

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 MR. SCHAEFER: Good evening, everyone. It
3 is Tuesday, July 9th at 7:00 p.m., we are in the
4 Blackhawk High School auditorium. This is the
5 time and place for the public hearing required by
6 Section 780 of the Public School Code in order
7 for the board of school directors to consider
8 whether it should permanently close the
9 Northwestern Primary School.

10 The board will not take a vote to
11 permanently close the building tonight. The
12 purpose of the hearing is to allow public comment
13 on whether the building should or should not be
14 closed. Members of the public will be allowed
15 three minutes to provide comment. When you get
16 to the podium, please state your name, residence,
17 and slowly spell your last name before speaking.
18 Mr. Nelson will give you a signal when you
19 approach the three minute mark. You will be
20 stopped from making further comment beyond three
21 minutes.

22 Please note that we are limiting the
23 comment to three minutes so that everyone who
24 wants to speak has the opportunity to do so.
25 Please be courteous to your fellow community

1 members and do not interrupt during comment.
2 Board members have been instructed not to respond
3 to public comment this evening in the interest of
4 time.

5 The hearing will conclude once all members
6 of the public who wish to speak have done so. At
7 that time, I will provide you with a few closing
8 remarks. Thank you in advance for your
9 participation tonight.

10 Do we have any members of the public that
11 would like to kind of kick off the meeting and
12 address the board?

13 MR. SUTTON: My name is Dave Sutton, my
14 wife and I moved --

15 MR. SCHAEFER: Just to start, can you just
16 state I guess the township or borough that you
17 live in and then just spell your last name so we
18 have it for the record?

19 MR. SUTTON: S-u-t-t-o-n.

20 MR. SCHAEFER: Thank you.

21 MR. SUTTON: We moved to the Blackhawk
22 School District, my wife and four children, in
23 August of 1974, 45 years ago. We spent a lot of
24 time looking for a place, we needed a country
25 setting for our daughter, and we were looking for

1 a good school system. Blackhawk had only been
2 opened one year, there was nothing but good
3 things said about it, so we moved out here, we
4 wanted proximity to a small town.

5 At that time, Darlington was a thriving
6 community, several businesses, grocery store.
7 Chippewa was across Route 51 and 251, but it was
8 the right decision for us. Our oldest son
9 excelled in football, ended up with a full
10 scholarship to a division I school in 1979. Our
11 oldest daughter excelled in track, set a hundred
12 yard dash record her freshman year, and our
13 youngest daughter played basketball at
14 Northwestern gymnasium. Our youngest son
15 wrestled at Northwestern at the annex, and my
16 wife and I were involved in the football
17 quarterback club, we formed a committee to find
18 private funding so the girls' basketball team
19 could have warm up uniforms, all of our children
20 went to Northwest school.

21 By some miracle, none of them came away
22 scarred for life with any of the ill that have
23 come out of that school. The point I am trying
24 to make is that the current public opinion
25 regarding the Northwestern school is based more

1 on rumors and innuendo than it is on facts. I
2 could go through, but because I have only got
3 three minutes, I won't be able to go through all
4 of this down here, the downward spiral. This was
5 a well oiled machine in 1974 when we moved here,
6 there was never any problems. The problems
7 started probably with the Highland project, a \$21
8 million project that became \$29 million by the
9 time it was done.

10 Northwestern was closed, the \$8 million
11 difference would have fixed Northwestern, then
12 the \$8 and a half million you took from
13 Northwestern was used for a whole lot of other
14 things. All the time this is all going on, there
15 is undercurrents of asbestos, toxic air, wells
16 contaminated, football field defective material,
17 and this keeps going on and on and on. So at the
18 meeting on the 30th of April, the CAC meeting, it
19 was decided to put a poll out to see what
20 everybody thought. It was put on the Internet on
21 the platform that was sent out to teachers and
22 parents.

23 At that meeting, I said this is not going
24 to everybody, this has to go out to all the
25 taxpayers in this, and at the following meeting,

1 Mrs. Ziegler reported there were 336 responses
2 from a population of 17,000 in the district. She
3 attributed that to, you know, people not caring.
4 But if you really look at that number, it's kind
5 of bias because 17,000 people didn't vote for
6 that. In fact, I did my own demographics at no
7 charge to Blackhawk, and there are actually
8 14,500 people in this school district.

9 MR. NELSON: Sir, three minutes is up. We
10 need you --

11 MR. SUTTON: This is supposed to be an open
12 forum.

13 MR. SCHAEFER: We have a lot of people
14 tonight that want to come through. At the end of
15 the evening if we have more time --

16 (Multiple speakers.)

17 MR. SCHAEFER: And I let you talk all the
18 time, but not right now. Do not interrupt other
19 people when they are speaking. We will get
20 through -- everybody that wants to make a comment
21 tonight will have the ability to make a comment,
22 and then at the end, if time permits, we will
23 allow people to come up another time.

24 If you want to just wrap up real quick, and
25 then if we have an opportunity. The other thing

1 that I will state is between now and the time
2 where the board would make any type of decision,
3 we are going to have six, seven board meetings
4 that people --

5 MR. SUTTON: What I am just saying is I did
6 my own demographics, and the only way to get to
7 everybody in this school district is to mail them
8 a vote or have a referendum in November to vote
9 on, and as far as -- there are actually 6,869
10 households in the school district, and I actually
11 went to all the tax collectors and found out that
12 they sent out for 2019, 7,417 bills. So that's
13 the amount of people you have to send out to
14 really vote on this with whole thing.

15 And again, two out of three families in
16 this township don't have children, 26 percent of
17 the kids that are on free lunches, 33 percent of
18 this township is people on social security. So
19 money becomes a real issue, and you people have
20 the bad luck that have got on the board where
21 you're in a catch .22 now, you have got no money
22 to spend, so we have got to be very careful what
23 we do from now on.

