

**GENEVA COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER 304
227 NORTH FOURTH STREET, GENEVA, ILLINOIS
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF A SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The Board of Education of Community Unit School District Number 304 met in a special session on Monday, November 5, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. at Coultrap, 1113 Peyton, Geneva, Illinois.

1. CALL TO ORDER

- 1.1 Roll Call
- 1.2 Welcome
- 1.3 Reminder to sign attendance sheet

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by President Grosso.

Board members present: President Mark Grosso, Mike McCormick, Tim Moran, Vice President Kelly Nowak, Policy Committee Chair Mary Stith, Finance Committee Chair Bill Wilson. Late: None.
Absent: Matt Henry.

The President welcomed everyone, led them in the Pledge and reminded them to sign the attendance record.

District administrators present: Craig Collins, Assistant Superintendent Personnel Services; Donna Oberg, Assistant Superintendent Business Services; and Dr. Kent Mutchler, Superintendent.

Others present: Roger Butler, Sandy Ellis, John Fatten, Lori Dowd, Sue Sarkauskas (Daily Herald), Brenda Schory (K.C. Chronicle), Dick Graff, Kent Bickford, Jay Mottat, Dave Ziegler, Renata Pajic, Julieanne Zenz, David Lamb, Jeff Ward, Erin Julseth, Gail Ryan, Al Brown, Ron & Susan Stevenson, Anne & Matt Cesarone, Kathleen & Richard Chroust, Mary Limbris, Beth Ward, Kurt Kepker, R. L. Cabeen, Kristin & Dave Shorr, Diane & Cam Cleary, Chad Marquardt, Cathy Carrino, Steve Young, Susan Fahdel, Brigitte Ramm, Therese Davison, John McCormick, Art Echmann, Marie Durkin, Michael Massoth, Colleen Miller Owen, Paula Nagel, Debbie Hanson, Pattie Lane, Ron Rogalla, Mitchell Beleu, John Peters, Patrick McCann, Martha Paschke, Lynn Moravick, Fred Dresser, John Rice, Kathy Spencer, Darcy & Mark Thompson, Rick Nagel (Patch), Bob Mann, Krista Benhart, Kenneth Webster, Amy Schelick, Laura Zuzuly, Tom Annett, Robert Danek, Steve Lane, Laura Ross, Daniel Rnewitz, Colleen Schenok, Maureen Nelson, Jen Thill, Mary Keyzer, Bryan Schmidt, Andrew Thomas, Sara Emmerson, Jim Kurczek, Kathy & Jeff Hammond, Becky Rogalla, Wynn & Marilyn Church, Scott Row, Bill Clancy Susanna Watson, Joanne Gerlach, Gerald Klemm, Mr. & Mrs. Al Disilvestro, Ron & Andrea Preston, Kim Griffin, Jennifer Schwartz, David Larson, Judy Schmidt, and approximately 150 to 175 other individuals who did not sign the attendance record.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

The President reminded everyone that those wishing to address the Board needed to complete the required form and present it to the Recording Secretary prior to the start of the meeting. He stated that comments would be limited to about two minutes per individual speaker and asked that those speaking be respectful of the time limit so all speakers would have the same amount of time. He added that he wanted to provide his own comments which included the following: Geneva doesn't have the industrial or commercial tax base that our neighbors do; the majority of Geneva's tax revenue comes from individual property owners; the largest employers in the school district are Delnor Hospital, Kane County and Geneva CUSD 304; his family has lived here 25 years and during that time Geneva experienced a lot of rapid growth until the recession hit and growth stopped; to accommodate the rapid growth and development, the community authorized the building of schools; when the recession hit, those who lived Geneva found themselves with a large school construction debt; in order to pay the debt, which increases every year, the Board has made measured reductions to the budget trying to reduce it or keep it flat; the Board has used reserve funds to pay some capital expenses and has abated and repurchased bonds to offset some of the debt; the Board has asked all of its employee groups to take a pay freeze and following the pay freeze, those employee groups received a salary increase that wasn't as large as increases they had traditionally received; this year, the Board asked the teachers to share in the sacrifice, take a pay freeze and after the pay freeze, the salary increases wouldn't be as large as they had traditionally received; the Board did not ask for

anyone to be laid off and did not reduce positions or salaries; they only asked that the increase teachers traditionally have received be limited; we find ourselves in a tough negotiation process; for Board members, it's been uncharted waters without state or national organizations providing direction or a playbook; the seven Board members are trying to make a fair agreement with the teachers that the community can live with and so students can continue to attend the classes that have been traditionally offered in our school district; contract negotiations are tough and meetings can be stressful, frustrating, and very emotional; there has been a lot of negative rhetoric about these negotiations in the community, the press and on the Internet but we want everyone to know that the Board holds our teachers in high regard, as it does all the employees of the district.

