



THE JOSEPH SEARS SCHOOL

Kenilworth School District No. 38 Board of Education

542 Abbotsford Road • Kenilworth, IL 60043 • 847.256.5006 • kenilworth38.org

**MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF
KENILWORTH SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER 38, COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS
THE 16TH DAY OF APRIL 2018**

The meeting was called to order by President Mindy Kelly at 4:35 p.m. Upon roll call, the following board members answered as being present: Mrs. Mindy Kelly, Mrs. Suzanne Nelson, Mr. Scott Wallace, Mrs. Donna Keller, Mrs. Melissa Ross and Mr. John Gottschall. Mrs. Danielle Boros was absent.

Also in attendance were:

Dr. Crystal LeRoy, Superintendent/CSBO
Mr. Chike Erokwu, Board Secretary

Mrs. Kelly called for a motion to go into closed session to consider information related to specific employee matters and semi-annual review of closed session minutes.

Mr. Scott Wallace made a motion to go into closed session to consider information related to specific employee matter and semi-annual review of closed session minutes. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Suzanne Nelson

Roll Call:

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
		Mrs. Danielle Boros	
Mrs. Suzanne Nelson			
Mrs. Mindy Kelly			
Mrs. Donna Keller			
Mr. John Gottschall			
Mr. Scott Wallace			
Mrs. Melissa Ross			

The motion carried with a vote of 6 to 0 with one member absent.

The Board entered closed session at 4:35 p.m.

The Board returned to open session at 7:35 p.m.

Upon roll call, the following board members answered as being present: Mrs. Mindy Kelly, Mrs. Danielle Boros, Mrs. Suzanne Nelson, Mr. Scott Wallace, Mrs. Melissa Ross, Mrs. Donna Keller and Mr. John Gottschall was absent.

Also in attendance were:

Dr. Crystal LeRoy, Superintendent/CSBO
Mrs. Kendra Wallace, Principal
Mr. Chike Erokwu, Board Secretary
Mr. Besset Sabourin, Director of Student Services

RESPONSIBILITY, KINDNESS, HONESTY, RESPECT



Community: Mrs. Allison Drew and Mrs. Enza Fox (videographers) Approximately 100 parents, teachers, residents and alumni from the Joseph Sears School community.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mrs. Mindy Kelly welcomed members of the community to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. Mrs. Kelly noted that the Board has dedicated the entirety of the meeting to listening to feedback from the community.

Mrs. Kelly and Mr. Wallace read a statement on behalf of the Board:

“In light of the recent news regarding our Principal submitting her letter of resignation, and the very great interest and concern all of you have expressed in that topic, we made some changes to the agenda for tonight’s meeting.

We are dedicating the entirety of tonight’s meeting to listening to your comments and feedback. We take seriously our obligation to hear the concerns of all our stakeholders – parents and faculty in particular – and to consider those concerns as we make decisions that affect all of you, and most importantly the students in our school. Our main request is that tonight’s discussion remains business-like, professional, and in keeping with the Four Cornerstones that our students are taught. In order to accommodate all of your comments, we ask that each of you limit your comments to a maximum of five minutes.

As many of you know, the board has a long-standing policy of soliciting public commentary during board meetings. What we do not do during these public comment sessions is respond directly to the comments or questions that are made. Our job is to listen to you, and to consider the entirety of all that will be said here tonight. Our silence during these public comment periods is meant to give all of you a clear space to express yourselves and for us to listen thoughtfully and attentively. Engaging in a back and forth debate would encourage the opposite. We hope you respect that. We most definitely are listening.

Many of you have written to us about the topic of the stability of leadership in our school. We have read your comments with great interest and we share whole-heartedly in your desire for a safe and secure culture where all employees – administrators and faculty together – feel Sears is the place where they can grow in their craft and spend the better parts of their careers. For many of us, that is the main reason we sought a position on the school board in the first place. Too much turnover is not healthy for any organization and we hope you understand that we wholeheartedly appreciate this point. We would never risk the stability of our leadership without careful deliberation, sound legal advice, or for any light or transient reason.

We hope you recognize that the Board of Education serves several different constituencies: Parents, students, faculty, employees and taxpayers. Also know we operate under the District’s policies and that fact can sometimes constrain the options available to us. Most of the time, the interests of all our constituents are well-aligned – everyone wants the same thing and that thing is consistent with the District’s policies. Not very often, though, the interests of some of our constituents come into conflict with one another, or the constraints of the law come into play. When that happens, our job is difficult and



time consuming because we are faced with choosing between two imperfect outcomes that will likely leave some part of our constituency unhappy.

