

MINUTES
Community Unit School District #205
Board of Education
April 7, 2014

Call To Order/Roll Call

The Community Unit School District #205 Board of Education met in a special meeting on Monday, April 7, 2014 at 5:00 PM at 932 Harrison Street, Galesburg, IL. The meeting was called to order by President Colclasure. A closed session will be held for review of closed meeting minutes. The roll was read and the following Members responded: Welty, Gibb, Panther, Lindstrom, Kessler, Palmer, Colclasure (7) Roll Call #1

Recognition of Visitors

The following people spoke to the board regarding Silas Willard Elementary:
Elizabeth Rinehart Schwigen, Sharon Trotter-Martin, Paul Stewart, Kristi Mustain Perez, John Rehn, Doug Mustain, and Matthew Jones-Rhoades.

Closed Session

It was moved by Member Kessler and seconded by Member Welty that the special meeting be adjourned to a closed session for review of closed meeting minutes—5:26 PM. No action will be taken. On roll call the following Members voted AYE: Gibb, Welty, Colclasure, Kessler, Palmer, Panther, Lindstrom (7) Motion carried. Roll Call #2

Following the closed session, it was moved by Member Welty and seconded by Member Panther that the special meeting be re-convened. On roll call the following Members voted AYE: Panther, Palmer, Kessler, Gibb, Colclasure, Lindstrom, Welty (7) Motion carried. Roll Call #3

Silas Willard Plan

Mr. David Black, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, stated that on September 9, 2013, the board approved moving forward with the replacement of the Silas Willard building. Through extraordinary efforts by administration and architects, the life safety replacement bond financing was verbally approved by ISBE. On Monday, March 31, ISBE called to say that they had read in the paper comments by the board that seem to indicate to them that the board was no longer interested in replacing the Silas Willard building. ISBE has agreed to delay the final decision until the board, “makes up their mind.” Therefore, we have requested this special Board of Education meeting to again discuss renovation vs. new construction. The administration is also proposing two additional options. One thing that has been made very clear by ISBE is that the board needs to make a final decision. If ISBE were to sign off on the project, the board would have one year from the date of that approval to perform all of the life safety repairs which are categorized as “Priority A” (this includes most of the repairs on the life safety violation list). If these repairs were not completed within the one year, the building could be condemned any occupancy permit revoked. If ISBE denies the life safety replacement bonds proposal based on their belief that the majority of the board is not committed to the project, new construction will no longer be an option.

At the last board meeting, grade level centers were introduced as a possibility. However, because of the size of the elementary buildings and the fact that one has already undergone a \$6 million renovation, it seems clear that Galesburg 205 has already committed to continuing the model of smaller neighborhood K-5 schools. It would require major renovation and expansion of most of the buildings in order to configure them to be able to house entire grade levels.

With regard to Silas, the board previously focused its discussion on two options. Option 1 (\$20,507,000) involves totally renovating the current Silas building, tearing down and rebuilding the gymnasium, and adding another wing with a cafeteria. Option 2 (\$18,360,000) was building an entirely new Silas Willard building at the current Silas Willard site and tearing down the old building upon the completion of the new construction. Due to the fact that some Board of Education members have publicly professed a desire to explore less costly options, we have developed Option 3 (currently being developed by Russell Construction – will be presented the night of the special Board meeting - preliminary cost estimates show that this could indeed be a workable plan with significant savings), relocating Silas Willard to the current Lincoln School site while moving the administrative offices to the Technology Learning Center, and Option 4 (\$7 million), doing only what is necessary to correct life safety issues at the existing Silas Willard building and making it handicapped accessible. The following details include some of the benefits and challenges of all four options.

Option 1 benefits: preserves part of the current building which some in the community feel has historical significance due to the fact that Ronald Reagan attended school there. The school would remain at the current Silas Willard site.

Option 1 challenges: it's a very old building that has been built onto multiple times. Renovation is fraught with difficulties due to old building standards. As we found with renovating other older buildings, there are constant construction surprises and many costs associated with trying to work with existing, very old construction. As we have experienced with Lombard, even after millions of dollars has been poured into the building, in many ways the building still shows its age. The biggest challenge is the fact that there is nowhere for the students to be housed during the time that their classrooms, hallways, etc. are being renovated. Finally, the construction estimates show that renovation of the old building will cost \$2 million more than new construction. These estimates are based on the experience in actual costs associated with the renovations of Lombard Junior High.

