

MACOMB INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT
PROPERTY TRANSFER HEARING
NEW HAVEN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
TO CHIPPEWA VALLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 16, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

The Property Transfer Hearing was called to order by President John Bozymowski at 7:00 p.m. in Room 103 of the Educational Service Center.

Members Present: John Bozymowski, Max McCullough,
Theresa Genest, Edward Farley, Donald Hubler

Administrators Present: Michael DeVault, Paul Bodiya, Don Bollinger,
Rosetta Mullen

In attendance for New Haven Community Schools were Superintendent Dr. Keith Wunderlich, Board of Education President Gina Walker; Board of Education Treasurer Tracy Bonkowski;

In attendance for Chippewa Valley Schools was Board of Education Treasurer George Sobah.

Also in attendance were Sharon Lamb, circulating petitioner for Elan Estates Subdivision; and others as listed below who gave testimony.

President Bozymowski explained that this meeting was being held to hear a request from Elan Estates subdivision ("Elan Estates") petitioners to transfer their property from the New Haven Community Schools ("New Haven") to Chippewa Valley Schools ("Chippewa").

REVIEW OF
DOCUMENTS, MAPS,
ADVERTISEMENTS

Rosetta Mullen, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources/Legal Affairs, reviewed the application process and provided background of the transfer request from New Haven to Chippewa. The completed and eligible petition was received on April 22, 2015 for a property "block" transfer request from petition circulator, Sharon Lamb, seeking to transfer the Elan Estates Subdivision (116 home sites) and vacant property south of subdivision owned by Macomb Township. She added that copies of all petitions and supporting documentation were forwarded to both local districts. She noted that all prerequisites for a hearing have been met. Mrs. Mullen stated that the petition met the signature count requirement, the property subject to the transfer is contiguous to Chippewa and its assessed value is less than 10% the

latest assessed value of New Haven. Legal notices of tonight's hearing were placed in local newspapers. Also, individual notices were provided to the School Districts, Macomb Township Supervisor's Office and all resident property owners. Mrs. Mullen presented maps illustrating the subject property and distributed an information packet, including an analysis of the signature count, to the Board members, Superintendent DeVault, Superintendent Wunderlich and Superintendent Roberts. On June 11, a letter from the Zuk family in opposition to the transfer request was received by the Macomb ISD and forwarded to the Board of Education. Today, we received the following statement from Chippewa: "Please be advised that the Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education supports any/all decision(s) made by the Macomb Intermediate School District in regards to the property transfer petition for Elan Estates development."

Moved by McCullough, supported by Hubler, to accept all documents as presented. Ayes: all; nays: none. Motion Carried.

President Bozymowski announced that individuals who wish to address the Board of Education on the proposed property transfer request are asked to complete inquiry cards, which have been made available, and submit them to Mrs. Theresa Genest, Board Secretary, for comments during this portion of the hearing. Public participation is limited to five minutes, except for the Spokespersons who are making the principle presentations on behalf of the residents and school districts. They are allowed additional time to complete their presentations.

TESTIMONY OF
RESIDENTS IN FAVOR
OF TRANSFER

Sharon Lamb, Circulating Petitioner and chief spokesperson for Elan Estates, expressed that she believes Chippewa Valley is a better school district and would like to set the children on a great path for education. Mrs. Lamb submitted copies of academic statistics from the MI School Data website of Chippewa Valley and New Haven and reviewed some of the comparisons: She indicated that the enrollment numbers for New Haven residents at New Haven schools were 1,216 and 1,256 New Haven residents were enrolled in other districts through the Schools of Choice program. She stated that in Elan Estates subdivision, there are 70 school-age children enrolled in other districts. She also compared the distances of Chippewa and New Haven schools in proximity to Elan Estates and noted that Elan Estates is only 1,000 feet from the Chippewa property line. Prior to 2006, the area and surrounding area of Elan Estates was all farm land. Transportation is another issue. Chippewa will be able to provide quality and safe transportation. Overall, it would be in the best interest of the children to be part of the Chippewa district.

Jeff Smith shared his concerns about the distance from the Elan Estates to the schools in New Haven. He said it takes 25 minutes to drive to New Haven

High School; 10 minutes to Dakota High School. He mentioned a student who attends New Haven lives in Elan Estates and is the first child to be picked up and the last one to be dropped off at the end of the day.