24 And just as an aside to this, I talked to
25 several people since that last board meeting, and

1 I live in South Beaver Township, and nobody knows
2 what's going on. There is no information that's
3 flowing out there. We got a paper this morning
4 that had some very questionable comments in it,
5 so right now, what I propose, I went through all
6 of these options 1 through 6, and I came up with
7 option 2A, which is to remedy Northwestern,
8 Patterson would -- and this is only for K through
9 4 on both Northwestern and Patterson, you
10 renovate Northwestern as was planned before,
11 Patterson would only need 4,000 square feet
12 instead of 8,000 square feet, that saves about a
13 million dollars, and plus everything we do at
14 Northwestern, you get a 14 percent refund, which
15 is probably another 2 million.

16 So after you do that, whatever time I would
17 say you would make this happen, when the school
18 year starts, you open Northwestern, Patterson,
19 you close BIS, and now you have taxable property
20 to sell.

21 MR. SCHAEFER: Mr. Sutton, I apologize, but
22 I just -- in the interest of giving everybody the
23 time, I just need to kind of stop you there. And
24 I mean, obviously, I know I have seen you at
25 board meetings, so --

1 MR. SUTTON: Can I just finish this one
2 part?

3 MR. SCHAEFER: How long?

4 MR. SUTTON: What my plan would do, and
5 this comes in -- and I am not talking about any
6 repairs, which I have a question why the repairs
7 and building program are all in the same thing,
8 it just muddies all the water, this would be less
9 than \$20 million to do this.

10 MR. SCHAEFER: What I would appreciate, if
11 you wouldn't mind, if you would send me or all
12 the board members an e-mail, if you have access
13 to e-mail, that you could layout, you know, your
14 plan for us to kind of take a look at, and I
15 would still encourage you to come to, you know,
16 all the board meetings, and then we can discuss,
17 you know, the option that you layout further.

18 MR. SUTTON: One more thing about this, if
19 you did this, the first thing it's going to do is
20 repair a big fracture that's going on in our
21 school district right now. Everybody is split
22 six ways from Sunday, and nobody is working
23 together anymore on the board. The last two
24 boards is five against four or whatever. This is
25 the most economic financial scenario, and the

1 best part is, young kids go to school in their
2 area, kindergarten kids.

3 I went to school in a country school in
4 Idaho. I went the first seven years to school in
5 Idaho. I would have been scared to death to get
6 on a bus to go to town to school. That's a
7 comfort factor for these kids to be in a
8 neighborhood school. This one size fits all
9 doesn't work. It didn't work before, I don't
10 think it's going to work this time, if you go to
11 one campus.

12 If you want to get out there and get a
13 vote, send it to me the same way you sent me this
14 tax bill.

15 (Applause.)

16 MR. STIDMON: My name is Ron Stidmon, I
17 live in Darlington, S-t-i-d-m-o-n. I am very
18 curious why anyone would want to close
19 Northwestern. It's -- I have looked at all the
20 proposals and scenarios, and I have listened to a
21 lot of fake news, if you will, particularly with
22 regard to the suitability of Northwestern as a
23 place for kids to go to school.

24 I know that you could call it
25 prevarications, made up news, but clearly a lot

1 of the things with regard to the drain field,
2 with regard to the water supply, with regard to
3 the asbestos, it's fake, it's phony, it's not
4 true. And yet, you have done two studies, both
5 of which have created this same fake narrative,
6 and it's beneath me. I am embarrassed to be in
7 this township. I am embarrassed to be in this
8 school district.

9 This kind of shenanigans, this is what you
10 expect from some third world place where there is
11 dictators running it. You don't really expect a
12 behavior like this from people who, I have
13 supported some of the people on the board, and I
14 don't know what happens if there is something bad
15 in the water here at the school, all of a sudden,
16 you go in, you're elected with the idea that I am
17 going to watch out for people's money, I am going
18 to be very careful with how I spend the money of
19 the poor, the small, the old, the retired, the
20 people on fixed incomes, I am going to watch out
21 for them.

22 And then you get on the board, and all of a
23 sudden, money is no object, let's just see how
24 much we can raise taxes. It's other people's
25 money, we can always get more if we need it. I

1 can't believe -- it's so obvious what the right
2 choice is. The right choice is to remodel
3 Northwestern, to close BIS, sell it and try to
4 get our spending under control.

5 I can afford to pay my taxes, there is a
6 lot of people here who can't, and I think you're
7 doing a very, very -- disservice, you're not
8 thinking about other people, you're thinking
9 about yourselves, your petty interests, and it's
10 really beneath you.

11 That's all I have to say, I am kind of
12 embarrassed.

13 MR. SCHAEFER: Thank you for your time.

14 (Applause.)

15 MR. CUNNANE: Hi guys, I am Dan Cunnane, I
16 am from --

17 MR. SCHAEFER: Could you just spell your
18 last name?

19 MR. CUNNANE: Sure, C-u-n-n-a-n-e, I am a
20 product of Blackhawk and my wife is, too. I know
21 some people on the board, I know some of the
22 faculties and stuff, too. The reality of it is,
23 we have dealt with this question for a couple of
24 years, to be honest, it's almost a waist, because
25 you figure my daughter right now goes to summer

1 school, she drives all the way to Patterson
2 during part of the summer. Last couple years, my
3 daughter never set foot in Northwestern, neither
4 is she going to because of the grade she is going
5 to.

6 We did fine without it, the sad reality of
7 where we are at, taxes are going to go up, that's
8 great. If people don't want to pay them, then
9 it's pretty simple, sell your house, move out.
10 You don't like what the district is doing, that's
11 fine, that's always an option. Just like your
12 life, you have choices, because if you don't like
13 where you're at, you don't like what you do, you
14 always have an option to change or do something
15 different.

