people in the audience had enough background to understand. First, there was a survey (one year ago) and the findings were passed along to the Middle School Steering Committee (teachers, parents, School Board members, administrators, etc.) and it was posted on the web site. The committee came up with the recommendations (not the School Board). The Board passed the plan but it is not their plan. They hope to address some of the concerns that they are hearing from their constituents and that were voiced in the survey process.

Mrs. Brown commented that we should not expect to be approving courses the next time we meet.

Mr. Baker stated that by the time we get to January, given what has occurred, he believes it's incumbent that there be some clarity with common objectives, a common approach, and the timing in which it is going to occur. That is a critical milestone by January or it will have material impact in terms of next school year.

Mrs. Brown stated that she is pretty sure we are not there.

Mr. Murray stated that there were no items for Finance this evening.

It was moved by Mr. Wandersee and seconded by Mrs. Trigg to approve the following personnel items (agenda items a. and c. through f.):

- a. Professional Conferences
 - 1. Approve attendance at (3) Professional Conferences as on the attachment (p. 7.a.1)

FINANCE

PERSONNEL

**PROFES-
SIONAL
CONFERENCES**

3.a.7

Personnel (Continued)

- c. Substitutes (2)
 - 1. Patricia Bohn – Support Staff Substitute
 - 2. Janet Curran – Reading Specialist
 - 3. Patricia Peters – Bus Driver, effective October 28, 2005
 - 4. Karen Perugini – Hillendale Elementary School Paraprofessional, effective December 2, 2005

- d. Supplemental Contracts (2)
 - 1. Mike Berkeihiser - Assistant Track Coach
 - 2. Mike Berkeihiser - Indoor Track Coach

- e. Employ (2)
 - 1. Davis Listman – Chadds Ford Elementary Technology Support Specialist (7.0 hours per day x 185 days), effective December 5, 2005 (upon receipt of employment paperwork), at a salary of \$17.77 per hour
 - 2. Linda Demrick – Unionville Elementary School One-on-One Paraprofessional (6.5 hours per day x 182 days), effective November 14, 2005 at a salary of \$11.23 per hour

- f. Leave (1)
 - 1. Marcia DiGregorio – Patton Middle School Physical Education Teacher, extend Child-Rearing Leave through the 2005-06 school year

Motion carried (8-0).

It was moved by Mr. Wandersee and seconded by Mr. Swayze to approve the following personnel item (agenda item g.):

- g. Create Position (1)
 - 1. Certified / Licensed Athletic Trainer – Full-time, 11-month (220 day) Technical Staff Position

This position was discussed at the last Work Session. In response to Mrs. Brown's question regarding replacement of Ralph Harrison's position, Dr. Kenney stated that his position was a supplemental contract. We will be hiring a full-time substitute for .6 of a Physical Education position and the administration is recommending the creation of a full-time position as a trainer effective January 1, 2006.

Motion carried (8-0).

There were no action items for Transportation this evening.

**PERSONNEL
(Continued)**

SUBSTITUTES

**SUPPELE-
MENTAL
CONTRACTS**

EMPLOY:

D. Listman

L. Demrick

LEAVE:

M. DiGregorio

NEW POSITION:

**Certified/
Licensed
Athletic Trainer**

**TRANSPOR-
TATION:**

3.a.8

Mr. Baker stated that there were no Communication items for action this evening. He thanked Mr. Marinelli for getting the district newsletter out.

Mrs. Trigg commented that there were no items for Policy this evening.

Chris Caswell, substitute Student Representative, provided his report regarding:

1. Middle School Curriculum – As a student who attended the middle school, he feels there is definitely a lack of consistency between the teams.
2. Katrina Relief – The \$50,000 goal was achieved and the proceeds will go to the American Red Cross. Thanks to the whole community for helping out there. Much of the money came from the elementary and middle schools and from several businesses.
3. Student Council – Service Projects: Canned Food Drive has begun to benefit the food cupboard in Kennett Square; the Winter Dance will be held on Friday night - admission is to bring one canned food item. This will help to build a sense of community spirit vs. paying cash. Their goal is to receive 2005 cans.
4. PSSA's – Overall attitude in the high school is more one of confusion. Students need to know more about the function of the test. They don't understand the importance of the test and see it as standards written on the walls without further explanation. We need to find a balance between the test and instructing to the Standards and giving time and resources to other parts of the curriculum.
5. Student Congress – Created initially to provide a person in this role more of the whole student body's ideas. Their next meeting will be held in a couple of weeks. They have lots of ideas going around. Their meeting took place before school, which was inconvenient for students. They have discussed trying to have it held during the school day with the high school administration. This will come with further discussion.

