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West Islip Public Schools
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INVITATION TO THE PUBLIC PUBLIC HEARING 10-25-11 TRANSCRIPT

*The following residents addressed the Study Group at last night's Public Hearing.
They are listed in order of appearance.*

Name: Andrea Gebler

Topic: Closing of Oquenock Elementary School

Comments: Elementary aged children thrive on small-class instruction. Changing that and grade configuration of elementary buildings would have a negative impact on students. They need a sense of stability. Moved to West Islip for its reputation, and smaller school sizes even in light of paying higher taxes.

Name: Stacey Bressi

Topic: Closing of Oquenock Elementary School

Comments: As an educator she realizes the nurturing effect elementary school configurations have on students. Works in another district which recently closed an elementary school and she was furious. Students deserve small class sizes – especially in reading groups. Changing configurations would result in less individualized instruction. Elementary students need a strong foundation on which to grow.

Name: Martina Scheben

Topic: Closing of Oquenock Elementary School

Comments: Children attend Oquenock. We must retain smaller class sizes – struggling students especially need that environment. Changing the configuration and closing an elementary school will only inflict stress on all.

Name: Kristy Carlson

Topic: Redistricting

Comments: As a CPA she realizes the effect of redistricting. She feels that sixth grade should go back to the elementary schools. Foundations and friendships begin in elementary school and it is critical that it remains that way. We expect an excellent education in West Islip and now you are putting it all on the line. Elementary school is where education begins.

Name: Geri Bearden
Topic: Possible School Closings – Especially Oquenock
Comments: She moved to West Islip before her children were of school age and she moved here for West Islip’s reputation. Move sixth graders back to the elementary level. Focus on the “little kids” who need to be better prepared before moving upward to middle and high school. Close one middle school.

Name: Doreen Hantzschel
Topic: Cost/ Research Seniority/ Tenure
Comments: We may need to cut teaching positions and this may be difficult. Regardless of what the decision is, the children will be fine and will be helped in whatever transition is needed by seeing how parents accept the change. Supports the Board but feels for the teachers. She is concerned with all that is going onteachers being evaluated (APPR). Perhaps a panel should be formed – similar to the Study Group – to determine what positions should be kept or eliminated. Perhaps this decision can be based on teacher effectiveness. Seniority vs. tenure – should be looked at by reviewing teacher personnel files to see which teachers are nurturing, positive role models.

Name: Kathleen Takats
Topic: Savings Advice
Comments: Started by thanking the Board – mentioned she moved to West Islip when she and her husband built a new home across the street from Oquenock. Her older children have only experienced Catholic education. When younger children enrolled in Oquenock she was told at “Meet the Teacher Night” that students had no textbooks. She was appalled. She contacted the Comptroller’s Office. Found no misconduct, but sees abuse, overspending and waste in our budget. District needs fewer administrators and then we would not have to close schools. Not enough is being done – teachers should contribute more to health benefits. West Islip needs a reality check. Staff should be paying more for benefits. Administration is too top heavy. Parents should raise money for extracurricular activities. District needs to restructure.

Name: Linda Doherty
Topic: Closing of Buildings
Comments: This is déjà-vu. Remembers when Masera and Captree were closed – when the district was experiencing redistricting and we all survived. Fifth grade was moved to the middle school and survived. Children are resilient – and we need to keep in mind that the taxes are killing us. She may have to move. If we need to close a school, we will save money and at the same time she has faith and believes that children in West Islip will still get a good education.

Name: Joe Elberti
Topic: JV Sports
Comments: Has five children – two in Oquenock – moved back to West Islip in 2007 – picked this town because he and his wife liked the consistency of the school district. But taxes are going up and administrators keep getting raises. Teachers should be willing to “give back” in order to save jobs. We’ve been relying on the state too much to subsidize districts – it’s now time for us to step up to the plate. Getting rid of JV9 sports program was an irresponsible decision. Kids are hanging out on the streets doing nothing. The board should be responsible and the community should have a voice in the final decisions.

Name: Al DiBernardo
Topic: Salaries and Building Closures
Comments: Discussed the Governor’s Tax Cap – sees it as a good thing. We need to live within our means – district must be affordable. We need to close a school. Closing a middle school would be the least disruptive option. We need to change the way we are settling teacher contracts. Change the contract or break the contract – fire all teachers and rehire new ones. We need to think outside the box. Teachers are entitled to earn a good living but the tax cap is needed to keep costs down.

Name: Ruth Mineo
Topic: Elementary School Closings
Comments: How much money would each taxpayer save by closing an elementary? The reason she returned to this district was because of her positive experience and sees that positivity disappearing. We need to cut administrators – across the board. Administrators are needed in the schools but years ago districts operated with one Superintendent and one Assistant Superintendent. This is the year 2011 and technology has streamlined jobs. We should be able to do more with less not the opposite. Previous administrations were smaller and served a larger student body. It can be done. Put sixth grade back in elementary schools. Keep 7-8 grades in middle school. Do not close an elementary school. That should be the last choice, not the first.