16 The reality of it is, we have gone so long
17 without it, why open it up? Why open the door
18 for the asbestos problems, why open the door for
19 the mold issues, it's something that we still
20 need to deal with. Again, I live at the furthest
21 end of the district, basically almost in Lawrence
22 County, and if I say, hey, put my daughter on the
23 bus for a little longer, didn't affect me, didn't
24 affect my wife, didn't affect my daughter. I go
25 hey, how did your day go? Great dad, I had fun.

1 Okay. How is your bus ride, is it too long? No,
2 it's perfectly fine.

3 The reality of it is, if we are doing fine
4 without it now, why open the door for the future,
5 because it's going to have construction projects,
6 oh, we found these issues, oh, these problems
7 didn't come up, we didn't budget for this. Then
8 you're going to start skyrocketing. The sad
9 reality of it is, why keep it, why keep something
10 you don't need? Say there is septic problems, I
11 mean, how many cans of worms are you going to
12 open, plus, we don't have the field there.

13 I would rather see the money get put in
14 part of our current field. You go to the field,
15 there is no bathrooms, you got to use a
16 porta-john. So you want people to move into your
17 district and have a good game, hey, guess what,
18 guys, let's go to a school that has porta-johns.
19 They spent all this money, it's crazy. The
20 reality of it is, keep it closed, we don't need
21 it, put the money in the schools, in the schools
22 we have.

23 I would rather, like I say, see that place
24 close and keep our staff and keep the kids going
25 educational wise than I would to see a building,

1 live here, the more questions I have.

2 Why are kindergarten through second grade
3 students and teachers separated into two
4 buildings? Why don't the students begin their
5 kindergarten school experience together in one
6 building instead of joining together in third
7 grade? Why aren't kindergarten through second
8 grade teachers together in the same building to
9 allow better collaboration? Why do ceiling tiles
10 in numerous classrooms leak so severely that
11 buckets are placed in the rooms to collect the
12 water? Is mold growing in those rooms with leaky
13 ceilings?

14 Why is the temperature in some classrooms
15 so warm during the winter that students have to
16 wear short sleeve shirts, even though classroom
17 windows are open, despite the freezing
18 temperatures outside? Why do the students at BIS
19 have a separate computer lab and science room,
20 but students at Patterson have to attend science
21 in the computer lab? Why does Patterson have a
22 cafeteria that also has to serve as the gym, but
23 BIS has a separate cafeteria and a gym? Why are
24 kindergarten students who should have attended
25 Patterson recruited to go to BIS in an attempt to

1 lower classroom sizes, while adding another bus
2 for those students? Why are the number of
3 students in classrooms too high and spaces too
4 cramped?

5 Why do we own and maintain a school
6 building that has been closed for years? Why do
7 classrooms flood and cause damage, as well as
8 disruptions by needing to relocate classes into
9 already crowded spaces? Student safety should be
10 a top priority in addition to a quality
11 education. Leaking ceilings, flooded rooms, mold
12 at Highland, inconsistent classroom temperatures
13 and overcrowded rooms are health concerns for the
14 students, teachers and all Blackhawk employees.

15 Many parents may not be aware of these
16 concerns if their children don't mention them
17 because they are common occurrences. The world
18 continues to change and the cost of everything
19 continues to increase. We can't live in the
20 past, we need to plan for the future, but also
21 focus on the present educational setting for all
22 of Blackhawk. They deserve a safe place to learn
23 with classrooms that aren't overcrowded.

24 Northwestern should not be reopened. All
25 children should be in the same school with their

1 grade level peers. Patterson already has limited
2 parking, and although spaces may be added, it
3 would still be overly congested. If we hope to
4 grow the Blackhawk community to include those
5 families that will be moving to the area based on
6 job increases, we need to focus on providing
7 better school buildings like other local school
8 districts have done.

9 Based on the growing building issues and
10 how old they are, we should build a new school to
11 build a better educational setting. Let's not
12 lose site of the current students while planning
13 for the future students. We need to stop
14 reacting to emergencies in the structures of our
15 buildings, and start acting to build solid
16 foundations for our schools, children, teachers,
17 employees and community of the Blackhawk School
18 District.

19 (Applause.)

20 MR. SCHAEFER: Do we have anyone else that
21 would like to address the board?

22 MS. KRESHON: Hi, my name is Lori Kreshon,
23 I have been with Blackhawk from day one,
24 Northwestern from day one, we had five children
25 go through there, children, granddaughter. I am

1 also from Darlington Borough and vice president
2 of Darlington Borough Council. We have seen over
3 the years the studies, we have seen them
4 recently, we have seen them a few years ago. We
5 have signed off with the Beaver Falls Water
6 Authority to -- years ago to have the water
7 brought out to Northwestern when they were
8 talking about the renovations and the repairs out
9 there, so that's not a problem out there.

10 I know some folks say close it, it's a
11 problem, well, some people can't move out or
12 don't want to move out, so I don't believe that
13 that's an answer. You're talking about raising
14 the taxes quite a bit if we put \$33 million into
15 a combined school. You're talking about ten
16 million, plus we get money back, and we are going
17 to lose that if we don't move on it in the next
18 couple of years to get Northwestern back to where
19 it can be a viable school. No, it's been closed
20 for years. No, it's been closed for two years,
21 two and a half years. You know what, that's not
22 a problem. The whole time we should have been
23 looking at how to repair it and how to make the
24 repairs instead of all this, like, fake news, or
25 not even just fake news, I guess ignorance you

1 would call it as to the situation.

2 The football field, it's gone, it doesn't
3 matter. I have lived there all my life. Do I
4 like listening to Friday night football games
5 from my house and watching that? Yes, but you
6 know what, good for the people that made a new
7 field out here and did it. That's fine. It's
8 not about the athletics, which some people would
9 really like it to be, and I know that's been a
10 big part of Blackhawk, but it's about the
11 education and the bussing.