Mr. Murray reported for the Center for Arts & Technology/Special Education/Intermediate Unit that they have not met and will not meet until after the January Work Session. He will report at that time.

Mr. Wandersee reported for Legislation that there was little to no activity because the focus has been about the salary increase issue.

**COMMUNI-
CATIONS**

**BOARD
POLICY**

**STUDENT
REPRESENTATIVE
REPORT**

**C.A.T./
SPECIAL
ED. / I.U.**

**LEGISLATIVE
REPORT**

Dr. Kenney provided the Superintendent's report:

1. New Board Members – He welcomed Karen Halstead and Therese West to the Board.
2. Mr. Wandersee – He thanked him for his advice and enjoyed working with him over the past two years as Board President. Mr. Wandersee stated that he enjoyed working with Dr. Kenney over the years.
3. Mr. Baker – He congratulated Mr. Baker as the new Board President.

Dr. Kenney extended his best wishes to everyone for the New Year – filled with life's blessings.

Mr. John Nolen, Hillendale Elementary School Principal, provided the Elementary School Report:

- Welcome to the new Board members
- Winter Concerts – are just around the corner and are listed in the district calendar
- Unionville Elementary –
 - Donation tree – benefits His Mission in Kennett Square
- Pocopson Elementary –
 - New Sign – Very excited about it; the PTO helped to offset a large portion of the cost for the project. Thanks to the District Maintenance Department for their support in helping to make this happen.
- Hillendale Elementary –
 - Reading Olympics Meeting was held – They have three teams of 12 students each. The program is sponsored by the Chester County Intermediate unit. The competition will be in April - students need to read at least five books.
 - Charlene Stone (Principal–Chadds Ford Elementary School) – Welcome back!

On behalf of the entire elementary staff, happy holidays!

Mr. Bruce Vosburgh provided the Patton Middle School report:

- PTO Meeting – Thanks to Gail Wolfel, Transportation Supervisor, and the two drivers who presented last week about school bus safety. They'd like to invite her back to continue some of those conversations.

SUPER- TENDENT'S REPORT

Elementary Report

Middle School Report

Middle School Report (Continued)

- Concerts – Chorus and Orchestra will be held on December 13, 2005; Band Concert will be held in January
- Katrina Relief Fund – Thanks to the high school; they did a great job of putting it together and getting the community together. He is looking forward to seeing “Dorothy” on December 19th at the middle school!
- Giving Tree – Set up in the lobby; part of the Kennett/ Unionville/Avon-Grove communities where they give food and toys away to the needy. Pick-up date is December 15th and families will receive the items on December 17th at the Kennett Meeting House.

Happy holidays and welcome to the new Board members.

Mr. Jim Fulginiti provided the Unionville High School report:

- Welcome to the new Board members; happy holidays to all!
- HVAC Project – On schedule and will finish in March;
- Assistant Principal Interviews – Interviews will occur next week and they hope to have names before the Board in January (the candidates could be held for up to 60 days in their current positions)
- Athletic Trainer – also in the process of interviewing for this position and a .6 health/physical education position
- Katrina Relief – Thanks to Bruce Vosburgh for his comments. Everyone is to be congratulated. The duPont Co. also matched the funds that were raised. This will be great for the folks who are very needy. “Dorothy” is out there somewhere over the rainbow!
- Experiment/Hallways – Conducting a one-cycle experiment due to the congestion in the hallways (a down stairwell and an up stairwell); will see how it goes.

Judy McClaskey, Birmingham Township resident, thanked Therese West and Karen Halstead for taking their time and working on the plans that we have now. She congratulated Curt Baker in his new position and stated that he has big shoes to fill. She hopes things go well. Mrs. McClaskey also congratulated Bruce Swayze as the Board’s Vice-President. She thanked Jim Fulginiti for putting the challenge out there for the kids regarding Hurricane Katrina relief and is hoping to catch his show.

Mrs. McClaskey commented about curriculum issue. She heard Kathy Brown say that the teachers’ comment was that they felt the team concept was going to be compromised if these things would take place. She heard Chris Caswell say that the team concept was what was hurting things. Are they choosing to promote team over academics or what is more important at that level? Her middle school student spends way too much time not doing anything at night after school. The teachers are excellent but that should not be.

**Middle School
Report
(Continued)**

**High School
Report**

**RESIDENTS’
COMMENTS**

Tracy Cohan, Birmingham Township resident, commented that her daughter is a 7th grade student and the whole team concept is very new to them. In talking with members of the community, however, people feel there is an inequity and a feeling that every student have the same opportunity. If there is any way to make that the ground on which you are playing, people could digest this more. They are the professionals and know what needs to be taught. She hopes that everyone works for equality for all students.

