KENT INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT Kent County, Michigan March 21, 2016

A Public Property Transfer Hearing of the School Board of said district was held in the Administrative Offices on the above date. The meeting was called to order by President Bajema at 6:45 p.m. for the consideration of a property transfer request from Lowell Area Schools to Forest Hills Public Schools.

Members Present: Bajema, Grifhorst, Haidle, and Joseph
Members Absent: Thorne
Guests: Andrew Schipper (property owner), Carol Hamilton (Lowell Area Schools), John Zielinski (Lowell Area Schools), Darryl Hofstra (Forest Hills Public Schools)

Kent ISD Staff Present: Superintendent Caniff and Assistant Superintendent Sullivan.

President Bajema welcomed all guests to the meeting.

Assistant Superintendent Sullivan stated that the petitions have been checked and do meet the legal requirements. The petitioner both own and reside on the property listed in the petition. The petition has been signed by both Andrew and Jaclyn Schipper, fulfilling the requirement of a minimum of 2/3rds of the persons who live and reside on the property have signed the petition. Although Forest Hills Public Schools noted that the property is not contiguous to the school district to which they are requesting to be attached, Sullivan explained that it met that standard.

The notice of the hearing was published in the Grand Rapids Press. Lowell Area Schools and Forest Hills Public Schools were notified of the hearing. Mr. and Mrs. Schipper were notified by letter. The property owners are Andrew and Jacklyn Schipper. They have three children ages 5, 2 and 2. The 2015 state equalized valuation of the property involved is $132,400. Mr. Schipper confirmed this information.

Maps were provided indicating the current school district property lines. This map came from software from the Bureau of Equalization - Property Description and Mapping Division, of Kent County. The petition provided by Andrew and Jaclyn Schipper was read and reviewed by Assistant Superintendent Sullivan and a copy is available with the minutes.

Andrew Schipper stated that his daughter will be starting school in the fall. He said that he believes Forest Hills provides a more diverse student population than Lowell, and he stated that he is interested in the Chinese and Spanish immersion programs. The father also claimed that Forest Hills has superior academic scores.

The parents are requesting that their property be transferred into Forest Hills Public Schools both for a more diverse population as well as a shorter distance to school. The father stated that his children would likely be attending Cherry Creek Elementary as part of Lowell Area Schools, which is 8.5 miles away since they are near the edge of the Lowell Area Schools boundary. Meanwhile, Ada Elementary within Forest Hills Public Schools, is 2.5 miles from the home.

John Zielinski stated that Lowell Area schools is opposed to the property transfer. Every year bus routes may vary. Currently the bus ride is scheduled to run 35-40 minutes. In addition, he expressed concern that granting this request would complicate and confuse boundary lines as the Schipper parcel's transfer would create a "jagged" boundary. Furthermore, he stated that granting such a request may open up the potential for other property owners in the area to also request a transfer, which could result in a detrimental fiscal impact. He stated that current laws do allow opportunities to attend neighboring districts via Schools of Choice or Section 6 without changing the property lines. However, he acknowledged that Schools of Choice students do not receive transportation services.

Zilienski also said that Lowell's state test scores are comparable to Forest Hills Public Schools' performance, especially at the third trade level, the first grade level in which students experience state assessments.

Darryl Hofstra reviewed the map and the Forest Hills bus routes to that area. He stated that even though the Schippers may reside closer to Ada Elementary School, Forest Hills assigns children in this area to Knapp Forest Elementary School which is somewhat an equal distance from the home to school as the distance cited from the home to Cherry Creek in Lowell. He said that the current bus ride to that area would be approximately 40 minutes, and therefore a slightly longer period on the bus than if the child was transported to Lowell's Cherry Creek. He also stated that the immersion programs the Schippers' expressed interest in only offer limited transportation, with one of the school's being housed at Meadowbrook Elementary, much further from the Schipper parcel. The secondary immersion program is at Forest Hills Northern, which again is further from the Schipper home and only limited transportation is provided.

Board members then reviewed the current property lines and district boundary lines. Other than the corner of the Schipper property (across Bailey Drive) being contiguous with Forest Hills, the remainder of the property is surrounded by parcels located within Lowell Area Schools. Granting this request would not straighten any boundary lines, and in fact would make them more irregular and confuse the boundary.

After the opportunity for closing statements was provided, Member Haidle made a motion that the property transfer request from Lowell Area Schools to Forest Hills Public Schools be denied as there is no clear advantage for the student regarding transportation/the length of the bus run and that granting the transfer would not straighten any district boundaries, but would make them even more irregular. The motion was seconded by Member Joseph. President Bajema called for a vote on the motion to deny the Schippers' request to transfer the property from Lowell Area Schools to Forest Hills Public Schools.

Ayes: Members Grifhorst, Haidle, Joseph, and Bajema
Nays: None
Motion declared to have carried.

President Bajema commended Mr. Schipper for being a strong advocate for their child.

The meeting was adjourned by President Bajema at 7:18 p.m.

Minutes Approved: April 18, 2016

Andrea Haidle
Andrea Haidle, Secretary

Claudia Bajema
Claudia Bajema, President