The Board President commented that during tonight's public comments the Board would not tolerate any negative comments about or bashing of our teachers and he reminded those wishing to speak that they would be limited to two minutes.

Public comments included:

You used to give five minutes. (Times are tough and we've had to reduce the speaking time limit.) The teachers' union has declared their intent to strike but a strike won't impact Board members who receive no compensation, administrators who will still get paid, or taxpayers, who no matter what happens will bear an already crushing tax burden. The impact of a strike will fall entirely on students and parents; interruptions to students' education and inconvenience to parents. The GEA appears indifferent to their victims and maintains that the students and parents deserve to be punished by a strike because the Board has not agreed to their demands for salary increases, in spite of considerable salary increases in all of the past twelve years. They've demanded salary manipulations designed to inflate future pension entitlements beyond levels actually earned, and that the Board require all teachers to pay part of their salary as "Fair Share" to the GEA union leaders salary and benefits. The GEA argues that money exists to continue salary increases indefinitely and maintain that the District's reserve or surplus should be earmarked for their members while ignoring next year's budget deficit of over \$4 million and that the taxpayers need those reserves for future relief toward the \$300 million debt; that the Board allocate reserves to match salaries with other school districts or Geneva won't be able to attract quality teachers. There are many unemployed teachers who would be eager to have a job. There is no proof that experienced teachers are being turned away or that any teacher every employed by Geneva has given up their tenure and position to take a non-tenured position in another school district because of salary difference. (The President noted that the speaker had run over the two minute limit.)

I've lived in Geneva for twenty years. I have two daughters; one graduated from GHS and one is currently in eighth grade at the middle school level. We've had very good experiences with Geneva schools. My daughters have received fabulous education and I give tribute to everyone for that. My concern is that lately we hear a lot from teachers and administrators about bullying and peer pressure. It seems to me there is a whole lot of that going on here. My daughter has heard talk that there are teachers who really don't want to strike but will do it because of peer pressure. Maybe they are being bullied in one way or another. The whole thing is inconsistent with what has been a real emphasis in this school district and I would like everyone to think about that. Let's do this in a way that it doesn't affect everybody. Regardless of which side you are looking at, what message are we sending to the kids?

I have lived in Geneva on the east side for twenty-nine years. I own two houses and pay over \$10,000 a year in property taxes. Thanks for the opportunity to address the Board. I think we have a fantastic school district and it is great for many reasons, like student achievement, thanks to the great efforts of students, teachers, administrators, support staff, parents and the community. In my opinion, we have dollar-for-dollar the finest student achievement in the collar counties. We're reported as tops in third and eighth grade reading in several counties. We're second in third and eighth grade math. Second to one high school in Lincolnshire in high school reading. We're within the top four high schools in the collar counties in the PSAT composites. But this district is operating an instructional budget \$400 per student below the state average. That is possible because everyone does their best. An Illinois Association of School Boards document, *Playing Fair with the Children of Illinois*, available on our school district's web site states that ". . . top students in the nation tend to be located in communities that insist on the best and are willing to pay for it. All children eventually compete with the graduates of these schools." Lincolnshire's starting salary is a little over \$50,000 and that's our competition. We have a fantastic school district because everybody works together.

I want to thank the Board for their professionalism in these tough negotiations. This is the first time they have taken on the teachers and not given them everything they wanted and I appreciate it. I also want to thank the GEA President. We know what they are trying to do and can appreciate it and she's done a good and professional job. When all is said and done, I believe we will be able to work together. That being said, we have seen the final offer from the Board and the teachers. The union has said they won't go along with the Board's offer. So, I ask the Board why don't you quit negotiating. Negotiating days are over. We have to go out and hire replacements for the teachers. According to an article I read, the teachers' right to strike is protected by state law and they cannot be fired but they can be replaced. Let's get them replaced. The Board hired 15 teachers in August. They were trained and they are accepted. We need 400 replacement teachers. It's been said that you've received 1,000 applications. Kane County has nine school districts and has 10,500 teacher applications. Do not negotiate. Hire replacement teachers. If our teachers go on strike, that's their cause. Love them for it. But let's get them replaced.

