

JOHNSBURG CENTRAL SCHOOL  
Monday, September 23, 2024  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
Minutes

Board Members Present: Rachel DeGroat  
Melissa Freebern  
Chris Jay  
Erwin Morris  
Tom Ordway  
Tara Sears  
Sarah Williams

Board Members Absent: N/A

**Call to Order:** Rachel DeGroat opened the meeting at 6:30 with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Merger Motion:** Sarah Williams made a **MOTION** to approve the following referendum:  
Johnsburg Central School District/Minerva Central School District  
Proposed Merger:

WHEREAS, the Johnsburg Central School District (the “District”) and the Minerva Central School District have completed a merger feasibility study, and

WHEREAS, the Johnsburg Board of Education would like to provide an opportunity for feedback from voters in the District on this issue.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Johnsburg Board of Education hereby authorizes the District to hold a non-binding advisory referendum on the merger issue and directs the District Clerk to schedule the date of the advisory referendum.

seconded by Chris Jay.

Rachel DeGroat asked both administrators what their thoughts and or opinions were regarding moving forward with the the Straw Poll.

Michael Markwica gave a quick report of his history at JCS. He stated that Minerva has always wanted their building to stay open. He went on to say that he would not have been for the merger if he didn't believe that was a positive for the students. He said the public should not fear a new board because most people who run for a seat on a school board, do so for the benefit of the children.

Heather Flanagan also gave a history of herself. She stated it has been two years in the process for the merger. At first, she was unsure but may see advantages that the public may not. She feels it is best for the students and went on to list the positive programs that could be created with the merger. She said that there will be a minimum tax increase and aid for 14 years. She asked the board to continue the discussion and let the community decide what we should do.

Rachel deGroat instructed the members of the Board to give their reasoning, as well as their vote on whether or not to continue the process with a straw poll.

The following roll call was taken:

Melissa Freebern: Thank everyone who came out and spoke. She stated it was a hard decision and thanked those who joined the committee. She noted that the options are not finite, and she would encourage everyone to get involved to make a good plan for the long term. The state said that we won't get this financial number again. Let the community weigh in.  
Her vote was yes.

Sarah Williams stated she owned a local business, which allowed her to speak to many people in the community. Up to a few weeks ago, she had heard very positive reasons, but now she is hearing the negatives. This tells her that the community should make the decision.  
Her vote was yes.

Tom Ordway stated he was on the Board for 33 years and spoke to many students. He said he works for the people of the community, and they were the ones to vote him on the board, and he is on the board for the kids. He did not think this was the best decision for

our kids. He went on to say If you want to save money, you don't keep employees. The people who he talked to don't want the merger. He also didn't feel Jerry and Mike gave firm answers. He had concerns about busing and splitting up families. His vote was no.

Rachel DeGroat thanked everyone for coming and said everyone was respectful, which was also a testament to our community. She said that change is hard. Board members are tasked to look at the big picture and build a stronger school district. She wants to keep the conversation going and to look at options. Allowing the Straw votes allows the conversation to continue. Her vote was yes.

Tara Sears stated she was very excited when she first started. Now, talking about the merger, she is concerned about kids on buses may extend school time. Two schools open is also a fiscal concern. Her vote was no.

Erwin Morris stated that he looks at things in numbers - the effect of taxes. He said there was a large discrepancy between Minerva. and Johnsburg. He said that he would support an annexation. His vote was no.

Chris Jay stated he heard many good opinions, which gave him much food for thought. He also said that if we don't move forward, we will never know what we can do. The entire community should make the decision. He voted yes.

Rachel DeGroat stated the vote was. 4 yes to 3 no, so the Motion passes for the straw poll. Rachel DeGroat stated that the Minerva board voted no, so the merger process was over.

**\Approval of Minutes:**

Tara Sears made a **MOTION** to approve the minutes of the August 12, 2024, Board of Education Meeting, seconded by Tom Ordway and carried.

Tara Sears made a **MOTION** to accept the minutes of the CSE/CPSE/504 report, seconded by Tom Ordway and carried.

**Agenda Changes:**

Rachel DeGroat made one agenda change:  
VI. Executive Session

**Financial:**

Tom Ordway asked for an update on oil pricing. Elizabeth Viele stated oil has yet to be purchased but the District is on the state contract.

Michael Markwica stated that Kathy Spring, Liz Viele and himself met with Marshall and Sterling to learn more about Medicare advantage plans for retirees. This would offer cost incentives for the retirees and the District.

**Motions:**

Tara Sears made a **MOTION** to move to an Executive Session at 6:53 pm for personnel appointments, seconded by Chris Jay and carried.

Tara Sears made a **MOTION** to return to Regular Session at 7:15, seconded by Tom Ordway and carried.

Tara Sears made a **MOTION** to appoint Jake Sauer-Jones as a 5/6 Elementary Soccer Coach for the 2024-2025 school year, per the JCSTA contract, seconded by Tom Ordway and carried.

Tara Sears made a **MOTION** to appoint Kate Sauer-Jones as volunteer 5/6 Elementary Soccer Coach for the 2024-2025 school year, seconded by Sarah Williams. and carried.

Tara Sears made a **MOTION** to appoint Aaron Chambers and Allison Gonyo as assistant coaches for all sports if needed for the 2024-2025 school year, seconded by Tom Ordway and carried.