Kristal Grabowski stated that the majority of the children are already participating in Schools of Choice. She has two children attending Seneca Middle School and one child attending Sequoyah Elementary School in Chippewa.

Amy Ciamillo stated she has three children participating in Schools of Choice because of the good education they are receiving.

Megan Allis has lived in Elan Estates for three years. Her children go to Sequoyah Elementary School and have had a great experience and would like to continue to have her children attend school in Chippewa. She indicated that one student in the subdivision travels 45 minutes to get to his school in New Haven.

Brandy Peddy stated that when she moved there, they thought the subdivision was in Chippewa. Currently, she has two children in school. They attended New Haven last year and transferred them. One child is in Seneca Middle School. One will be entering kindergarten next year and would like her child to attend Chippewa because it would be more convenient to have her children in one school district.

Natalie and Joe Affonso stated that they have an infant and would like their child to attend Chippewa because Chippewa will offer a better education.

Jeremy Pringle has two children in Sequoyah, and he believes Chippewa has a better sense of community. They receive material from Chippewa often regarding their little league programs and other activities. Mr. Pringle said he does not receive letters or information from New Haven.

Don Ferrington has a special needs son who attended the Macomb ISD program. The child finished the program at age three and now he wants his child to attend Chippewa because he believes it would be a better program with more opportunity.

David Cobone has a five year old, and thanks to Sharon Lamb for presenting the statistics, because that is exactly why he is in favor of the transfer. There is a strong sense of community in Elan Estates.

Melissa Boulier has two children who attend Sequoyah Elementary in Chippewa, one in third grade and one in kindergarten. She and her husband both work but when her son enters middle school, transportation will be an

issue so having transportation provided by the school would be beneficial. Sequoyah is an awesome school. The Special Education Program is amazing. They have friends in the community and it would be better to attend Chippewa.

TESTOMONY OF
RESIDENTS OPPOSED
TO TRANSFER

Jackie Bakowski has two children, one is a senior who has attended New Haven since kindergarten. As far as the statistics that were reported earlier by Petitioner, they are numbers from a computer. You need to come and visit the schools to see results. Most of the students the petitioners are referring to are elementary age children. There are no high school students. In comparing the high schools, Dakota High School is a large school; and New Haven is a small high school. They moved to New Haven because of the community and lower taxes.

Kerry Russell stated that all the petitioners knew this was New Haven when they moved here.

Tracy Bonkowski is a New Haven resident of the Village of New Haven and is the Treasurer of New Haven's Board of Education. She is a proud parent of two sons who attended New Haven and they had countless opportunities. One of her sons graduated from the Early College of Macomb program and currently attends Wayne State University. He achieved academic excellence and participated in the Lawrence Tech program at New Haven and received thousands of dollars in scholarships, based on his GPA and ACT scores. She is very proud of the administrators, teachers and support staff. New Haven provides rigorous programs for students similar to Chippewa. The petitioners made a conscious decision to purchase in New Haven. If this is granted, what will the domino effect be? Please deny the request. Petitioners can still participate in Schools of Choice.

Gina Walker is a resident and President of New Haven's Board of Education. She has three children in New Haven. One graduated with a high ACT score and participated in the Early College of Macomb program and has already earned an Associate's Degree. New Haven has made great strides and all three of her children are testing very well. Chippewa does a good job as well but so does New Haven. Schools of Choice is an option available. New Haven is a small high school and offers opportunities that a larger high school does not have. She graduated from a class of 550 students and enjoys the small class size for her children.

TESTIMONY OF
DISTRICT OPPOSED
TO TRANSFER

Keith Wunderlich is the Superintendent of New Haven and chief spokesperson. He is happy to have the opportunity to visit other districts and talk about New Haven. He pointed out that the petitioners think they may know about New Haven, but they have never visited. He provided copies of

letters, and read them, from two parents against this property transfer request: Jason and Michelle Zuk and Michelle and Richard Hillegas.

Dr. Wunderlich pointed out that petitioners stated that a bigger district is better. In terms of assessments and academics, he shared updated and current MI School Data reports which challenged the earlier report by the petitioner.

Both schools, Dakota High School and New Haven High School, were rated as “*Green*.” Both districts, New Haven and Chippewa, were rated as “*Yellow*.” New Haven High School is no longer in deficit, and currently is recognized for sustaining marked improvement and has become a “Reward School.”

