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 5:30 p.m. for the consideration of a property transfer request from Lowell Area Schools to Forest Hills Public Schools.

Members Present: Bajema, Grifhorst, Haidle, Joseph and Thorne

Members Absent:

Guests: Lynette Battaglio, Michael Battaglio, Carol Hamilton (Lowell Area Schools), John Zielinski (Lowell Area Schools), Darryl Hofstra (Forest Hills Public Schools)

Kent ISD Staff Present: Superintendent Caniff and Recording Secretary Conners.

President Bajema welcomed all guests to the meeting.

Superintendent Caniff stated that the petitions have been checked and do meet the legal requirements. The petitioners both own and reside on the property listed in the petition. The petition has been signed by both Michael and Lynette Battaglio fulfilling the requirement of a minimum of 2/3rds of the persons who live and reside on the property have signed the petition and the property is contiguous to the school district to which they are requesting to be attached.

The notice was published in the Grand Rapids Press on July 26, 2015. Lowell Area Schools and Forest Hills Public Schools were notified of the hearing. Mr. and Mrs. Battaglio were notified by letter. The property owners are Michael and Lynette Battaglio. They have two children ages 4 and 1. The state equalized valuation of the property involved is $105,500. Mr. and Mrs. Battaglio confirmed this information when asked by Superintendent Caniff.

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 Michael and Lynette Battaglio was read and reviewed and a copy is available with the minutes.

Lynette Battaglio stated that her daughter will be starting school in the fall. She learned that her daughter would be attending Bushnell Elementary as part of Lowell Area Schools and that the bus ride would be approximately 45-50 minutes since they are near the edge of the Lowell Area Schools boundary. Bushnell Elementary is seven miles from the bus stop. Once students arrive at school they go outside for 20-25 minutes so her daughter would need to be dressed and ready for outdoor play when she rides the bus. She stated that this is a long bus ride for a young child, and that the only neighbor that has children attending Lowell Area Schools drives their child to school every day. She had been informed that some neighbors attend Forest Hills Public Schools and that the bus ride was approximately 25 minutes each way. They are requesting that their property be transferred into Forest Hills Public Schools so that the bus ride would be shorter.

John Zielinski stated that Lowell Area schools is opposed to the property transfer. Every year bus routes may vary. Currently the morning bus ride to the stop by Battaglio’s property is scheduled to run 45 minutes. However, the afternoon bus ride would be short (approximately 15 minutes). The total time on the bus every day would total approximately 60 minutes. Therefore, the information conveyed in Mr. and Mrs. Battaglio’ petition is in error. In addition, he expressed concern that granting this request may open up the potential for other property owners in the area (six total) to also request a transfer, which could result in a significant 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.
Darryl Hofstra reviewed the map and the Forest Hills bus routes to that area. He stated that even though the Battaglions may reside closer to Ada Elementary School, Forest Hills assigns children in this area to Knapp Forest Elementary School which is eight miles from the bus stop. He said that the current bus ride to that area would be 35 minutes for both the morning and the afternoon ride (approximately 70 minutes total daily). He stated that the secondary bus runs in the area are currently 40-50 minutes long. He also expressed concern with finding a safe, legal bus stop in the area. If the property transfer is approved, it would result in the current route being lengthened, and the driver would need to find a suitable turn-around area since the stop would be at the end of the run.

For either district, the bus stop would be a short distance away and would not be at the driveway since the area is hilly and curvy, and does not meet the current requirements for a bus stop location.

Superintendent Caniiff then reviewed the current property lines. Granting this request would not straighten any boundary lines, and in fact would make them more irregular.

Lynette Battaglia stated that her daughter has been accepted into the Spanish Immersion program at Ada Vista in Forest Hills Public Schools. She said that she or her husband are able to transport their daughter at this time, but were not sure they would be able to do so for the remainder of her school years. She wants to ensure that her one year old would be able to attend the same district as her daughter.

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 the length of the bus runs and that granting the transfer would not straighten any district boundaries, but would make them even more irregular. The motion was seconded by Member Grifhorst. President Bajema called for a vote on the motion to deny the property transfer request from Lowell Area Schools to Forest Hills Public Schools.

Ayes: Members Grifhorst, Joseph, Bajema, Thorne and Haidle
Nays: None

Motion declared to have carried.

President Bajema commended Mr. and Mrs. Battaglio for being a strong advocate for their child.

The petitioner was notified of their right to appeal this decision within ten days to the Michigan State Board of Educaion and/or to the State Superintendent of Public Education.

The meeting was adjourned by President Bajema at 6:28 p.m.

Minutes Approved: September 21, 2015

Andrea Haidle, Secretary

Claudia Bajema, President