

VASSAR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Special Meeting of the Board of Education with Millington Community School Board of Education

Date: March 4, 2014

Time: 6:30 P.M.

Place: High School Auditorium

A. CALL TO ORDER:

1. The special meeting of the Board of Education was called to order by President Mike Kennard at 6:30 P.M.

B. ROLL CALL:

VPS MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Kennard, Ben Guile, Kirk Van Wormer, Russ Hubbard, Jeff Fackler, Jill Baase, Randy Middlin

VPS MEMBERS ABSENT: None

VPS OTHERS PRESENT: Tom Palmer, Paul Wojno, Deb Dewey, Jason Kiss, Bill Haines, Phil Marcy, Chuck Fabbro

MCS MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Crump, Mr. Collins, Mrs. Grulke, Mr. Shreve, Mr. Hennessy, Mr. Hickey, Mr. Murray

MCS MEMBERS ABSENT: None

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: ADDITION OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA:

1. MOTION by Jeff Fackler, support by Russ Hubbard to approve agenda as is.

MOTION CARRIED (unanimous)

E. FINANCIAL ISSUES:

1. Mr. Kennard introduced the Millington Community Schools Board of Education and read a statement regarding the reasons for tonight's meeting. Mr. Palmer went into further detail discussing the reasons for the shared services (declining enrollment, cuts in funding, etc) while maintaining current programming. Both districts can save income and keep it in the classroom. Currently the districts share the Federal Programs Director and the Superintendent. These services will be increased in the proposed plan as well as the addition of sharing Technology staff, Counseling staff, a High School Principal, a social worker with Millington Schools. Vassar will also be looking at transferring Payroll to the Intermediate School district, restructuring the Transportation Office staff, and moving Kindergarten to Central School. At this time the plan would save the district approximately \$296,809. The process will be evaluated throughout the year. It is NOT a consolidation of districts. Vassar does not want to become Millington and Millington does not want to become Vassar. The boards cannot decide that issue. It must be put to a vote by the public. We are not doing that. Mr. Crump: After many hours and meetings the Finance Team came to a decision to enter into this arrangement with Vassar. We need to save money and keep it in the classroom. Mr. Collins: Mr. Palmer did an excellent job of explaining it. We need to retain our own identities. We need the cost savings efforts. Mr. Fackler: We've been doing this with the Superintendent and Title person. I haven't heard any yelling. Has there been any gaps? Mr. Hennessy: Where's the problem? I've had no creditable questions asked. I think this will work. I'm upbeat about his. We know educational money will be scarce until the state recovers. We have to work together to get this done. I think this will accomplish it. Mrs. Grulke: Mr. Palmer and Mr. Males have been excellent individuals throughout this transition. Mr. Palmer communicates with Millington's board of education. It was a smooth transition. Mr. Males is still tending to some tasks. Mr. Males: As it stands the Governor's presented his budget but it has to take the form of a bill. The Governor's proposal does include an increase. We are at \$7026 per pupil. It includes an increase of \$111 per pupil. Educational organizations want condensed categoricals and put into the state aid. Our costs are increasing approximately 8%. Funding is increasing 1%. We used to get \$300 per pupil more in the past. We are looking at increasing costs: insurance by 12%, retirement by 1%. Many contracts have steps they are legally obligated to fill. We are not looking at a robust

