

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES – BOARD OF EDUCATION
 REDFORD UNION SCHOOLS, DISTRICT NO. 1
 May 23, 2016

Special Meeting 5/23/2016

A Special meeting of the Redford Union Board of Education was held May 23, 2016 at the Redford Union High School (Auditorium), 17711 Kinloch Road, Redford Township, Michigan, 48240. President Kurland called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

Call to Order

Present: Caloia, Doby (6:13 PM), Graham, Gubachy, Isabell, Kurland, Pridemore
 Absent: Student Representative Hovey

Roll Call

President Kurland asked everyone to please up their cell phones on silent or vibrate. There was an amendment to the agenda.

President's Remarks

MOVED by Isabell, seconded by Caloia, to adopt the amended agenda of the May 23, 2016 Special Board Meeting as presented. Yes: 6 No: 0 Motion: Carries

Adoption of Amended Agenda

President Kurland greeted the audience and said that there are comment cards in the hall right outside the auditorium doors. You do not have to fill out the cards to speak. There are a few options if you wish to speak today. Please come up to the microphones, you can speak without a comment card, if you are not comfortable with public speaking you can fill out the comment card and give it to Mr. Hulings. Mr. Hulings will read your comment card if you wish to remain anonymous

Feasibility Study
 Stakeholder Input Session
 Facilitator,
 Mr. David Hulings,
 Hulings & Associates

President Kurland thanked everyone for coming out and she introduced the Facilitator, Mr. Hulings of Hulings and Associates.

Mr. Hulings greeted everyone and explained his part/role. For the past 20 plus years he has been helping schools in various functions; one on one coaching of superintendents, principals and doing culture work with schools as they blend buildings together. While at South Redford doing a one on one coaching session for an administrator, then sometime in January, Supt. Brian Galdes asked to meet with him and he shared a little bit about this annexation ideal. Mr. Hulings expressed to Supt. Galdes that he did not have time to do it and that he is not in the area. The following month Supt. Galdes approached him again. The only way Mr. Hulings would get involved was if he could meet with both board presidents and both superintendents and have the understanding that both school districts wanted to be involved in the feasibility study. After meeting with them they agreed that he should be a part of the study. He then interviewed each board member individually. Afterwards he presented several plans. The only common plan that both school districts agreed on is where we are today.

Last Monday he was at South Redford from 8am-10pm doing interviews with staff and with some community groups. Wednesday he was here at RU doing interviews and meeting with groups and now we are here.

His job is to facilitate/to be our voice. He has no answers tonight. His job is to make sure our questions and concerns are presented in a way that will help people make better decisions so they can come back to us and answer questions.

Everyone needs to be heard. If you are not comfortable speaking in a public forum you can contact him. His business cards are available.

This is a passionate subject. We need to make sure we hear the right dialogue.

Courtesy.

There are a lot of things that has been done in the past that need to be addressed. He need to hear those things. But tonight he wants to hear from this point forward what we think needs to be addressed.

President Kurland asked that people be respectful and not use language such as those people etc.

President Kurland introduced some of the Redford Union Township Elected Officials that were in the audience. She also introduces the principals and other staff that were seating in the audience.

The call to the audience started and Mr. Hulings read the first question.

What are the plans; Plan A, Plan B? Is there a particular plan?

President Kurland said RU is not the people doing the feasibility study. If there are plans the board is unaware of them. Supt Shivers added that RU has not be asked to participate in any planning so we have no knowledge of a plan, if a plan exist or time-line to develop a plan.

What are the class sizes? Are they just going to merge the classes together and have bigger classes? What is the cost of standardized testing?

A parent of a RU student spoke. He is trying to understand the complexity. He knows class size is important. Standardized testing is an excessive cost. Standardized testing robs children from of the opportunity to think and robs teachers of their freedom to teach. Mr. Hulings will write the question as: What is the impact of an annexation on standardized testing? President Kurland said that some of the things the parent brought up coincide with some of the programs such as early college and the strategic planning that the district is currently going through. Supt Shivers spoke on the District focus of early college, life beyond K-12 and developing the whole child and not just learning drills and more.

Forming a front to fight this.

A Teacher/parent/resident (Stuckey) spoke regarding the rivalry with RU and South Redford and she is concerned. How are RU kids going to be treated? Are teachers going to be a part of this? Member Pridemore spoke, we cannot continue to sit quietly. She is a parent of a student at RU.

President Kurland said as a board they do not have an official position.

Supt Shivers spoke on the annexation which is a very complicated process. Part of the process of forming a fight is a timing. The bill has not passed and, therefore South Redford has not voted to do anything yet. When and if South Redford board votes to put this on the ballot we have already had conversation about process. Because it is running an election we will be doing a formal election with a no vote and the reason why RU district should vote no.