12 And I have a granddaughter that has to ride
13 for 45 minutes on a bus from Darlington just to
14 go to Chippewa. She rides with middle schoolers
15 that use foul language, call her foul names, not
16 just her, other children. She has ridden buses,
17 it's just -- it's just financially better if we
18 keep Northwestern open. The options that we have
19 that they show, it would make Northwestern almost
20 like a brand new school. And if you close
21 Northwestern, and guess what, you are going to
22 have to close Patterson, and then come on, is
23 everybody in Patterson going to want to go to
24 Chippewa? It's just not a viable option to just
25 say, okay, well, close it, because it's just old,

1 or you can move away because you can't afford the
2 taxes.

3 True, a lot of people in Darlington, Enon,
4 South Beaver, you know what, a lot of them don't
5 have children now, and they are still paying the
6 amount of taxes. Okay. Let's go from \$1,000 a
7 year to \$4,000 a year in taxes. Well, I guess
8 the old people need to move away.

9 No, you know what, let them pay for a
10 school that has been a history, a part of
11 history, a part of Blackhawk history, that has
12 been very good to this community.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. SCHAEFER: Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 MR. HUPP: My name is Doug Hupp, H-u-p-p, I
17 grew up in this school district. I actually grew
18 up in Darlington, now I live in Patterson. I
19 rode a bus for 45 minutes to go to Northwestern,
20 it was not a great building then either. Us
21 spending a lot of money to repair a building
22 because we think there is history there is not a
23 great option.

24 My kids go to the Patterson school right
25 now. If they moved to Chippewa, I wouldn't have

1 a problem. These kids who ride 45 minutes on a
2 bus, some kids ride 45 minutes to go to
3 Northwestern. It doesn't matter, it's not a big
4 deal. Kids adapt. I drive 45 minutes a day to
5 go to work in Pittsburgh. I do it so I can live
6 in a good school district.

7 Us spending more money on a building we
8 don't need is not a good option. Building new
9 buildings that are properly equipped for modern
10 classrooms, computers, quality, Internet access,
11 that's the way to go.

12 MR. SCHAEFER: Thank you.

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. ZIELINSKE: How are you doing, my name
15 is Rob Zielinske, I'm from Enon Valley,
16 Z-i-e-l-i-n-s-k-e. The bus rides for the younger
17 kids, I do think it's too long. 45, 50 minutes
18 is what my kids are on the bus for. I am looking
19 at one of my daughters going into kindergarten
20 next year, it's too long. It's a long, long
21 ride.

22 My older daughter had an accident twice, as
23 a matter of fact, on the way home, because they
24 got on the bus, oh, crap, I got to go the
25 bathroom, it's a long time to hold it when they

1 are 7 years old, 6 years old. Beyond that, aside
2 from any personal feelings, here I want to read
3 this to you, this is from the Florida Statutes
4 Title 16, education, chapter 235, educational
5 facilities. This is regarding their legislative
6 findings. Granted, it's Florida, but it's
7 still -- this is solid research.

8 Smaller schools provide benefits of reduced
9 discipline problems and crime, reduced truancy
10 and gang participation, not that that's probably
11 a problem here, reduce drop out rates, improve
12 teacher and student attitudes, improve student
13 self perception, student academic achievement
14 equal to or superior to that of students at
15 larger schools, and increased parental
16 involvement.

17 Section C says smaller schools can provide
18 these benefits while not increasing
19 administrative and construction costs. Honestly,
20 I don't care about the history of the school. I
21 agree with what the gentleman said earlier that
22 the history is not a great reason to keep the
23 school open. However, if we are looking for the
24 overall benefit to the community, you can't even
25 really look at just the financial part of it, you

1 have to look at what we are building. What
2 you're building is student. What you're building
3 are mature adults that have a solid education.

4 The bigger your classroom size, the bigger
5 problem you have. The one lady said that
6 earlier. It's overcrowded, and one of the
7 reasons, one of the ways that we can solve that
8 is re-opening Northwestern and using that school
9 properly. If it's renovated properly and is
10 upgraded to be modern, like the gentleman before
11 me said, they are going to have access to all the
12 modern things that they need, computers, half of
13 them are using tablets and you don't really need
14 anything for that, you just pop open a wifi
15 router, and bam, you're good to go.

16 So a lot of those things can be
17 accomplished, and probably accomplished at a much
18 more reasonable dollar rate than building an
19 entire new building. Anybody that's looked at
20 getting a new house, you look at one thing first,
21 is this house worth renovating. That's a solid
22 building, solid guts, you renovate it, fix it up,
23 and you move on and you have solid teachers in
24 there giving the kids a good, well rounded
25 education.

1 Thank you.

2 MR. SCHAEFER: Thank you.

3 (Applause.)

4 MR. INMAN: My name is Don Inman, I am vice
5 president of the Patterson Township board of
6 commissioners, but also a 12 year board member of
7 this board, and also a former president of the
8 board. When I left six years ago, VEBH was our
9 architects, and they said at that time that we
10 had fixed up Northwestern, we had put over a half
11 a million dollars into Northwestern, and all it
12 needed was windows and air conditioning.

13 I was not even going to come to the meeting
14 until I saw the thing in the paper today and it
15 kind of upset me a little bit, because people
16 make comments, but they don't really know the
17 facts, I don't think. It said that there was
18 asbestos in the building, I'm sure you may have
19 found some, but when we left six years ago, VEBH
20 told us that the only asbestos in the building
21 that we had not removed was the asbestos that was
22 in the tunnels underneath, which was wrapped
23 around the pipes that are hidden, which you never
24 see.

25 I am concerned about crowding issues.

1 Having been a board member, when I was here, we
2 tried to keep our elementary down around 16 to 18
3 people. When we got to 20, we got concerned. I
4 know that you have at least one-third grade that
5 last year had 26 people in it. I also know that
6 you lost a special education teacher because she
7 had 20 students. She left here and went to West
8 Allegheny, and now she has eight. One of the
9 things I used to laugh about in the newspapers
10 was they would always talk about the sewage
11 system.