I've lived here for fifteen years and seen my property taxes double but my income and that of many in this community has not. The price we pay for government services continues to go up. I've looked at the district's education budget and compared it to 2003-2004. We have a 52% increase in the education budget but only about 7% more students in the school system. We now have a debt that taxpayers will be stuck with until 2025 due to decisions made by past Boards. To the GEA, if you go on strike, you are not helping the children. This isn't about the children, it's about the teachers' self interest. I've got thirty-one years experience negotiating collective bargaining agreements with private sector unions and understand the process. But Geneva has always given their teachers a very fair deal. We've given you increases when the economy was good. Now, the community is not in a position to continue to pay out the kind of lavish salary and benefit expectations the teachers are used to. We live globally in what appears to be potentially an inflationary environment. I don't believe that anyone in this room hasn't realized that going forward, we can't always expect to get the 5%, 6% and 8% step and lane increases each year. I'm asking the teachers, please don't hurt the families and taxpayers of this community by striking.

Thanks to the Board for their difficult and dedicated service. Congratulations to the teachers for their hard work and a job well done. I'm a retired Geneva resident married to a teacher and have benefited from good teaching and support from the public education system in this state. My sons and grandchildren have flourished under this system. I agree with the recent appeals to the Board to hold the line on property taxes. During this time of economic difficulty, many retirees are having an increasingly difficult time on fixed incomes due to declining property values and increasing property taxes. Some retirees can't sell and move to appropriate care facilities. A local retiree is looking at renting out a portion of her home, pending changes to covenant restrictions. I've been a union member. I've walked a picket line. I've served on the pension committee of a major company. Teaching jobs have employment security and longevity not typically available in the private sector. Teacher pay and working conditions are fair and compensatory when compared to most private sector jobs. The benefits are superior to private sector jobs relative to insurance coverage and retirement benefits. There are essentially no cost of living adjustments in the private sector jobs and few, if any, current defined benefit plans based on average four years of earnings. Geneva has serious pension and financial expenses for the school system. According to a June 2012 newspaper article, the teachers got a \$900 million bump above their original pension benefits last year as a result of a 3% compounded annual cost of living adjustment. (The President indicated that the speaker was at his two minute limit.) It appears that teachers' pay increases continue even under current contract provisions both as a result of a COLA, as well as step and lane provisions. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

3. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

In response to statements made by audience members tonight, the President reported the following: At the last negotiation session on October 26, we agreed on probably 85-90% of the issues we were negotiating. When we've agreed on that many, I'm not sure why the GEA is continuing to threaten a strike. The Board has no timetable or deadline and will sit at the table as long as it takes. Also, the Board wants to thank everyone on both sides of the issue for the emails they have received. There have been hundreds of them and while we don't have the time to answer them all, be assured they are read by every Board member.

4. ACTION CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Resolution to Temporarily Suspend Bylaw 0131.1, Bylaws and Policies

The President read aloud the resolution authorizing the temporary suspension of Bylaw 131.1.

Motion by Wilson, second by Nowak, to adopt the resolution, as presented. On roll call, Ayes, six (6), McCormick, Moran, Nowak, Stith, Wilson, Grosso. Nays, none (0). Motion carried unanimously.

4.2 Adopt Policy 7430.01, Picketing, Public Protests, and First Amendment Rights
The President read aloud Policy 7430.01.

Motion by Moran, second by Wilson, to adopt Policy 7430.01, as presented. On roll call, Ayes, six (6), Moran, Nowak, Stith, Wilson, McCormick, Grosso. Nays, none (0). Motion carried unanimously.

5. EXECUTIVE SESSION TO CONSIDER MATTERS PERTAINING TO COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATING MATTERS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC BODY AND ITS EMPLOYEES OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES [5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2)]

At 7:31 p.m., motion by Nowak, second by Stith, to go into executive session to consider matters pertaining to collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives. On roll call, Ayes, six (6), Nowak, Stith, Wilson, McCormick, Moran, Grosso. Nays, none (0). Motion carried unanimously.

The Board President reported no action was anticipated following executive session and that the Board would only be considering the latest GEA offer.

At 7:43 p.m., the Board moved into executive session.

At 9:37 p.m., motion by McCormick, second by Stith, and with unanimous consent, the Board returned to open session. A Board member checked to see if any community members were waiting for the Board to return to open session. There were none.

6. ACTION POSSIBLE FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

7. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:38 p.m., motion by Wilson, second by McCormick, and with unanimous consent, the meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED _____ PRESIDENT
(Date)

SECRETARY _____ RECORDING SECRETARY