Tara Sears made a **MOTION** to appoint Amanda May as a 3/4 Elementary Soccer coach for the 2024-2025 school year, as per the JCSTA contract, seconded by Tom Ordway and carried.

Sarah Williams made a **MOTION** to accept Kathryn Ashe's Horizontal Promotion MA+6 as per the JCSTA contract, seconded by Tara Sears and carried.

Tom Ordway made a **MOTION** to accept Cathy Kennedy's Horizontal Promotion MA+30+12 as per the JCSTA contract, seconded by Tara Sears and carried.

Tom Ordway made a **MOTION** to appoint Joe San Antonio and Jodie Seymour as Co-advisors of the Natural Helpers Club as per the JCSTA contract, seconded by Tara Sears. Mike Markwica reported that Heather Flanagan and himself met with Jodie Seymour and Joe San Antonio with new ideas created by the Board. Both advisors were excited with the new ideas. Motion carried.

Tara Sears made a **MOTION** to appoint Melissa Parker as an Elementary Special Education teacher at Step 7, \$59,725 as per the JCSTA contract, effective October 21, 2024, seconded by Tom Ordway. Mike Markwica stated that Ms. Parker has a background in Headstart, Prospect School, Florida, and is currently with our BOCES at the Myer's Cente. Motion carried.

Tom Ordway made a **MOTION** to approve the Calvary Bible Church's use of a school bus to transport teens to REVERB, in the Glens Falls area, on November 8, 2024, returning the morning of November 9, 2024, with the understanding they will be responsible for the cost of fuel, mileage, and securing a qualified driver from the pool of school drivers, seconded by Sarah Williams and carried.

**Discussion:**

**Update Reports:**

**Sub-Rate Nurse:**

Mike Markwica said he has spoken to Amber Aurilio with concerns with nurses who are willing to substitute due to the price. \$30 is suggested price. \$25 is what we offer now. Prices are very different in local Districts. If we want an RN we would need to pay a higher rate. LPN does not fit the criteria. Mike Markwica was asked if an LPN get the same sub rate and he said they would.

**Motions:**

Tara Sears made a motion to increase the nurses sub rate to \$30 seconded by Sarah Williams and carried.

Tom Ordway made a **MOTION** to appoint Amanda May and

Brian May as co-advisors for the 8-12 grade Archery club as per the JCST contract for the 2024-2025 school year, seconded by Chris Jay and carried.

Tom Ordway made a **MOTION** to appoint Amanda May and Brian May as co-advisor for the 4-7 grade Archery club as per the JCST contract for the 2024-2025 school year, seconded by Chris Jay and carried.

**Committee Reports:**

**Curriculum Committee:**

Melissa Freebern reported that the committee discussed adding college courses for history and art. Art courses did not fit the needs of the students but history courses did. A new course was added and Matthew Wells is teaching it.

**Updated Reports:**

Michael Markwica stated that the governor passed a bill that all boards of education meetings will have a student BOE member as of July 1, 2025.

Heather Flanagan reported that this school year is off to a great start. The new 7-12 cell phone policy is working and she is proud of students for doing as asked. Students are allowed to use their cell phones before and after classes and during lunch.

Tara Sears asked if there were any new issues with students being late for class. Heather Flanagan reported that there were just a few.

**Other Business:**

Tom Ordway thanked everyone who came out tonight. He said the community makes a big difference. He also said that the students who spoke tonight did a great job.

Rachel DeGroat commended our coaches for doing a great job while in a game and after. She still feels that there is still a concern with spectators.

Mike Markwica suggested putting a committee together - asking community members to give input. If spectators are asked to leave they may have to take an online course to be able to attend future games. We can only make a decision for our fields, not other school's fields.

Rachel DeGroat would like to see this committee happen.

**Visitor Comments:**

Mike Sharp:

JCS ARCHERY achievements were listed since Mike Sharp introduced Archery to JCS. He stated that the only thanks he received was to be run out of coaching. He was upset that the Board set up guidelines without talking to either Deanna or himself. He felt that they were kicked out without any reason.

Deanna Sharp:

Stated that her understanding that each of you received a letter that she sent to the administration. She said that the issues they had with our softball program are being held against them. She is confused about why the Board would remove either of them. She said that the Board never communicated with them so why do they need to follow specific guidelines. She asked who provided the BOE with information on how to create these guidelines. She also stated that Mike was never informed that he was replaced. She then read the letter she sent to the administration and the Board.

Hannah Sharp:

Talked about how she was taught to shoot by her father and she is now concerned with the level of coaching she will receive from the new coaches. She also said she is not sure if she will continue with the club.

Garit Waldron:

Stated his three children will not continue with archery.

Jake Sauer-Jones:

Supported both of the Sharps as coaches. He asked the Board if they took into consideration the safety of this sport. He recommends that the Board rethink their decision.

Jeremy Mottram:

Stated that his daughter loves the sport and trusts the coaches. Everything she trusts about it will be taken away so she probably won't continue. Not sure what the problem was.

Melissa Mottram:

Stated she was concerned about the changes in coaching and she did not know about the new coaches. She has chaperoned before and wants to know if they are going to be safe.

Mike Sharp:

Spoke again about being upset about the new guidelines and stated they were already not being followed. He feels that this was put into effect to get rid of them.

**Adjournment:**

Tara Sears made a **MOTION** to adjourn at 7:58 pm, seconded by Tom Ordway and carried.