12 I was a certified sewage enforcement
13 officer for 30 years, investigated the system,
14 found out that what happened was that they had
15 taken the manhole covers off and put manhole
16 covers on that had holes in it, and that's why it
17 smelled. I talked to Jim Perlick about it, they
18 took those manhole covers out, put in solid
19 manhole covers and the smell went away.

20 The other thing is that some -- when I
21 inspected the system, I could find nothing wrong
22 with it. I understand from my connections to the
23 Darlington Township sewage enforcement officer
24 inspected, he could find nothing wrong. The
25 state came, not only did they not find anything

1 wrong with it, but they also found a separate
2 drain field, which said that the system would
3 probably go forever. And then one of the things
4 that was in the newspaper was they found fecal
5 material on the lawn and the ball field, and when
6 I went out to the industrial museum, which is
7 just around the corner from that, I had fecal
8 material in the yard about that big around, there
9 had been a bear running through Darlington. So
10 apparently, they didn't understand what it was.

11 The heating system, when I left, we had a
12 new boiler, but I will have to admit that one of
13 the things that VEBH said we should consider was
14 a spare. The concerns that I have about the
15 money spent on Northwestern, as I said, we spent
16 over half a million dollars, we borrowed \$28
17 million, but we put money into every school
18 building.

19 So if you close these school buildings,
20 you're going to lose 14 percent. As an example
21 now, you're going to lose 14 percent a year of
22 your half a million dollars that you put into
23 Northwestern. I would be in favor of fixing it
24 up, \$15 million -- I would rather see \$15
25 million, the district borrow that than borrow

1 \$50 million, and PlanCon closed, from what I
2 understand, it is now frozen, so you will get no
3 reimbursement. Thank you.

4 THE REPORTER: Excuse me, sir, could you
5 please spell your last name?

6 MR. INMAN: Inman, I-n-m-a-n.

7 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 MS. TODORICH: Good evening, this is my
10 first opportunity of being here. My name is
11 Melanie Todorich, T-o-d-o-r-i-c-h, I am of South
12 Beaver Township, absolutely love it, born and
13 raised in Beaver Falls, educated at Quigley and
14 Holy Trinity. Very proud of my education, very
15 proud of Blackhawk School District.

16 I have a granddaughter who is in first
17 grade going to second grade. You have issues
18 with bullying. You need to address them. The
19 bullying issues and the cyber schools that are
20 going and popping up out here, and are existing,
21 I have a daughter-in-law who is a teacher down at
22 Beaver, they are losing students big time because
23 of bullying. You're talking about dumping \$50
24 million or whatever into improving, redeveloping,
25 whatever, I personally think that's a drop in the

1 bucket. You're going to be losing students, it's
2 out of your control, it's out of all of our
3 control. You need to get a grip on that, first
4 of all.

5 I am also with the Little Beaver Lions
6 Club, we tutor. We tutor at BIS, we have been
7 tutoring between Northwestern and BIS for about
8 15 years. We tutor math, we tutor reading.
9 Mrs. LeDonne goes, and we do a very good job, we
10 come in four, five days a week to tutor. When we
11 moved to BIS, the amount of steps you have to
12 climb to go back and forth, the chaos of the kids
13 going every direction, that school was added and
14 chopped up into stairwells and everything, there
15 was a lot of confusion there, not so much for the
16 kids because once they finally learned about it,
17 they get it down, it's not really handicapped
18 accessible for anyone, it's not a good school at
19 all.

20 As the one gentleman said, if you want to
21 sell a property, you're not going to get any
22 money supposedly for Northwestern. Well, then
23 sell BIS. There is your capital, big time.
24 You're in Chippewa, you know, the Cranberry of
25 Beaver County, sell BIS then, let them level it

1 off, let whoever develop whatever they want to
2 there since it's such a valuable area, Chippewa
3 is. There is extra money there, income. More
4 than enough of that money could develop and
5 condition, and as Mr. Inman said about all the
6 points of what is going on with Northwestern, you
7 would have more than enough money to approve
8 that.

9 You have not paid off, if I remember
10 correctly, the field that you floated for BIS,
11 when you refurbished BIS. I remember years BIS
12 was condemned, it still floods out in the
13 gymnasium there. Then, you floated bills for
14 Highland Middle School, been in that school, ran
15 the food drive in there, that's a little bit of a
16 chaos, too. I have to give the teachers there
17 credit for having a nice school there, working
18 with it as best they can. It's not a simple
19 layout, although. BIS is not a simple layout,
20 Highland Middle School is not a simple layout.

21 Northwestern, when we tutored there, it was
22 a simple, understandable layout. It's
23 conditioned for a second tier, you could put it
24 in there, you could let all those elementary
25 school people -- I'll leave Mr. Nelson -- come

1 and be all in one building there. The only other
2 thing I have to -- I went to see a -- what sport
3 is it that the girls play, lacrosse game, you
4 talk about fecal material. Went to see a
5 lacrosse game at our new football field, watched
6 one of the girls bend over, pick something up and
7 fire it off to the side. Didn't know what it was
8 until after the game, figured it out, asked her,
9 goose poop. Goose poop all over the field.

10 You aren't going to do anything to correct
11 that. We live in the country, you can have that
12 anywhere and everywhere. You need to listen to
13 the studies. Mr. Inman knows what he is talking
14 about, these other people know what they are
15 talking about. Don't act hastily with this, and
16 I believe in a referendum on the ballots in
17 November is the only fair way that you can do
18 anything about this before you start putting
19 money out.

20 Thank you. Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 MR. SCHAEFER: Do we have anyone else at
23 this time that would like to address the board?

24 MR. SUTTON: I just have, I think a
25 question that probably everybody in here wants to

1 hear.

2 MR. SCHAEFER: Do you want to go up to the
3 mic, just to make sure they can hear it?

4 MR. SUTTON: After having this CAC
5 committee spend with a \$65,000 budget and a
6 public relations of \$20,000, and there is a
7 demographics going on for \$58,000, why in the
8 Lord's name would you put this on the table at
9 this point in time when you're right in the
10 middle of a study? Why wouldn't you let this run
11 out through its due process and then let that
12 work out rather than have a separate thing just
13 to push Northwestern out of the way?

