



Board of Education Special Meeting Minutes

May 12, 2025

Powell 9th Grade Academy – 5:00 p.m.

Called to Order	5:00 p.m. Called to order by President, Rachel Eichhorst. 7 members present. 0 members absent.
Pledge of Allegiance	Led by the Board
Approved	Agenda for May 12, 2025 Special Meeting. Rice moved. Antoine supported. 7 Ayes. 0 Nays. Motion carried. Agenda approved.
Public Comment	<p>Parent Sarah Kasper spoke in support of GSOPS. She stated she wants what's right for our kids and future and that the property was meant for learning. She mentioned the GSOPS group and their vision. She asked the board to rethink and listen to the community.</p> <p>Student Emily Kubichar spoke in support of the green space on Prospect. She stated it's a safe place for kids to go to learn about their environment and feel safe. She spoke about the importance of children connecting with nature and having a place to be themselves. She asked to put the needs of the children first.</p> <p>Student Robyn Kasper spoke in protest of the sale of 297 Prospect St. to land developers. She asked that they consider who they are selling to and mentioned that the green space is the best decision for the future.</p> <p>Kristin Brewer, a GSOPS volunteer, stated she believes strongly in the GSOPS proposal which offers a lasting educational benefit for a property that has always been used for education. She mentioned that this is a unique opportunity to have a lasting legacy of preserving the property as it was always meant to be used and asked the board to reconsider and save the green space.</p> <p>Community member David Rees spoke regarding 297 Prospect. He mentioned that his father-in-law wrote the fight song and the alma mater of this school. He spoke of the history of the building and stated he was giving an emotional appeal to make the right call.</p> <p>Community member Chuck Ryntz spoke in support of the greenspace. He lives on a golf course and stated the greenspace is beneficial to his well-being. He stated GSOPS has presented a reasonable offer and urged the board to accept their offer.</p> <p>Community member Melissa Folino spoke of the hours, money and efforts that have been devoted toward the greenspace cause. She stated that if the board believes in their own mission statement, then they won't vote to sell the land to a developer. She asked them to vote for the community and save the land for generations to come.</p> <p>Community member Franco Folino stated that GSOPS and the board have been working together for 2 years and the board is suddenly ready to vote on selling the property. He stated the board has an opportunity to enable something amazing and</p>

asked that they vote no on selling to developers and propose to pause and meet with the GSOPS group.

Community member Thomas Ridley spoke in support of GSOPS. He mentioned properties in Romeo and the taxpayers that support them. He stated he would donate additional money to his pledge because this is an important cause to him.

Community member Clarke Stough mentioned the reasons he moved to Romeo and its uniqueness. He stated there is an opportunity to have a park in our own community. He mentioned that it's not all about money and that he's hopeful they don't ruin the uniqueness of the village by making a wrong decision.

Community member Elizabeth Miller stated she stands in awe of the support from this community for this beloved property and mentioned that 7 people will decide its fate. She shared visuals that supported their fundraising and articles pertaining to their efforts.

Community members Michael & Meagan Hummon stated they were speaking on behalf of their daughter because the decisions made now will impact her future and they hope that Romeo is a place she chooses to return to. Mrs. Hummon strongly urged the board to refuse the RFP that is being voted on and stated the decision on this property should be in the best interest of the community for generations to come. She asked the board to stand with the community and children they represent. She is thankful that the process has allowed her to build stronger relationships with the community and she knows they will continue to support one another and keep the best interests of this village at heart.

Community member Mary Meissner mentioned that the C in RCS is for community and that without unity, there is no community. She questioned some of the other RCS assets which are of greater value than the property that is for sale. She asked what community meant to the board members and stated they can show everyone tonight.

Aleda Miller, a 2020 graduate of Romeo shared concerns with Resolution 51 and the builder they are proposing to sell to. She asked if the board did their homework on this builder and mentioned that the goal of GSOPS is to preserve and protect this property as is. She stated that she hopes that they understand that this decision will have implications on natural resources for generations to come. She asked the board to make it possible for this property to be a place where children go with their families to learn about pollinators, indigenous connections, green infrastructure and green space.

Resident Charles Turner spoke in support of GSOPS. He stated that he spoke to the board in February and mentioned that he understood the fiduciary responsibilities of the board but did his best to describe the merits of keeping it a green space. He stated that the situation with the contractor should be enough of a red flag to put the brakes on and make sure they are heading in the right direction. He stated GSOPS has done a great job in raising funds and there's more to this than money. He asked the board to reconvene with GSOPS and shared a sketch of what he hopes the property to look like.

