

Durand School Board Meeting Observation and Reflection

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I noticed that attending a school board meeting is very similar to attending a city council meeting. At this particular meeting, new officers were elected for the following year and the budget cuts were approved. Several teachers and coaches had resigned their positions and their resignation letters were read aloud.

There was time allotted for the community to speak their concerns before the board. Two high school teachers had disputed a budget cut and another community member voiced disapproval of the school board's action to making intelligent decisions. The board had all they could do to control their temper, and the speaker came close to having been removed from the meeting by law enforcement.

Since the failure to pass a referendum which would continue to finance the needs of the school in areas of curriculum, bus routes, athletic programs and other various fees, several people were upset with the decisions made by the school board and had been trying to retaliate with lawsuits for poor practice. For example, there was disagreement as to whether the school board should hold open or closed sessions when discussing budget cuts, because the elimination of a department could mean the elimination of a particular teacher. In my opinion, the school board had shown that they had spent a great deal of time coming up with ways to best serve the community with budget cuts and had very reasonable arguments for making the decisions that they had made. One board member had even said that the anticipated budget cuts were posted well enough in advanced and he had received no phone calls or letters expressing disapproval.

I would have to say that participating as a board member takes quite a bit of guts to make decisions that are in the best interest of the community and knowing that not everyone is going to be happy with the decisions. The way I see it, there are board members that are not only administrative staff, but parents of students in the school district as well. I am sure that they want what is best for their own children, as well as all of the children attending. They have proven that their knowledge and skills of the subject matter and that they are competent in making decisions, so I feel that the attacks that they have had to put up with are often uncalled for.

Looking at the budget, one would understand how much a school board is in charge of. Taking the time to offer positive professional feedback and stating why programs, procedures, safety measures and other resources are important would be of great help to the board in making the decisions that they have to make. These board members are representatives for the teachers, students and parents and need input from all who are affected by the decisions they make. If I was asked to say what the most important value I walked away from the meeting with, it would be an appreciation for those making the difficult decisions.