14 I would like to have somebody answer that.

15 MR. SCHAEFER: Well, one -- and I know I am
16 just going to answer this one, one, we are at the
17 end of the study. Two, we didn't spend \$20,000
18 on marketing, it was never approved. Okay?

19 MR. SUTTON: It was out there, though.

20 MR. SCHAEFER: It was out there, but never
21 approved. So no, we saw the community based
22 study through its end, and now based on the
23 information of that community based study, it was
24 motioned to, you know, look at the potential
25 closing of the school, and that's why we are here

1 tonight, to get the public opinion.

2 MR. SUTTON: Like I said, I think it's a
3 personal issue, Mrs. Ziegler, and you listen to
4 everybody out here, everybody hasn't made up
5 their mind, everybody doesn't know what's going
6 on. Four guys came and cut a tree down at my
7 house the other day in South Beaver didn't have a
8 clue what all was going on.

9 MR. SCHAEFER: The biggest thing that I
10 will just stress one point, you know, because you
11 mentioned this, is, you know, you think it's
12 Mrs. Ziegler, but it takes five people on the
13 board to make -- pass any motions. A motion was
14 made, and if there weren't five members, the
15 motion would have died at that point, but there
16 are five people, so --

17 MR. SUTTON: And that's reprehensible, too.

18 MR. SCHAEFER: -- you can't blame it on one
19 individual.

20 Mr. Yonkee?

21 MR. YONKEE: Thank you, Mr. Schaefer. I
22 would like to approach this with a common sense
23 idea. In speaking with Amy Anderson a little
24 while ago, looking at the enrollment, it looks to
25 me like you're going to end up with somewhere in

1 the neighborhood of about 650 to 700 kids at
2 Highland. In Pennsylvania, a middle school is 5,
3 6 and 7, 6, 7 and 8, or 5, 6, 7 and 8.

4 There are a lot of middle schools across
5 the state that are 5, 6, 7 and 8, so I would keep
6 that in mind. I think that the school district
7 has grown in terms of the municipalities involved
8 and are rallying in support for the Blackhawk
9 School District throughout. I fear that the path
10 that we are on right now, from what I have read,
11 what I have heard, you're going to fracture the
12 community. If you eliminate Northwestern, you're
13 telling those people, we want your kids, we want
14 your money, but you don't get a school.

15 Region 2 has three loaves of bread,
16 Patterson has a half a loaf of bread, and
17 Northwestern has no bread. That's not right.
18 Our government is set up so that there is equal
19 representation across, so that Rhode Island and
20 Texas and California and New York and Delaware,
21 they all participate. You're telling the people
22 at Northwestern, you're sending a message, and I
23 have talked to a lot of people out there, they
24 feel that they have been rejected. That's
25 important to think about that, about the

1 children.

2 There is a difference between an elementary
3 child that's 5, 6, 7 years old, than a child
4 that's 8 and 9. You're talking about a mega
5 school here, where you're going to have a
6 thousand students. And every study you look at
7 will tell you, every study I have looked at, at
8 least, that elementary schools should be between
9 four and 500, max 500.

10 You're talking about at least a thousand in
11 what we are doing. I would hope that we would
12 take a look at that, and the other thing that was
13 mentioned, you can't hear back there too well
14 with the PA system we have, that 14 percent, has
15 that been mentioned? Do you know what I am
16 talking about, the 14 percent, the reimbursement?

17 MR. SCHAEFER: Yeah, PlanCon.

18 MR. YONKEE: The Northwestern school is the
19 only school that's going to have state
20 reimbursement, all the other -- whatever we do
21 regardless of that, it's going to be a hundred
22 percent. 27 percent of our students are on free
23 lunch, that means they are at the poverty level.
24 Another 35 to 38 percent are on retirement, that
25 means that their incomes are pretty much stable,

1 they are not going to go up or down, they are
2 going to stay where they are.

3 So a tax increase it would take to build a
4 new school, one that was supported when I was at
5 the meeting the last time, is going to cost
6 between 30 and \$35 million. I don't think we can
7 afford that. I would rather use that money for
8 instruction, for materials, for books, software.

9 My time is up. All right. Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 MR. SCHAEFER: Thank you. Ken, just
12 correct me if I spell this wrong, Y-o-n-k-e-e,
13 your last name, two Es?

14 MR. YONKEE: You got it.

15 MR. HOENIG: Good evening, my name is Mark
16 Hoenig, Chippewa Township, H-o-e-n-i-g. First
17 let me say, all due respect to Mr. Yonkee and
18 Mr. Sutton, I played with their sons, I really --
19 I believe that no matter what you do, the
20 community will come together and still be a
21 strong community. Five -- 40 years ago,
22 Patterson, Patterson Heights, West Mayfield,
23 Chippewa, Enon, Darlington, we came together as a
24 school, we won a football -- we played for a
25 football championship that year, we came

1 together, we brought this community together, and
2 I think we can do it again, no matter what
3 happens with what you do with Northwestern.

4 All that being said, I am vehemently
5 opposed to you re-opening Northwestern. I
6 believe that you would be throwing good money
7 away. I would like you to consider moving the
8 8th grade into the high school. Look, you can
9 say what you want to say about it, my daughter
10 was there, other people, my friends' kids were
11 there, if that solves the crowding problem, I
12 think it's something you have to consider. You
13 need to get a good, solid five year plan to
14 possibly build or add onto the existing school.
15 You don't have to do anything now.

16 You don't have to be the board that spends
17 \$30 million to do something today. I believe
18 having one campus or something close to that
19 keeps costs down on staff and maintenance. Did
20 they like it when West Mayfield Elementary
21 closed? Probably not. Did they like it when
22 South Beaver Elementary closed? Probably not.