RU Staff Member/Resident/former student spoke regarding the bill being introduced if there were any researched based facts that the additional \$600 per student would raise test scores par for the state or above state average?

The bill is Senator David Knezek's.

What haven't RU applied for a feasibility study? What does annexation mean? Can you speak on RU current bond debt?

President Kurland said RU has a lot of expiring bonds. The largest bond expires in 2018 and 2022 is our next small bond. In 2018 the school taxes that the home owner pay will drop off. Next month when the Board votes on your feasibility study RU has the opportunity to possible building a new high school or sports complex. There are possibilities to what we could do without raising taxes. RU is in an amazing place going forward. We want to make sure our academics are solid.

Supt Shivers has done a lot in her one year on the job. She has also developed partners. Starting in the fall our freshman will have the opportunity to get an associate degree free of charge and we will also have trades programs and other opportunities for our students.

Supt Shivers said RU asked for the feasibility student. South Redford did not apply for a grant to do a feasibility study. South Redford applied for \$4.5 million to annex RU. They were only given \$150,000 by the State to do a feasibility study before the State would give them the other \$4,350,000. It was not a grant you could apply for just a feasibility study. It was a grant for annexation. We did not apply for a grant to consolidate or annex because we are not interested in consolidation or annexing South Redford.

Annexation means take over. The State's statute is one district's board votes to annex other district. The district that has been voted to annex, the voters in that district vote and agree yes we want to be annexed or no we do not want to be annexed.

Annexation for RU means South Redford would have to vote by August something to have it on the November ballot. In November the residents of RU and only the resident of RU would vote up or down. If the residents of RU district voted up, then RU as a school district would no longer exist. That is the difference between annexation and consolidation. In a consolidation everyone goes away and no longer exist. In an annexation, only the school district being annexation goes away. The community members and township has no say in this.

Also, if RU school district is annexed the residents of RU will assume the debt of South Redford such as their bond debt and sinking funds, millage etc.

A parent/resident spoke regarding the rivalry with RU and South Redford students. Are they considering counseling or workshops?

A RU parent asked what will happen if the schools get shut down? Will her property value go down? When did her child's education have a dollar signed attached to it? Are teachers going to lose their jobs? Has anyone asked the student how they feel about this?

A RU staff person said it is not a merger it is a takeover. Do they have a plan?

Member Caloia said we sent a FOIA request to South Redford but we have not received a response. They have applied for an extension.

Member Isabell said South Redford mentioned at their meeting that the extra money would be for fixing their buildings, infrastructure and technology. Other than that there was no plan.

Mr. Hulings said there are three parts to the feasibility study; financial (Plante Moran), legal (Miller Canfield) and people part (Hulings and Associates).

A RU parent said that South Redford is not being transparent.

RU addressed a letter to South Redford BOE asking for a joint meeting as of today we have not received correspondence back from South Redford.

RU decided to have this meeting as a town hall meeting because we wanted to be transparent and have an open dialogue. We were hoping to have a meeting with South Redford for an open dialogue

A parent/resident from South Redford said they had a meeting with Senator Kenezek last Monday night and we asked where the South Redford Board was. We are not being told anything buy RU is not making it. That RU is in debt and that the schools are falling apart. She just walked through RU high school and the school is fine. She wish more South Redford residents and staff would of attended RU meeting. She said it not even on the South Redford Agenda what is happening. She hopes that RU will not vote for this.

President Kurland said four years ago Redford Union's debt was (\$4.1) million as of 2013-14 our fund balance was \$2.4 million and a big chunk of that came off of our teacher's backs. We can out of the deficit elimination plan one year early. Thanks to our assistant superintendent McIntyre making sure we were put in the right place and in the right position of where we are today.

Our teachers took cuts to help take us out of debt. Staff really relied on the board to make the right decisions to make us whole. The question of annexation to her was personally disrespectful to our teachers for taking a cut and then saying you should not exist and that your jobs should exist and maybe you will have a job in the new district. We extremely appreciate all the cuts that our staff took.

A RU staff member/resident and parent of South Redford said for something of this importance to work you have to come together. He read senate bill 456 regarding dissolving of a school district. He said that South Redford residents and staff are in the dark.

A student asked why would this help our students.

Supt Shivers said she wishes she could answer her question. She also said she that was one of the most important question that is not being answered. Supt Shivers said she we have a district that is doing an awesome job. She inherited one of the best staff and administrative team and the board support.

The student also asked why don't RU annex South Redford. Mr. Hulings said that there has to be a will. President Kurland said there is no will.

A RU student said that the students have not been asking anything about this. All the students know is second hand information. He asked if the additional \$600 will outweigh the benefits of having such teachers. Will it outweigh the nice building, the associate degree coming in next year? How is the annexation going to outweigh the benefits that they already have?

A staff member of RU/resident of South Redford said they do not have a voice in South Redford district. How can her children and other South Redford resident benefit with the programs coming to RU district? She would not have known about this if she did not work in the district.

