

## **Joint Public Workshop between the Boards of Education of the Penn Yan Central School District and the Dundee Central School District-September 20, 2017**

**Call to Order** at 6:30 p.m.; Penn Yan Central School District, Elementary School Cafeteria, Three School Drive, Penn Yan, NY 14527; President Jeff Morehouse presiding

**Penn Yan Board Members Present:** Jeff Morehouse, Kathy Guenther, Robin Johnson, Renee Bloom, Loni Terpolilli, Nancy Scher, David Willson, P. Bacher

**Penn Yan Board Member(s) Absent/Excused:** L. Warren

**Dundee Board Members Present:** Laurie Richer, Wendy Gibson, James Koehler, Robert Neu, Kevin Crofoot, Jared Webster

**Others Present:** Superintendent Howard Dennis, Superintendent Kelly Houck, Cathy Milliman, Greg Baker, Becky Perrault, Stacey Barden, Dave Pullen, Warren Kinsey, Edward Foote, Karen Burcroff, Tobin Tansey, Kelley Johnson, Alicen Yonts, Kevin Johnson, Reid Jensen, Dave Mulberger, Tina Webber, Katie Dean, Jill Denmark, Laurie Hopkins-Halbert, Chris Arnold, Deb Kuhn, Community Members, Parents, Media Representatives

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by PYCSD President Jeff Morehouse.

Kelly Houck and Howard Dennis thanked the community for attending the meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to continue conversations regarding creating student opportunities and experiences for current and future students in both districts. The meeting is a continuation of the discussions that were held on 7/19/17.

Schools are facing increasing challenges such as the tax cap, state mandates, lack of funding, reduced enrollments, etc. The meeting will continue to explore solutions and ideas from the members of the Board, community members, students and parents on how to deal with the challenges and to collaborate on resolving the challenges so that all students are prepared and competitive with students in the nation.

Mr. Dennis and Mrs. Houck shared results from the survey that was provided in both communities for students, staff members and community members. Mr. Dennis and Mrs. Houck thanked their respective communities for participating in the survey. (FY-2018-41)

### **Public Participation**

A DCS community member and school employee encouraged both boards to continue to share information with the public. She indicated people believe a merger is imminent and that staff members fear losing their jobs.

Alicen Yonts, PYCSD community member, requested the surveys be distributed again as she indicated many people did not know the surveys were available. She asked if the surveys could be distributed electronically to parents.

PYCSO community member Mike Clancy encouraged both boards to continue to hold conversations regarding collaborations and merging. He indicated PYCSO offers programs that DCS does not have and in the long term, both schools would benefit from a merge and from sharing services. Mr. Clancy believes both districts should keep all options open and think about the students. He believes the survey should be redistributed in six months and then provide presentations to the various clubs and service organizations in the area.

DCS Board President Laurie Richter would like to be proactive for the students. She indicated it is better to consider merging and make decisions before the decisions are made by the State Education System. Mrs. Richter reported both districts have lost 30% of students in the past 30 years and that now would be a good time to consider merging.

DCS Principal Laurie Hopkins-Halbert asked if the joint meetings could be video recorded so that the community members not able to attend the meetings may stay involved in the discussions.

DCS Community Member Gretchen Pratt asked for the process of merging. DCS Superintendent Kelly Houck indicated the steps are: 1. Each board has to approve a merger study which would require a request for proposal from various firms and for committees to be formed to study transportation, facilities, academics, financial, etc. 2. A straw vote would be conducted in each district and, if approved at both districts, 3. A final and binding vote would take place in each district. If any of the steps are not approved, the process halts.

PYCSO Board Member Renee Bloom indicated building aide is given to merge districts and she stated since programs would increase, perhaps staffing would increase.

DCS Board President Laurie Richter suggested if the merger takes place, the incentive of approximately \$28 million over 15 years be broken down in thirds with 1/3 going to support and fund the merge, 1/3 being allocated for tax relief and the remaining 1/3 be saved for future needs.

DCS Board Member Wendy Gibson suggested the boards need time to digest the information they have been given and since everyone processes information differently, thinking about the observations and digesting all of the thoughts requires more time.

Mike Clancy asked for information on other areas the two districts could collaborate on prior to merger discussions. (Athletics, special education, agriculture programs, viticulture programs, etc.)

PYCSO Superintendent Howard Dennis suggested convening a joint committee that explores the possible combinations that would enhance or preserve athletic opportunities or educational opportunities for both communities. He suggested exploring multiple opportunities and offering a recommendation to a combined future board meeting.

Mrs. Houck suggested a merger study brings forth information that perhaps neither community nor district has thought of.

PYCSO Board Member David Willson suggested talking with South Seneca and Romulus schools. The two schools combine athletics and musicals but the districts are not merged.

DCS District Clerk Jill Denmark suggested beginning the process with small steps. She believes the students don't see the boundaries that adults do and that the students are adaptable.

Mike Clancy would like to hear from districts that have merged. He would like to ask the pros and cons of merging. Would it be possible to hear from Campbell Savona?

DCS Board Member James Koehler indicated the last time merging was discussed was in 1991 and that perhaps now is the time to hold the discussions again. He believes a merger would be in the best interest of students in both districts.

PYCSD Board President Jeff Morehouse thanked Mr. Dennis and Mrs. Houck for the hard work and efforts in bringing information forth. He suggested the boards need time to digest and process the information and that another joint meeting should be held.

Mrs. Houck asked for expectations for the next board meeting. Mrs. Bloom would like to see opportunities that could be explored for both districts. Mrs. Richter suggested a consultant be brought in to facilitate the discussions. She would like to hear from a superintendent that has gone through the merger process. Mrs. Gibson and Mr. Willson suggested parents and students of a merged district talk with the board regarding the successes and challenges both districts faced when merging.

PYCSD Board Member Phyllis Bacher asked Athletic Director Tobin Tansey how the athletic class determinations are made. Mr. Tansey reported the decisions depend on the sports and the enrollment figures of the district.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Sincerely,

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Kathleen M. Dean  
District Clerk