23 The fact of the matter is, and Mr. Yonkee
24 just stated it, there is a lot of people in this
25 district that are on a fixed income, I am not so

1 sure now is the time to spend \$30 million to
2 either renovate or build. Get a five or ten year
3 plan, get the schools consolidated, hopefully
4 into one campus, and move on from there. Thank
5 you.

6 MR. SCHAEFER: Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 MR. SCHAEFER: Do we have anyone else who
9 would like to address the board?

10 MR. FLEISCHMAN: Dean Fleischman,
11 F-l-e-i-s-c-h-m-a-n, Chippewa Township. I like
12 what Mark just had to say, because I think Mark
13 understands how you deal with a budget and how
14 you deal with community. Chippewa is a different
15 community, some areas have more money, some
16 others don't, some sort of in the middle. You
17 have to look at a whole community and make
18 decisions based on that. You have to see all the
19 people that are there.

20 So the smart decision at this point, quite
21 honestly, coming off the backs of the Highland
22 project, which was supposed to be \$50 million,
23 not 20, and the teacher's contract which was not
24 supposed to be 18 percent, it was 8 percent, the
25 numbers bear that out, and we are not going to go

1 there. Right now, we have no money to do
2 anything sensibly, not to spend \$30 million and
3 not to put this district in a position where they
4 can do nothing for seven years.

5 We have a woman at Wimbledon, 16 years old,
6 getting a lot of attention right now. Let's put
7 this into perspective. If you build this
8 building and you build it this year, that young
9 woman would be 87 years old before you do
10 something else in this district. Think about
11 that. Perspective is critical to understanding
12 the decision making process.

13 There is also something else that's out
14 there, something I have no problem with, because
15 I have lived on that side of Chippewa my whole
16 life, walked down and I wouldn't have been a
17 student at Beaver Falls, why haven't we talked
18 with Beaver Falls? Why hasn't our superintendent
19 gotten Donna Nugent on the phone and said let's
20 throw it out there, let's put together four of
21 your board members, four of our board members,
22 and let's talk, is this an option that might work
23 for us in a time of declining enrollment, in a
24 time where shared resources is critical to being
25 able to provide a solid education, while also

1 being respectful to people's finances and their
2 ability to pay their taxes.

3 I know some people want nothing to do with
4 Beaver Falls, one person is known for his many
5 derogatory comments about Beaver Falls, we won't
6 go there. That person knows. Somebody else
7 knows who they are, too, that's the danger of an
8 IP address.

9 But that being said, why not Beaver Falls,
10 why not that option? Why not explore it? That
11 way, you can honestly say you have looked at
12 everything, and I think when you take that type
13 of perspective with whatever decision you make,
14 you can honestly say comfortably, with good
15 conscious, and on that day that you stand in
16 front of God, that I did it and I did it the best
17 way that I could.

18 Nobody expects you to be perfect, this is
19 not a job you can do in a perfect fashion, but
20 you have to look at all people and their frame of
21 reference and all options that will make this
22 ultimately the best decision. To repeat what
23 Mark said, this board does not have to be the
24 board that makes that decision, and having sat in
25 that chair, I can tell you guys, now is not the

1 time. Do not act on this.

2 You did good research and you can be proud
3 of that, but you have to come back to the
4 community and say, we wish that we could, but we
5 can't. Much the same way that many of you as
6 parents have said to your child, you want a \$500
7 prom dress, honey, we wish that we could, but we
8 can't. \$30 million school, we wish that we
9 could, but we can't.

10 Thank you.

11 MR. SCHAEFER: Thank you. Do we have
12 anyone else at this time?

13 MR. PAUMEN: Gary Paumen, P-a-u-m-e-n,
14 Patterson Heights. This is my first board
15 meeting that I have gone to here in our district,
16 so I really don't have a lot of history to go
17 along with it.

18 But for my own edification, I would like to
19 at least know who I am talking to. Would you all
20 mind at least telling me who you are, because I
21 don't know any of you.

22 MR. SCHAEFER: Sure. We could -- maybe we
23 should have started -- you should have cut us off
24 at the beginning when we started, but I am Doug
25 Schaefer, I live in Chippewa Township, and I am

1 the school board president.

2 I guess just kind of yell out, we don't
3 have microphones here.

4 MR. MORRISON: I am Neil Morrison, vice
5 president of the school board, I live in South
6 Beaver.

7 MR. JONES: Dan Jones, I am from Patterson
8 Township, and I am treasurer of the school board.

9 MS. GOEHRING: Bonnie Goehring, South
10 Beaver Township, region 1.

11 MS. ZIEGLER: Melissa Ziegler, Chippewa
12 Township, region 2.

13 MS. HELSING: Kathy Helsing, Chippewa,
14 region 2. I am just actually filling in the rest
15 of the year for someone who resigned.

16 MR. BATTAGLIA: John Battaglia, Chippewa
17 Township, region 1.

18 DR. MAKOCZY: Dr. Frank Makoczy, Chippewa
19 Township, region 2.

20 MR. SCHAEFER: And then we have Eric
21 Brandenburg at the end, who is the business
22 manager.

23 DR. POSTUPAC: Dr. Robert Postupac,
24 superintendent of schools.

25 MR. KUSTRA: Victor Kustra, solicitor.

1 MS. LEDONNE: Marianne LeDonne, director of
2 curriculum and instruction.

3 MR. NELSON: Scott Nelson, high school
4 principal.

5 MR. FORD: Rick Ford, assistant high school
6 principal.

7 MR. ARBOGAST: Mike Arbogast, assistant
8 middle school principal.

9 MS. ANDERSON: Amy Anderson, principal of
10 Highland Middle School.

11 MS. BORRONI: Jodi Borroni, I'm the
12 principal at BIS.

13 MS. ALTENHOF: Elizabeth Altenhof, I'm the
14 special education director.

15 MR. PAUMEN: Thank you.

16 MR. SCHAEFER: You're welcome.

17 MR. BORELLO: I am Domenic Borello,
18 B-o-r-e-l-l-o, I live in Patterson Township. I
19 put four kids through this school. The only
20 thing I want to say, it's going to be very easy.
21 I talked to other board members, they are no
22 longer here, Northwestern, get a D9 bulldozer and
23 plow it over, because it's scrap.