Superintendent Shivers said part of our strategic plan is to fix the communication. We all hold the narrative of this school district by what we say in the public and the reality is parents turn to other parents, parents turn to the children's teachers, so we have to make sure that our discourse and narrative is positive talk about the changes and the direction that this district is going in. And we have to make sure that our own internal stakeholders

Superintendent Shivers said RU is not a deficit district, we are not lack and this is not a struggling district. Everything happens for a reason and the young people in this district will be better because all of you have given up your time on May 23, 2016 to come and voice your concerns about all the young people in Redford Township. And that is what we are supposed to be doing.

Superintendent said that the associate degree program will start in the fall and the entry points will be 9th and 10th grade because they have to have time to acquire the degree at no cost to the student. The State will only allow the students to go beyond one year which would be the 13th grade.

A resident asked if the annexation was on the November ballot what would be the time-line. If it passed does that mean we stop existing that day, the next day?

Superintendent Shivers said it is a time-line there is a date that would be on the ballot to let the resident know when it would come into effect. The resident asked when would the taxes change?

A parent of RU asked how the township ended up with two districts. President Kurland said it was around 1920. It was actually more districts.

A resident of South Redford said the lack of transparency from our South Redford community members have put them in an awkward position so they have to try and question. Why would a school district request \$4.5 million for annexation? What is in that for a school district to do that? Redford Union at one point was the second largest property holder in Redford Township so with this annex the new district would become the largest property holder.

Member Caloia said she was invited to attend South Redford's meeting last week. When she brought up the money she was accused of starting all the rhetoric. South Redford's test scores are below state average just let Redford Union's test scores. We are the same. They

cannot say they give out a better education and they are going to save us. Because they do not educate their children better than us.

A RU staff member said we are almost at end of the school year and we need to get the message out right now. We cannot wait until August, September. The teachers in this building is willing to help. Please let us know what we need to do.

A parent/resident asked what can we do now as a parent/student/staff/community member to make RU better now. President Kurland said we appreciate her being here at the meeting and continue to be an active member and parent of our community. Help us get the word out, tell people you enjoy RU.

A student asked if it's not about the money then why is it an annexation and not a consolidation? President Kurland said we do not have an answer to that.

A resident said if we are going to fight this we need to stay positive and state the facts and don't get all emotional.

A RU parent/resident asked if there is an annexation will the classrooms be overcrowded and what about staffing/work level?

A parent/resident said it was a stigma and it should be taken into serious consideration.

A parent/resident thanked the Board and Superintendent for taking time to bring this all out. She really feels that they care about the children. Since the Superintendent has been here she has heard more positive things from this district. How is annexation going to help with the kids, we already have problems with fighter and bullying? How do we make it positive for our children? She wants to be part of the solution and keeping it positive for our kids and community.

A RU staff member parent/resident asked if the bill goes through in November who will write the proposal. She also thanked the board for the meeting. President Kurland said South Redford would write the proposal.

A student/resident said that the RU offers a unique learning experience. You learn so much more here. He has been more prepared for the college courses he is taking compared to some of his classmates.

A community member asked what type of promotions can the school board do through the State to get their point of views out about not having RU annexed. President Kurland said we cannot use school funds. We cannot disseminate information during school/work hours. That bill is currently in court.

A parent/resident said he sees how hard the teacher and administrator work and he wanted to say thank you. He son asked if he is going to lose his teacher and principal. Why do they want to do this? Our children is not our business our children is our children.

Superintendent Shivers apologize for having to students to go through this. They will continue to have forums like this.

Superintendent Shivers introduced stakeholders in the audience. She also thanked the parents/staff/student/community members for coming out.

Mr. Hulings thanked everyone.

Mr. Hulings said his report will be completed which will be only questions and it will be submitted to both superintendents and his recommendation will be to answer the questions.

Member Graham said the last meeting she attended at South Redford was about annexation not a consolidation. It all about the money.

Member Isabell attended the South Redford meeting last week also and when she asked about the programs for the children she was told that the special education programs would be taken over by RESA and the other program such as early college and international baccalaureate would be decided what they wanted, who would do it and if they had any interest in them. They did not discuss the students as she was hoping.

Member Doby told the audience that she takes being a board member as a privilege of charge.

Member Caloia told the audience she can be reached by phone.

Member Kurland told the audience the reason why she ran for the school board was to be an active member in the community.

Monday, June 13, 2016 – Regular Meeting at 7:30 p.m.
Board of Education Administrative Offices, 17715 Brady Street, Redford, MI 48240

Future Meeting Dates

MOVED by Caloia, seconded by Isabell to adjourn the meeting at 8:44 PM.
Total: Yes: 7 No: 0. Motion: Carries.

Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Isabell,
Secretary
Redford Union Schools Board of Education