Option 2 benefits: students and community are presented with a brand-new, 21st-century school at the current Silas Willard location. Students are able to attend the old building while the new construction is completed.

Option 2 challenges: the current Silas Willard site is small in size meaning that the new building will have to be two stories in order to provide sufficient square footage to house the Silas Willard population (including those currently housed at other schools due to crowding issues at Silas). Playground space may be tight until the old building can be demolished.

Option 3 benefits: maintains the appearance of frugality by using the current Lincoln School building and providing a use for the Technology Learning Center. The Lincoln School site is significantly larger than Silas Willard's thereby allowing ample room for expansion. The new Silas/Lincoln school would use materials in the front to make it look somewhat similar to Steele

School. Although the gymnasium would not be in the front, there are multiple ways to make it look similar and still put the gymnasium in a place that makes sense for this particular building.

Option 3 challenges: Lincoln School is located adjacent to railroad tracks where trains regularly haul tanker cars during the daytime when children would be present. Because train tracks divide the location of Lincoln School from the majority of the population center for Silas Willard, almost all of the students would have to be bussed.

Option 4 benefits: it is the least expensive option. This option will make happy those who have been advocating for preserving the original building.

Option 4 challenges: those students who are currently being bussed to other schools due to crowding issues at Silas Willard will continue to be displaced. This will do nothing to address anything aesthetic other than to repair any damage made to install required life safety or accessibility. The basic building configuration will remain. There will be no air-conditioning. It essentially puts \$7 million into a building that will look very similar to what exists today. At least some of the life safety repairs will have to be made while students are present. They could displace classrooms. No cost was included for dealing with displaced students and no plan exists for an alternate location to hold classes during the repair process.

Mr. Black stated that it continues to be the recommendation of administration to proceed with the original approved vote in September 2013, moving forward with new construction at the current Silas Willard location. Mr. Black introduced Steve Baughman with Russell Construction to present to the Board the cost and design of option 3, which would close Silas Willard Elementary and reopen Lincoln as a school. Following the presentation, discussion ensued between Board members. President Colclasure stated his concerns for moving forward with the already approved Silas Willard plan due to funding and the location. Member Panther stated he was concerned about the location as well while Member Lindstrom stated that he was the only no vote in September and that he was the only person who wanted to look into closing Silas and moving to Lincoln. Member Lindstrom went on to say that the Board voted and passed in September 2013 to move forward with new construction at the current Silas Willard location and that it hurts credibility with the community and administration if now not even six months later that decision is changed. Member Kessler asked for a clarification on what exactly the board was to do this evening. Mr. Feeney, the district attorney, stated that no vote needed made since the Board already voted in September to move forward with new construction at the current location. The only vote needed would be if the Board chose to change that decision and not move forward with the September 2013 vote. Member Gibb stated that based on the new information and what he has learned tonight that he feels the right path is to continue with the vote already approved in September but that he feels the boundaries need to be looked at again at some point in the future. Member Welty stated that the board has to make the best decision for today and that in his opinion that is moving forward with the plan already approved in September 2013. Member Panther stated that in the best case scenario moving forward with the already approved plan is the best but that he also thinks giving the community a chance to discuss the new information is needed. Mr. Arthur stated that there have been at least fourteen meetings to discuss the approved plan and that every month delayed it pushes back the date for students and changes the funding. Member Palmer stated that the one thing that has not been discussed is how the Silas community would feel about the Board closing Silas. She stated that if the new options had been part of the original

information given to the Silas Willard community that maybe the outcome would be different but that the information presented to the Silas community has always been that the school would remain at the current location and moving forward with the already approved vote is the right option. President Colclasure asked the district attorney what needed to be done at this point. Mr. Feeney stated that the Board has taken action and that the September 2013 action stands to move forward with new construction at the current Silas Willard location and as long as the board is not taking action to change the course of that approval, then no action needs to be taken. No action this evening would be to stay the course of the September 2013 approved vote. Member Colclasure asked if anyone was interested in making a motion to change the course of the September 2013 vote. After a brief pause, President Colclasure stated that hearing no motion, it is the Boards decision to move forward with the approved vote from September 2013 of new construction at the current Silas Willard location.

Adjournment

It was moved by Member Kessler and seconded by Member Welty that the special meeting be adjourned—6:36 PM. On roll call the following Members voted AYE: Lindstrom, Palmer, Panther, Welty, Colclasure, Gibb, Kessler (7) Motion carried. Roll Call #4

Thomas Colclasure, President

ATTEST:

Michael Panther, Secretary