Dr. Wunderlich stated that Dakota High School tied for fourth place with New Haven High School on the Top to Bottom list. (Eisenhower High School was rated third). Chippewa Valley High School and L’Anse Creuse High School were not rated as high. New Haven has many excellent programs. New Haven High School received recognition for its programs, awards of excellence and the Student Wellness Award. For example, 20 students from all over the country were invited to the National School Boards Association meeting and one student was invited from Michigan. The one student was from New Haven. Also, the New Haven Transportation Supervisor just received the Transportation Supervisor of the Year Award.

Dr. Wunderlich stated that there are many opportunities for students, AP classes in high school and middle school; Early College of Macomb; Lawrence Tech University is on site at New Haven and students can earn an Associate’s Degree in four years. New Haven works closely with Oakland University on the Renewable Energy Project. In addition to comparable course offerings, New Haven offers classes that small schools wouldn’t normally have, such as guitar and yoga classes and many other classes. Academically, we tied with three out of four Utica High Schools.

Since he has been with New Haven, he has learned the great opportunities of a smaller district. He and the staff know everyone by name. Parents contact him directly. He sends out an email newsletter every other Friday to the parents. They have the Rocket Festival in the summer. He believes students have more opportunity. They have very few out of school suspensions. They have all-state athletes and are proud of their basketball team. When New Haven experienced a power outage last summer, he and his staff delivered cold water to the communities, including Elan Estates. New Haven wants everyone to succeed.

Dr. Wunderlich stated that if you want to be part of a family, come to New Haven. The stigma of the past has changed. He has invited families that

consider leaving, to come visit. Everyone who visits has stayed. The open invitation still remains.

Dr. Wunderlich, on behalf of the New Haven Board of Education, asked the Macomb ISD to deny the property transfer request.

George Sobah stated that he was taking a neutral stance. He is the Treasurer of the Board of Education for Chippewa. He appreciates all the positive comments about Chippewa. Chippewa and New Haven are great districts, however, student success is also about parental involvement. Students will do well as long as their parents are involved, and he believes that after observing the parents participation at this meeting, the students will be successful. The Chippewa Board of Education supports whatever decision is made by the Macomb ISD Board of Education.

EXPLANATION OF
TAXES AND BONDED
INDEBTEDNESS

Mrs. Mullen explained that all residential property is subject to a state-wide education tax rate of 6 mills. If the property request is granted, the Elan Estates property owners will continue to pay for the New Haven Community Schools' bonded indebtedness, as long as they own their home until the debt is paid. The property owners are not responsible for the debt of Chippewa Valley Schools approved prior to tonight's hearing. However, if Chippewa Valley Schools approve new debt in the future, the Elan Estates property owners are responsible for the new debt; and to continue to pay the debt of New Haven Community Schools until paid off. The 2015 debt rate for New Haven Community Schools is 7.82. The 2015 debt rate for Chippewa Valley Schools is 8.64.

BOARD ACTION

Moved by McCullough, supported by Hubler, to deny the application for transfer from the New Haven Community Schools to Chippewa Valley Schools, for the following reasons:

1. Residents may participate, and are already participating, in Schools of Choice;
2. The educational programs provided by both districts are comparable;
3. The proposed transfer does not eliminate geographical barriers;
4. Transportation is currently provided to New Haven students by New Haven Schools; parents participating in School of Choice understood in advance that transportation is not provided to non-New Haven schools;
5. The proposed transfer does not straighten boundary lines, but will create an irregular border and peninsula;

6. The petitioners knew or should have known that they were purchasing property within the New Haven School District;

President Bozymowski asked if anyone wished to discuss the motion further, and hearing no request, President Bozymowski called for a vote: Ayes: all; nays: none. Motion carried.

INFORMATION
REGARDING RIGHT TO
APPEAL

Mrs. Mullen informed the petitioners that they have the right to appeal within ten days of this evening's hearing. The Michigan Department of Education can affirm, modify or overturn the decision of this Board. Mrs. Mullen provided Sharon Lamb with written information necessary to file an appeal.

INFORMATION AND
INQUIRY

None

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mrs. Genest, supported by Mr. Farley, to adjourn. Ayes: all; nays: none. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 P.M.

John Bozymowski, President

Theresa J. Genest, Secretary

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