



Community Unit School District 308

SERVING ALL OR PARTS OF THE COMMUNITIES OF
AURORA, JOLIET, MONTGOMERY, OSWEGO, PLAINFIELD, AND YORKVILLE

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES East View Kindergarten Center – Room 30 Monday, November 30, 2015 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

I. Roll Call

*Meeting called to order at 5:36 p.m. by Board of Education Member and Committee Chair
Mr. Greg O'Neil*

The attendance sheet was used in place of an official roll call

Members in Attendance:

Alexa Backus, Amanda Mancke, Jamil Nichols, Melissa Woolever

Dr. Matthew Wendt, Superintendent

Board Member: Brad Banks

Board Member: Greg O'Neil

Guests in Attendance: Representative Keith Wheeler, Senator Linda Holmes

Members Absent: Tracy Collander, Anne Elwood, Brian Valek, Natalie Winkfield

Recording Secretary: Ursula Coan

II. Approval of Minutes from October 26, 2015 Meeting

*A motion was made by Mr. O'Neil to approve the minutes from the October 26, 2015 meeting.
All members in attendance agreed unanimously to approve the minutes as presented.*

III. Guest Speaker – State Representative Keith Wheeler

- Representative Wheeler stated that he grew up in Oswego and his family has been here since 1846.

We are missing several things for Illinois to be a great place to raise kids and to retire. Representative Wheeler is advocating to pay school districts the full GSA every year. It is unrealistic for every school district to guess every year how much they are going to get and when they are going to get

- it. Unfortunately the bill that Keith submitted, did not get heard. Dr. Wendt traveled to Springfield to make a statement regarding that bill, which at least raised some awareness.
- Representative Wheeler stated that the other issue he talks about the most in Springfield, is the Workman's Compensation Reform. Everyone in the State of Illinois has to accommodate someone for workman's compensation, whether they are self-insured or a big corporation. These businesses write a premium check to insurance companies every month. They are affected by this, since Illinois has the second highest cost in the country. We are losing businesses to our neighboring states that have a much lower rate. If you can assign just 1% of an injury to your workplace, your employer is 100% responsible for the cost, plus paying for your time while you are off, 2/3 of your salary with no taxes taken out. The way we handle workman's compensation is very expensive. It's not just because business guys want to make a bigger profit, it also affects the State's budget. If we had the middle of the road, 25th place in the country, we would save about 190 million dollars a year between our local and state governments. That's not counting any construction savings we would have, since construction companies pay huge sums for workman's comp. The other part that has come to my attention is that our Social Service Agencies are getting destroyed by this. I know of an agency in DuPage County, that is the largest provider of services. In the last 10 years, their cost has gone up from \$ 250,000 a year to 1.4 million. In the last few years they had to cancel every raise for their employees, about 400 of them. All this because of the cost of workman's comp. To me this is just something that we have to fix.
 - What would happen if there was a tax freeze?

If I were to go door to door today, most people would complain about property taxes. The State does not have a lot to do with a property tax freeze, but it's a popular thing right now. The Governor wants to do something and any time anything gets changed, it is going to ruffle some feathers. Property taxes in Illinois are very high. One of the committee members mentioned that a family member in Indiana with a 4000 square foot house pays approximately \$ 1,700 a year in property taxes. How do they fund their schools? Representative Wheeler responded that it is not done through property taxes. It is not an optimal system if you need to keep going to the property tax well. In order for anything to change, we have to have a conversation and that is not taking place at this time.

We are not talking to each other because there is no reason to talk to each other anymore. As a freshman Legislator I get asked the question if it is better or worse than I expected it to be and I can tell you, it is a lot worse. The first 3 months were pretty incredible. We worked together and I got three bills passed. Once the budget came up in April it became more difficult. Since OMA does not apply to the meetings in Springfield, they are not recorded and agendas are not posted beforehand. The first step in doing a budget, is knowing how much money we have to spend. We are almost into December and we have not done that yet.

- As a Legislative Committee, what should we be concerned about, what should be on our radar?