Given all of that, know that we are your neighbors, we are your friends, and we are your fellow taxpayers. We, too, want the best for Sears. When we are faced with difficult decisions that may disappoint some of our constituents, know that we will make those decisions, given the constraints we operate under, to the very best of our ability, thoughtfully weighing all the pros and cons, and always with the long term best interests of our students firmly in mind. We owe all our constituents nothing less.

We also would like to address how the board helps to govern the school and dispel any misconceptions that may exist around how we operate and what we are empowered to do.

Within our community, there seems, on occasion, to be a misunderstanding that the board manages the school directly; that we are empowered to make small, individual and day-to-day decisions. For example, there is a common misconception that board directly chooses a given curriculum or makes a choice around which teacher teaches a specific grade in a given year. Nothing could be further from the truth. The board does not make those kinds of decisions directly, nor should we.

Instead, we help to govern the school indirectly. More specifically, we hire talented administrators – the Superintendent, the Principal, and the Director of Student Services in particular – to make the day-to-day decisions in operating and managing Sears in the best way possible. They are the ones who manage the school directly and make the sorts of decisions that affect the school on a daily basis. Our job as a board is to set the long-term vision for the school, to evaluate progress toward reaching our strategic goals, to provide guidance where appropriate and approval when necessary and to levy the taxes necessary to pay for it all.

Our administrators are employed under contracts, the terms of which are all publicly disclosed. We also have a contract with our union - the KEA - under which we employ all the certified teachers in the building. The terms and conditions of that contract are also publicly available. It is important for you to keep this in mind as you seek change in the school currently and in the future. The board is only one piece of a larger puzzle. The Administrators and the KEA are also an important, and perhaps a more important, part of the puzzle in the overall operation of the school. Seeking change is best achieved by working through all of these people and entities – the board, the administrators and the KEA – at the same time, especially if done in a constructive, positive, and “we are all in this together” fashion.

We would like to address the topic of disclosure and transparency. As a taxpayer-funded public body, we feel strongly that the public has the right to know the details of what we do and to know it in a timely fashion. We provide timely board briefs after all our meetings. We post video recordings of all our meetings. Detailed minutes are kept. Board documents, in general, are matters of public record. As mentioned above, our administrator and KEA contracts are disclosed to the public. Further, we operate under the provisions of the Open Meetings Act. Among other things, the Open Meetings Act provides that board members can only discuss school business matters in a Board of Education meeting and that any decisions must be made in public at a meeting posted 48 hours in advance.

The main exception to that requirement comes when personal privacy comes into play, especially regarding matters involving specific employees, students and parents. In that case, as you can well



appreciate, the Open Meetings Act allows us to discuss these matters in closed session. So, in general, disclosure and transparency are our guiding lights, except when they conflict with personal privacy. On those occasions, our legal requirement to protect the personal, and sometimes sensitive, information entrusted to us must, as it should, take precedence. We take seriously the imperative to protect personal privacy and hope that our community respects this fundamental principle as well. Please keep all of this in mind as we go forward in this discussion.

Finally, we thought it would be useful for all of you to note that school board members are elected public officials and as such must make a sworn oath when we take our seats. All of us take these obligations seriously. The oath of office that we all took as board members is accessible and readily available.

We look forward to listening to your comments tonight.”

Twenty-five community members addressed the Board in relation to the resignation of the principal. Many community members shared testimony regarding their experiences with Mrs. Wallace, their desire for administrative stability and their desire to see Mrs. Wallace remain Principal of The Joseph Sears School.

CLOSED SESSION

Mrs. Mindy Kelly entertained a motion to enter closed session for the purposes of considering specific employee matters. Mrs. Kelly noted that no further board business or action would be taken after closed session.

Mrs. Suzanne Nelson moved to enter closed session for the purposes of considering specific employee matters. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Danielle Boros.

The Board entered closed session at 8:54 p.m.

The Board returned to open session at 11:29 p.m. in Room 258.

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Kelly entertained a motion to adjourn.

Mr. John Gottschall moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:29 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Donna Keller.

The motion carried with all yeases.

The meeting adjourned at 11:29 p.m.

Attest for Distribution: 
Chike Erokwu, Secretary



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Approved: Mindy M. Kelly
Mindy Kelly, President

ATTEST: Chike Erokwu
Chike Erokwu, Secretary