Dan Gabor, East Marlborough Township resident, congratulated Karen Halstead and Therese West as new Board members. He stated that he is the Student Congress Committee Co-Chair. They have their published minutes now; feel free to see him and he will e-mail them to you.

Katie Donovan, East Marlborough Township resident, commented that she had been on the Curriculum Council and heard about the Middle School Study when it occurred. They did agree to various things but all of a sudden, this plan was brought forth and children would be cross-teamed. None of that seemed to be what we were in agreement about. The data-driven decision was based on the response that we would be the school acting as a beacon for other schools.

Mr. Vosburgh, Patton Middle School Principal, felt it was important that he address this topic. Teaming is a middle school philosophy that assures that all teams teach the same curriculum. Personalities are sometimes involved. We are looking at common assessments in 6th grade. The teams are following what was set by the Board.

Tracy Cohan, Birmingham Township resident, apologized to Bruce Vosburgh but stated that when she was speaking of personalities, some teams seem to do a better job of it. There is a little bit of a disparity in motivation. We have also lost several key teachers. The inequality is a result of numerous things (not a black and white thing).

Sheila Himes, Pocopson Township resident, commented that we need to look at the reporting structure and report cards (reporting on the Standards for the acceleration – math) and not on the grade level Standards. This was confusing to parents.

Mrs. Trigg congratulated Karen Halstead and Therese West and extended her thanks to Stephen McClaskey and Keith Knauss for their years of service. She wished Curt Baker luck in the hot seat. She wished a happy holiday to everyone.

**RESIDENTS'
COMMENTS
(Continued)**

**BOARD
MEMBERS'
COMMENTS**

**BOARD
MEMBERS'
COMMENTS
(Continued)**

Mr. Swayze welcomed the two new Board members. He thanked Ed Wandersee for two years of distinguished service as Board President. Mr. Swayze recognized Gail Wolfel, Transportation Supervisor, for 16 years of service as she retires from her own school board. He extended best wishes to all for a happy holiday.

Mr. Murray thanked Mr. Wandersee for his service as President of the Board. He congratulated Therese West and Karen Halstead, commenting that he is sure their candor and debate will be a welcome change to the Board. Mr. Murray extended wishes for a happy holiday to everyone.

Mr. Wandersee welcomed Therese West and Karen Halstead to the Board. He looks forward to working with them and we can always use new ideas. Mr. Wandersee wished good luck to Curt Baker and thanked everyone for their support. He also thanked Dr. Kenney and the staff. His phone will be more quiet now, but it has been great and fun. He is quite certain that next year will be a very interesting and exciting year.

Mrs. Brown extended a happy holiday to everyone. She asked that everyone keep working with them and telling them their comments. They would like to know what people see as problems and to know when they are off base.

Mrs. Halstead stated that she is delighted to be here. It's been a long time here for her as a volunteer, a substitute, a teacher, and a parent. She has worn many hats. She is here to build bridges with honesty, respect, communication, and trust. She hopes we fill the place every meeting because without people coming, we don't know what's happening out there, although her phone is always busy. Here comes the sun!

Dr. West commented that it has been quite an evening for her. She is very delighted and happy to be here and serve on this Board. She thanked all of the Board members for their kind words, the parents, teachers, and everyone who voted. Dr. West publicly acknowledge her husband for his support also. She wished a wonderful holiday to everyone.

Mr. Baker commented that it's the time of year for a time of transition and looking ahead. In reflecting, he thanked Ed Wandersee. He watched him when he came on the Board two years ago and commented regarding the tireless effort and the amount of work he does for this community. Mr. Baker stated that he would also miss Steve McClaskey and Keith Knauss. He welcomed Therese West and Karen Halstead.

Mr. Baker stated that he had attended the football banquet in Kennett Square last evening. It was a time of great celebration and sadness. He hopes Pat's family is doing well following their car accident on the way to the event. Pat has done a wonderful job of coaching for the school. It was interesting to see the other coaches step forward and the degree of unity, love of school, focus, and camaraderie they have. It told him that as you look around at the Board, administration, teachers, staff, community and parents and the people working with their kids from day to day, you see that the future of this district is bright! Mr. Baker wished a wonderful holiday to everyone.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen M. Brown
Secretary

**BOARD
MEMBERS'
COMMENTS
(Continued)**

**MEETING
ADJOURNED**