Representative Wheeler told the committee that he would support going back to a 2 year budget. That way you don't have everyone go to Springfield every single year to beg for money. The budget used to be approved in May and run for 2 years. Legislative members had time to adjust laws instead of worrying who was going to get money and when. It also gives our local agencies the chance to actually plan and prepare for what they are going to have. To me, that would be a step to a better government.

The General State Aid figure is not even an inflation adjusted number and on top of that, it's not fully funded. GSA should not be 94 or 95%, it should be 100%, that's what was promised.

Hopefully this week, we will pass unemployment insurance reform for the state. For the first time in 30 years we are trying to get the definition of misconduct adjusted.

The question was raised, if we as a committee should concentrate on one of our issues or pursue all three (GSA, Unfunded Mandates, Construction Grant).

Representative Wheeler suggested to focus on all of them. You don't know which one has actually the best chance of getting solved. Different legislators have different priorities. Part of the process is to find the right legislator and be a voice for that.

- There was discussion about meeting dates, trip to Springfield to host a breakfast with the Legislators and reaching out to other districts around us to travel together. Particulars will be decided at our January meeting.

Guest Speaker – State Senator Linda Holmes

- Senator Holmes was elected in 2006. Senator Holmes chairs the Commerce and Economic Development Committee and she also sits on the Environment and Conservation Committee.

One of the top priorities of the Senate and the House is Education. All Legislators represent districts and people and one of the main issues is obviously always going to be education. Unfortunately, even though it is a top priority, the funding just is not there. Many things should be covered better than they are, but there is a lack of money.

- How do our neighboring states do it while having lower taxes than Illinois.

Actually, of all our surrounding states, our income taxes are not higher than theirs, but the property taxes are out of line with most other states. Unfortunately it was determined many years ago that property taxes were going to fund education. If we could go back and start all over, we would find a much better model to fund education. It's a steady source of money, but I don't think it's the best one. There is the equity question, Education should be funded equally, no matter what zip code you live in.

- When Governor Rauner first came into office, there was some discussion about consolidating certain offices to make more money available for education.

We have to see what he is proposing to do. It would remain to be seen whether money saved would actually go into the education fund. Most likely it would just end up in the general fund.

On over 60% of our budget, we can't make any decision on where it's going (pension, Medicaid, debt service etc.). Even though we don't have a budget, most of it is being paid anyway. What is left out of the mix are mostly Social Services. Since we have lost many child care facilities, parents that need subsidized child care are really suffering. There is so much in Social Services that is not being covered, that is the one piece that got left out.

- Dr. Wendt asked the Senator to talk about the Consolidation and Unfunded Mandate Commission.

The Governor decided this commission should be formed. We have had twelve or thirteen meetings and we have three more next month. After that,

we are due to submit a report to the General Assembly. Consolidation will happen out of necessity. Unfunded Mandates should be reviewed on a regular basis. All of us Legislators have our top priorities. Before there is a change, we have to get thirty people in the Senate and sixty people in the House to agree and finally, the Governor has to sign it. So getting everyone to agree on the top priorities is extremely difficult.

- There was discussion on how our committee could approach some of the unfunded mandates. We would need to find a way to show hidden costs that are attached to many of them. It's a matter of going out there to talk to our Senators. As Legislators, we listen to people from our district, our voters. The purpose of this committee is to talk to our Legislators and to nudge them in the right direction. This committee is focused on education, but as a Senator, I am also looking at many other issues and I am not an expert on everything. I have to gather the information from people that are in the middle of it, like the teachers for example.
So far, we have always managed to come up with a budget. The Senator stated that this has been a very frustrating year because of the fact that they are not able to work well together.

IV. Discussion: Upcoming Meeting Dates and Times

The committee suggested a planning meeting for our trip to Springfield.

V. Public Comment (3 minutes each)

There were no individuals present for public comment.

VI. Adjourn

A motion was made by Mr. Greg O'Neil to adjourn. All present were in favor to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Next Meeting: January 11, 2016