

January 25, 2012

A joint Board of Education meeting between Chatham Central School District and New Lebanon Central School District was held on January 25, 2012. The meeting was held in the cafeteria at the New Lebanon Jr/Sr High School. Monique Wood, Board President of the New Lebanon Central School District, called the meeting to order at 7:03. New Lebanon School Board members in attendance were Monique Wood, President; Raymond Sowalski; Christine Sotek; JoAnn Gavrity and David Kroboth. Tracy Bingham and Michael Bienes were absent. The Chatham School Board members in attendance were James Toteno, Vice President; Gail Day; Francis Jaconetti; David O'Connor; Melony Spock and James Marks. John Wapner, President; James Cartin; Michael Clark and Student Representative, Catherine Fowler were absent.

CALL TO ORDER

Others in attendance were Karen McGraw, Superintendent New Lebanon Central School District; Cheryl Nuciforo, Superintendent Chatham Central School District; Chuck Snyder, Business Administrator CCS; Carrie Nyc-Chevrier Business Administrator New Lebanon; Lisa Connell, Chatham Courier; Emilia Teasdale, Columbia Paper and several community members of New Lebanon Central School District and CCS staff.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance the following business was conducted.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Tim Lambert of New Lebanon addressed the Board that he was concerned about how this merger/consolidation would affect the small community and concerned for the future of the community if there was no school district within the community. Paul Walter of New Lebanon stated he feels a small community plays an important part in the school.

Christine Seyerlein addressed concern for the students who are comfortable with a small setting and how it would impact them if forced to a larger district.

PUBLIC COMMENT

#### BOARD OPEN DISCUSSION

Karen McGraw, Superintendent of New Lebanon Central School District, explained the purpose of the joint board meeting was to review the intent and components of the study and determine if both school boards wish to proceed with the Efficiency Grant application. The proposal is to study the feasibility for merger/consolidation. Cheryl Nuciforo, Superintendent of Chatham Central School District, mentioned that with declining enrollment, less state aid, and other funds more scarce for school districts it is essential for districts to consider ways to explore other options to maintain programs and operations. In looking at the situation long range it is best to have the best strategies going forward.

BOARD OPEN DISCUSSION

Ms. McGraw gave an explanation of three options: Merger/Consolidation, Functional Consolidation, and Shared Services. The Boards thoroughly discussed all three options and weighed pros and cons for each. Superintendent Nuciforo stressed the study will be a significant commitment. Both Superintendents agreed that if the Boards do not choose to go forward with the merger/consolidation they can move onward with the information collected from the consultant to develop other ways of sharing services. Ms. McGraw stated that this is a competitive grant from the state and we may not be considered. Both Superintendents stated during the meeting that they could structure the study to receive data pieces along the way.

Carrie Nyc-Chevrier, Business Administrator for New Lebanon School District showed a power point on the aid that would be given only if merger is approved. There will be no aid for other options. The Reorganization Operating

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Incentive Aid would originally increase up to 40 percent, then gradually decrease. Building Aid would increase to a maximum of 95 percent.

The consensus of both districts' Board members present at the meeting was that a merger study would give beneficial information to see what works best for the districts. However they could not speak for the missing Board members from each group. They also asked for further information about the process of a merger study, the impact of the projected financial climate, and for contact information with Board members from Districts that have been involved in merger studies.

Both Superintendents would speak to respective Administrators at Ichabod Crane and Schodack Central School Districts and share findings with each of the Board members of New Lebanon and Chatham Central school at the next joint meeting. The next joint Board meeting will be on Wednesday, February 8 at the Chatham Central School District at 7:00. The discussion will be whether to pursue a grant to fund a merger study. To proceed each Board of Education would have to pass a resolution that supports the application at their respective February Board meetings.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Tim Lambert questioned what would happen to property value in the event of a merger. Mr. Lambert also wondered if spending so much time for the study was worth putting other initiatives off.

Paul Walter expressed reservations on the merger/consolidation regarding data collection and busing issues. He has concerns regarding the local economy in each district. Mr. Walter gave a hand out to the New Lebanon board members with information on mergers.

Christine Seyerlein reiterated for the Board to consider the emotional aspects of students of a small community and not just look at the money.

Michael Brutsch of New Lebanon expressed he felt the study was a good way for the districts to gather information and use it to proceed with what best fits the needs of the districts.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Monique Wood, seconded by Raymond Sowalski that the joint Board of Education meeting be adjourned. Time: 9:04

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion Carried 12-0**



Deborah Pottenburgh  
District Clerk