Name: Lesley Keane
Topic: School Closings
Comments: Thanked the Study Group and the Board. Is a graduate of West Islip and that’s the reason she returned to West Islip. Sixth grade in elementary school is ok. She went to Westbrook (6th grade) and she’s still standing. Elementary schools should not be closing. The public has spoken regarding option 5 – move grade six back to elementary. Revenue problem last year – would closing buildings solve that problem for next year and how much would closing a school save the taxpayer?

Name: Cindy Perrone
Topic: School Closing
Comment: Option 5 is my preference – it’s the least disruptive.

Name: Marcelle Crudele
Topic: Class Size, What are the Options on the 6.7% increase? How Do We Let the Board and the Study Group know our opinions?
Comments: Thanked Rick and the Board – this is not a pleasant topic – but needs to be addressed. Appreciates the fact that the community has been kept informed and has been given the opportunity to respond. What criteria will be used when deciding which buildings are closing? How do we communicate to the Board....how can we tell people the best way to let the Board know what we want?

Name: Diane Pecorale
Topic: Class Size – Capacity at Middle Schools
Comment: Has been a resident since 1974 – taxpayer for 17 years. Opposed to closing one middle school – works in a school district as a 2nd grade teacher – 44 students. Cannot do her job with such a large class size. Does not want this to happen to West Islip – not in elementary or middle schools. All costs are increasing, food, gas, clothing – we can’t cut teacher salaries. What central administration cuts will be put into effect to save money? Central Office administrators should be pared down.

Name: Terry Harris
Topic: “Thank You to Our Teachers!”
Comments: Has a child in the middle school and is concerned about closing a middle school. How would that work? Thank you to the teachers who teach my children – they are in good hands and receiving a fantastic education. Teachers deserve to make a living and they deserve the respect of their community.

Name: Emil Masera
Topic: Middle School Closing
Comment: Moved from Hauppauge which had K-6 schools. His dad was a principal here and that is the reason why he moved his family here. Two older kids have gone through the system and they’ve done very well. Stay in elementary schools-condense middle schools – less disruptive. Having one middle school would increase West Islip feelings of camaraderie – would eliminate in-district rivalry. It’s obvious that more needs to be done but we also need to close a school – building utilization of 50 to 60 percent is needed to up enrollment. Look at class size to see if that is feasible.

Name: Deborah Rode
Topic: Curricula/Transitional
Comments: Utilize K-2 configuration – leaving the configuration close in grade levels affords students the chance to move up together as a group. Better transition for students socially. Teachers would have more of an ongoing relationship with students. With curriculum – we are hearing about changes causing increase in spending – teaching subjects close in grade level may help. Also, she believes having one middle school would increase tolerance among students.

Name: Mark Allen
Topic: Pre-K program
Comments: Don't close Westbrook – don't close an elementary – consider closing a middle school or implementing a Pre-K tuition based program to obtain outside funding.

Name: Brian Washington
Topic: (left blank)
Comment: Long time resident of West Islip. We must look at the shared sacrifice. Lower enrollment necessitates changes and we need to make them across the board. Building(s) need to be closed to increase space utilization. Government is partially to blame. The 2 percent tax cap will have long-lasting effects. Make your voice heard in Congress to effect positive change.

Name: Maria Stepkowski
Topic: Special Education
Comment: Her son goes to Bayview – last year he attended Kirdahy - in both buildings as a special education student. How will this restructure affect special education classes? The special education population is constantly moving from building to building. Will there be continuity for 12-1-1 classes, etc? Historically special education students have “travelled the district”. There has to be a better way to do this.

Name: Carrie Ann Filippi
Topic: Elementary Schools
Comment: Westbrook parent – whose children have excelled as a special education student in that school. West Islip (staff and administration) has helped to maintain her children's stability.

Name: Marceil Schmitt
Topic: Realistic Logistics
Comment: We all want good things for our kids. We need to close buildings in order to reinvest in better education. Better continuity between north and south but having students cross the railroad tracks is not a good situation. Physical

logistics in closing schools and transporting them to farther locations should be a serious consideration.

Name: Christine Pellegrino

Topic: School Closing – Budget Impact

Comment: Thank you to the Board for its arduous work. She is a teacher - not in West Islip – and a proud parent of Kirdahy students. She thanked the teachers. She is concerned about closing an elementary school. First full year of living in West Islip and would hate to see an elementary school close. She had two main concerns – will closing a school actually make a dent in the deficit and are we still in jeopardy of further cuts for the following school year? Going forward are class sizes bound to increase?

Name: Jessica Horvath

Topic: Train Tracks

Comment: It really seems that the best thing to do would close a middle school – least disruptive option and she cannot understand the problem with the railroad crossing – they are twelve-year old students.

Name: Kelly Wood

Topic: Oquenock

Comment: Has two boys in Oquenock and two boys in Udall Middle School. Worked as a teacher in West Islip previously – now is subbing in the district. Graduated from West Islip and had an excellent education. Returned to West Islip for that reason. Best option would be to close a middle school. She's familiar with the rivalry between both middle schools and thinks it would be a good for both buildings to come together. Closing elementary schools presents many concerns – kids need that sense of community – family oriented environment they get on the elementary level.