24 I have been in construction for 50 years,
25 that building is not worth fixing. The gymnasium

1 floor, we had trouble with that for years, and
2 you people that were out there know that. Kids
3 go out on the floor, they slip and fall. That
4 means there is moisture coming from under the
5 ground.

6 No. 2, what I propose, if I was on that
7 school board, I would put six classrooms on
8 Highland Middle School and a gymnasium. It's not
9 going to cost you \$40 million, believe me. If
10 you watch what you do, I think six or seven,
11 eight classrooms is all you need, and to
12 eliminate the fields out in Chippewa, the
13 baseball fields, you got to be -- is that where
14 you plan to build the new school?

15 Where do you plan to build the new school?

16 MR. SCHAEFER: There is no plan right now.

17 MR. BORELLO: I heard that they were going
18 to use the field.

19 MR. SCHAEFER: No.

20 MR. BORELLO: That would be ridiculous.

21 MR. SCHAEFER: No, I mean, that's not --

22 MR. BORELLO: My proposal, if I was on the
23 board, I would look at putting six classrooms in
24 Highland.

25 You have more ground out there than you

1 know what to do with, and people say we can't do
2 it. Don't tell me we can't do it, we can do it.
3 Bulldoze Northwestern down tomorrow. If I had a
4 bulldozer, I'd do it for you.

5 Thank you.

6 MR. SCHAEFER: Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 MR. SCHAEFER: Do we have anyone else that
9 would like to address the board? Okay. I am
10 going to make just one statement and then closing
11 remarks, and I don't know if the superintendent
12 will like this, but I am going to go off script
13 for just one minute.

14 We definitely appreciate everybody coming
15 out tonight and giving your comments and your
16 opinion. And again, I will state this again,
17 that we truly appreciate everybody coming out. I
18 would like to stress, if possible, you know, we
19 heard a lot of different people speak tonight.
20 And, you know, from my perspective as a board
21 member and being on the board for four years,
22 there was some information that was accurate, and
23 I will say there is some information that I don't
24 feel was accurate.

25 And I would encourage instead of, you know,

1 potentially -- and I am not saying that you do
2 this, instead of relying on maybe what you read
3 on Facebook or what you see as a letter to the
4 editor in the newspaper, please come to the board
5 meetings and hear for yourselves what's actually
6 being talked about. The biggest thing, and
7 obviously, that you know we are discussing the
8 possibility of closing Northwestern as part of a
9 grand or a larger plan, you know, I think that
10 fits with what Mr. Hoenig talked about and what
11 Mr. Fleischman had talked about.

12 I see comments all the time, and I am as
13 guilty as everybody, I look on Facebook, and
14 sometimes I am sitting there just ready to
15 respond, and I got to pull my hands back because
16 it won't do any good. There is no plan right now
17 that we are going to spend \$30 million, we are
18 not voting to spend \$30 million. In my personal
19 opinion, we do not have \$30 million to spend at
20 this point in time.

21 But we need to put a plan in place and we
22 need to start moving down the road, as the one
23 woman spoke, you know, earlier, you know, we need
24 to take action and not be reactive all the time,
25 and that's truly what we are looking at.

1 And like I said, I would truly encourage
2 all of you to come to board meetings, this will
3 probably be discussed over the next several board
4 meetings. We have a board meeting next week, you
5 know, there will definitely be, if you came to
6 those board meetings and addressed the board,
7 there will be more dialogue than what we had
8 tonight. So I would definitely encourage
9 everybody to do that and come and hear it first
10 hand, you know, just hear it for yourselves, know
11 exactly what's going on.

12 If there is something that you don't
13 understand, please come to a board meeting and
14 ask us directly, don't rely on other sources of
15 information. So with that, again, I would like
16 to thank you all for your participation tonight.
17 The board must wait three months from today
18 before it can take a vote to close Northwestern.

19 A VOICE: Question, you're addressing a
20 board meeting next week, where, what time, and
21 what day?

22 MR. SCHAEFER: It's on Tuesday at
23 7:00 p.m., and they are in the high school
24 library, and hopefully if we get everybody to
25 attend those, we will move it to in here, which I

1 would love to see, because I wish every meeting
2 was in here and we had community involvement that
3 we could make decisions.

4 Yes?

5 A VOICE: Mr. Schaefer, a question for the
6 attorney, is it legal to have this three minute
7 time limit?

8 MR. KUSTRA: Yes.

9 A VOICE: Seems to be too low and unfair.

10 MR. KUSTRA: It's legal.

11 MR. SCHAEFER: First of all, I think, and I
12 don't know if anybody disagrees, but I think we
13 gave everybody the opportunity to speak. So any
14 other just quick comments before I wrap it up?

15 All right. So again, thank you for your
16 participation tonight. The board must wait three
17 months from today before it can take a vote to
18 close Northwestern should someone make a motion
19 to do so.

20 I imagine that the board will engage in
21 discussion regarding Northwestern at its meetings
22 over the course of the next several months. I am
23 confident that your comments from tonight will
24 play an important role in our decision.

25 With that, we will end the hearing at

1 8:00 p.m., so thanks again for coming.

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(THEREUPON, at 8:00 o'clock p.m., the
4 public hearing was concluded.)

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C-E-R-T-I-F-I-C-A-T-E

I, Jenna Nicole Freund, the undersigned, do hereby certify that the foregoing forty nine (49) pages are a true and correct transcript of my stenotypy notes taken of the Public Hearing held at the Blackhawk High School Auditorium, 500 Blackhawk Road, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania 15010, on Tuesday, July 9, 2019.

Jenna Nicole Freund, Court Reporter

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