Kim Voss, a member of the GSOPS board of directors, stated she was an educator for many years and understands the politics of education but does not understand the resolution they are about to vote on. She mentioned the reopening of the RFP and stated that their offer came in late but that they were told that the deadline was not a hard date. They worked to make sure that their offer was valid and legal and were stunned to learn that it wouldn't be considered. She stated they were also told that there would be a survey given to the community to see how the community felt about the sale of the land but it was never done. They conducted a survey of their own and shared those results as well as a petition with over 700 signatures and letters of support. She stated that she hopes they will look at it. She questioned how they

think they can build their relationship with community when they aren't listening to them.

Donna Folland, Chair of GSOPS, shared printed copies of Appendix B that Kim Voss referred to. She asked before they decide to sell the land, that they try to see who GSOPS really is. They want to build something for the community. She shared some of the survey results and mentioned that there is a large mass of people in support of their effort. She asked the board to reconsider the resolution so that they can work together to build something for the community.

Resident Rob Wing shared concerns regarding the initial transparency of the Prospect Street property. He stated that a citizen heard about the sale and put slips of paper in resident's doors and that is how GSOPS was formed. He stated that people are amazed at the amount of money they have raised. He asked the board to look at the support and financial commitment they have received and to consider the ability of green space to educate youngsters. He asked the board to think very carefully on this because once the decision is made, there's no going back.

Parent Ashley Gotschell mentioned the number of students with mental well-being needs and spoke in support of greenspace. She spoke of the health impacts of having nature and greenspace for young and old alike. She mentioned that not all kids are sports-driven; some are driven and passionate about nature and these kids as well as future generations deserve this space.

Approved

- **Employee Services #46 – Tentative Agreement – Teamsters 214 Romeo Directors and Supervisors Assoc.**
Banach moved. Antoine supported. 7 Ayes. 0 Nays. Motion carried.
- **Employee Services #47 – Tentative Agreement – Teamsters 214 Romeo Executive Leadership Assoc.**
Boyer moved. Bowman supported. 7 Ayes. 0 Nays. Motion carried.
- **Business Services #48 - MISD Biennial Election – RCS Electoral Representative**
Ms. Eichhorst made a motion to be the representative for the June 2nd meeting and Ms. Banach to be the alternate.
Boyer moved. Antoine supported. 7 Ayes. 0 Nays. Motion carried.
- **Business Services #49 – West Michigan Insurance Pool – District Representative**
Antoine moved. Bowman supported. 7 Ayes. 0 Nays. Motion carried.
- **Business Services #50 – Food Service Supervisor**
Rice moved. Cichocki supported. 7 Ayes. 0 Nays. Motion carried.
- **Business Services #51 – 297 Prospect**
Ms. Eichhorst read a statement explaining the circumstances and timeline on the Prospect St. property since the process was started (September, 2022).
Rice moved. Bowman supported. Roll call vote. 7 Ayes. 0 Nays. Motion carried.

Ms. Eichhorst stated she has felt a lot of the same emotions regarding the greenspace. She read and listened to everything sent to her. She does not take this decision lightly but the board has a responsibility to look at the financial needs of the entire district.

Ms. Bowman stated that they care greatly about the district and community. She has read every email and listened to every meeting. She mentioned that at one of the meetings it was referenced that none of the board members were educators which is completely not true. She stated it is not an easy decision.

Mrs. Rice stated they do very much care about all the students. She mentioned that someone made a comment regarding "Community" and referenced the sale as a short-term gain. She feels community is made up of families and children. The additional families that move into these homes will not be a short-term gain. These children will attend Romeo schools and want to live in the village because it's so unique. The \$500,000 in additional funds will serve the 5,600 children as a whole.

Ms. Banach mentioned that there are other pieces of property that they might be able to work together in a partnership with. She mentioned that most of the board are educators and that they did go to the people that are elected to decide on community spaces and spoke at their podium on the wants of the community.

Public Comment

Franco Folino stated he did not know how to put together a bid to buy property from a Board of Education and they did their best to figure it out. He stated there were days of misunderstanding and stated that this is the worst decision in the history of the board of education and that they failed the children.

Melissa Folino stated that her husband wears a uniform to protect people's rights. She stated it was hard to put together a proposal when you don't know how and that she was proud of the community members and ashamed of the board.

Robyn Kasper stated she was mad and does not support development. She feels the board made the wrong choice.

Steve Mellen stated that the board did the appropriate and right thing. He stated the citizens did a great job of raising money but can they keep it up for the next 50 to 100 years? It would cost \$20,000 - \$30,000 a year in taxes, maintenance and insurance. He stated that it is not the school's job to make parks. It is their job to be fiscally responsible. He spent the last 50 years in property assessment and worked with school districts and stated they made the right decision fiscally and financially.

Adjournment

6:17 p.m. Rice moved. Antoine supported. 7 Ayes. 0 Nays. Motion Carried.

Approved by: Katherine Rice, Secretary _____