

The Special Meeting was called to order by Mr. Dan Petek, President, at 5:30 P.M. in the Highland High School Media Center.

Roll Call: Dr. Christopher, present; Mrs. Thomas, present; Mr. Kelly, present; Mr. Houska, present; Mr. Petek, present.

The next Meeting will be held February 28, 2011 at 7:00 P.M. in the Highland High School Media Center.

BOARD MEMBER'S AGENDA ITEMS

LEVY DISCUSSION

Superintendent Catherine Aukerman noted that the Highland schools need the proposed levy to protect the educational excellence that is a core strength of our communities. Simply put, with the levy we can continue to prepare students well for college and the jobs of the future. Without it, the vital educational programs and teaching strength will be lost because the funding to sustain them will not be in place.

Mrs. Thomas stated that the levy request is a necessity to sustain our schools and communities, She believes that our schools are worthy of this investment. She noted that Highland's per pupil costs are the lowest in Medina County and 20% less than the State average. For years, our communities have enjoyed excellent and accountable teaching and excellent results. We all want to keep it that way.

Mr. Houska said that without new revenue, education here will not survive at the quality we need to prepare our children and protect the quality of life in our communities and our investment in living here. We need to support our schools locally if we want to maintain quality schools. Expecting the state to pay is unrealistic. This is an investment we must make ourselves.

Dr. Christopher stated that every dollar of this levy is for classroom instruction and programs. With it we will have enough teachers, instructional aides, textbooks, technology and programs to serve our students. Without it, our financial resources erode and we are able to provide less and less of a quality education. He also noted that the schools and community are tied directly. The success of one depends on the other.

Mr. Kelly reminded the audience of the impact the failure of this levy will have on the District. He cautioned that education will surely suffer and the Highland that this community has come to know will be drastically different. Class sizes will grow and program offering will head towards State minimum standards.

Mr. Petek noted that it's been more than eleven years since the last school levy passed, and the District has higher basic operating costs. We would like to continue to remind voters that we also have 1,000 new students during that same time period. Meanwhile, our schools and their employees have tightened their belts. We have already cut over \$2 million out of our budget and have eliminated 40 staff positions. In addition, our administrators' pay has been frozen for two years. Mr. Petek also provided specific examples of how cost/prices have risen in recent years. Examples included food items, fuel, and homes.

Treasurer Neil Barnes described the balanced approach that is being sought by the Board, Financial Advisory Panel and administrators. This approach includes the infusion of additional revenues through the passage of a levy coupled with

responsible budget reductions and continued cost containment measures. He noted that the District cannot simply cut its way out of this budget situation without impacting the quality of education.

Donna Swan, 2000 Ridge Road, expressed concern about the impact the passage of the proposed levy would have on her property taxes. She estimated an annual increase of about \$2,000 (*in following up with Ms. Swan it was determined that the actual impact will be less than \$800*). She feels that the District already receives a substantial amount of money. Community members simply can't afford this given the current economy. She would also like to know specifically where the money will go if the levy passes.

Mrs. Aukerman noted that the money would go towards classroom instruction and educational programs, the Highland experience.

Steve Sage, 5415 Ridgeline Drive, expressed disappointment in the collective bargaining units' reluctance to offer cost saving concessions. He also feels that the Board/Administration and unions are equally at fault for the current contracts that are in place. He feels that the assumptions used during the bargaining process were overly optimistic. He feels that some community members have a difficult time reconciling their work schedules in comparison to teachers. He also inquired as to whether there is evidence that the quality of education will be impacted by deeper budget cuts.

Jim Mandera, 5446 Ridgeline Drive, wondered where this cycle ends. He expressed frustration with the fact that there have now been three failed levy attempts, but yet the District continues to put issues on the ballot. He feels that the unions have more control than the community would like to see. He also feels that the District's financial resources have been mismanaged despite the fact that Highland has the lowest cost per pupil in Medina County and spends 20% less per student than the State average.

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION TO PROCEED – ADDENDUM#1 11-01-26

Mr. Kelly made a motion, seconded by Dr. Christopher, that the Board of Education adopt a resolution determining to proceed with the submission to the Electors of the Highland Local School District the question of an additional tax levy pursuant to sections 5705.194 through 5705.197 of the revised code, as presented in Addendum #1.

Mr. Kelly, yes; Dr. Christopher, yes; Mrs. Thomas, yes; Mr. Houska, yes; Mr. Petek, yes.

Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

With all in agreement, the meeting was adjourned at 6:35 P.M.

President

Treasurer