funding picture. In the past educational bills were earmarked to K-12 education but went to higher education. We need to look at different ways of doing business. We can't ask voters for a millage in these economically pressed times. State aid is not aid it is money from the public. Mr. Middlin: We are receiving less funding than 10 years ago. There is also a percentage the State paid for having a lower foundation grant. It was received as an equity payment this year. It should continue next year. Mr. Van Wormer: I've seen a lot over the years. This is a unique deal. How many districts have ever tried this? Like a handful in the whole state. Think about the knowledge these 2 superintendents have that they can pass to the other district. I don't see why we can't make this work. Mr. Guile: As to the vote regarding the consolidation of districts. How are we going to insulate the children from budget cuts? We are all from the same rural area with the same hopes. If we can protect our classrooms by coming together and sharing services, I think it is the way we need to go. Mr. Shreve: To echo what Mr. Guile said, I didn't like the idea when we started. But the economic challenges we are facing, we would have to eliminate teachers. I don't want to do that. It's going to take team work for us to do this the best we can. Mrs. Helmbold: Are we talking about combining a principal? Sharing a principal? How many Grade 6-12 students at Vassar? Millington? Mr. Wojno: Vassar has 650. Mr. Bearss: Millington has 630 plus 100 from alternative ed. Mrs. Helmbold: So 1 principal will take care of 1,380 kids. How many staff at Millington? Mr. Bearss 28 Teachers, 1 Principal, 1 Dean/AD, 1 Counselor and 6th Grade adds 3 teachers. Mr. Wojno: 36 Teachers, 1 Principal, 1 Assistant Principal, 1 Counselor, 1 AD. Mrs. Helmbold: Sorry, this is not possible. Mr. Wojno: I am not worried about sharing. Vassar is covered by a uniform force which is what we will establish at Millington if one is not already in place. It may be I don't know. We should not have problems. Mr. Males: This was one of our concerns. We decided not to have 1 principal bear all evaluations. There is a Chief Building Official for when Mr. Wojno is not there. There is a separate Personnel function from the Student function. As we go along we will make adjustments along the way. Mr. Crump: Millington has already passed this motion. Mr. Shreve: What is the length? Mr. Palmer: This year plus 1 year. Mr. Males: We have a series of benchmark to use to evaluate the process. The first evaluation is in April 2014. Scheduling to start the school year this summer. Some is trial and error. We have to think differently given the situation. Mrs. Baase: I didn't like the idea either. Things have changed. We have to think outside the box. We are not voting tonight. We'd like to see how much time is spent. Mr. Palmer, you are keeping a log of your time. Please add to the board packets. I believe the dollar figure given to staff needs to be looked at. Some are getting raises. We know it has to be done. If everything you gave us goes into contracts. Mr. Palmer: These are payments are stipends. Separate from the contracts. We could go into this agreement and make changes to our own. Mrs. Helmbold, I hear what you are saying. If we don't do this, we have less teachers, less paraprofessionals, and more students per teacher. Mr. Crump: We have a certain timeline. Mr. Palmer: It is on Monday night's agenda.

F. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: 69 attendees.

- o Linda Inglis, 6100 Hess Road, Vassar, MI 48768: My questions were answered during the discussion. Thank you.
- o Chris Kidd, Millington, MI 48746: Look at the Facility Committee to trim money from the budget. A year ago Millington hired a data consultant. Mr. Males: I am not familiar with a data analyst. Mr. Kidd: There are legal obligations to pay these people. Did this committee look at other areas for savings? It looks like we are making short term decisions. Mr. Crump: The Finance Committee spent many days and meetings looking at these things. Mr. Males: Three years ago we started looking at cost containment systems: new insurance package saved the district \$89,000, an early retirement incentive for professional staff and 3 reduction to match staff FTE with student FTE. We looked at Buildings/Grounds/Transportation and reduced 1 bus run saving significant money. Personnel cuts were \$1.2 million last year. We are trying to not cut programming. Mr. Kidd: I feel we are looking at short cuts. What are we doing to get students back in the district? Mr. Crump:

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We might be looking at it each year. It depends on our student count. We have looked at answers to get kids back. Mr. Hennessy: Mr. Kidd, this is not something new. Lots of lines of worries come from this. Look at the revenue and costs 10 years ago and see where we've come from there. What excited me about this, it was finally an opportunity to create new opportunities. There's not 1 person here who doesn't want to do what is right for kids. Mr. Middlin: Chris, keep in mind insurance is capped. That limited quite a lot in that category. You need to trust us that we will be watching to see that it works. Mr. Kidd: I have one more question. The 6th Grade is moving in with the Grade 2 7-12 building. I know we have room. We have a student in it already. No problems there. Are there procedures in place to keep the 6th Graders from the High School students? Mr. Crump: Administration has things in place. Mr. Palmer: Vassar did this 2 years ago. We have separate ends of the building. Millington has separate floors. It was a hot topic at them time for us but now the kids would resist if we tried to pull them back out. An MCS Teacher: We will have a half time principal, full time assistant principal and a shared counselor. Mr. Palmer: Sharing services is sharing salaries. An MCS Teacher: Sounds like the same number of people. How is there any kind of savings?

- o Teri Moore, 259 Saginaw St., Vassar, MI 48768: I understand the concern over the sharing of the principal. It will put a lot on the teachers. I was in a previous district where they created an Advisory Committee. There has to be a plan for staff. Mr. Palmer: There should always be an administrator in the district at any time. Mrs. Moore: I encourage the board to put together an Advisory Committee.
- o Paul Wojno, 718 Cork Pine Lane, Vassar, MI 48768: Hi, I am Paul Wojno. I will be the Principal and I am the one whose name has been bounced around tonight. Statistical numbers are scary. There are some unknowns. How can we save programs? I will give it 100% to try to make it work. I will need to learn about the Millington High School staff. Staff we have here at Vassar are capable. I am only a cell phone call away. I will try to get that same way at Millington. I'd rather run around like a chicken with its head cut off than cut programs. It's either this or cut programs and I don't want that.

G. ADJOURNMENT:

1. MOTION by Randy Middlin, support by Russ Hubbard to adjourn the meeting at 7:42pm.
MOTION CARRIED (unanimous)

DATED: _____ SIGNED: _____
(Secretary)