

## CLARE SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

### What to Expect

You have to go to a Clare School Board meeting to fully appreciate what you are about to read.

A Clare School Board meeting will not strike you as a business meeting although business is being conducted. It will probably strike most as some kind of pep assembly with a lot of rah-rah, feel good stuff. The Board recognizes students, employees, teachers, administrators, counselors, volunteers, teams, clubs, organizations, events and so on and so forth with certificates of recognition or appreciation.

Recognition of people is a good and necessary thing but if you go to monthly meetings regularly, you may not be able to stop from getting nauseated by all the hoopla. There is a recognition speech, certificates are distributed and the newspaper takes pictures of the recipients. Whether it is meant to or not, it appears to an objective observer that there is a plan behind the constant feel good recognition beyond the appreciation shown to everyone under the sun.

Let me explain.

The Board gets a packet before the meeting that basically sets forth all of the information needed included recommended action. Thus, from a large business agenda, a few items *may* spark a discussion among the Board. Most of the business is routine without discussion. Unless you have the foresight to get a Board packet prior to the meeting, you really won't know what is going on. They do not give the public copies of the Board packet at the meeting. The lack of meaningful discussion on the agenda items is remarkable. Even when the High School principal, Middle School principal, Elementary School principal, athletic director or other administrator speaks, it is focused almost entirely on the positives and they tell all the good things they did but report on not a single bad thing that happened or how it was resolved.

The only discussion starts when people get recognized by the Board. As you would expect, the people being recognized are being recognized for good things. They have either won something for which congratulations are in order or they have served in some fashion for which the Board is giving appreciation. These recognitions are pleasant with all smiles, laughter and goodwill.

So we have business conducted without discussion and without the public being clued in on what is going. Things are going smooth.

Then they take it up a notch. Administrators tell the Board lots of good things that they did or were a part of—avoiding any bad things or how they were resolved.

Then they put the cherry on top by parading person after person up before the Board for special recognition.

You may think that all of this is understandable and it actually is to a point. But consider that this system, perhaps by design, keeps the Board in the dark, keeps the public in the dark and creates its own artificially happy environment. This happy environment makes public participation nearly impossible.

The public has two spots on the agenda to address the Board and the Board need not respond to the citizen. So if you have a serious issue you want the Board to address, you are really out of place. It makes it quite uncomfortable for a citizen to talk seriously in the face of all this happy do-do. A serious statement from a citizen is out of place and a downer at the meeting. The Board usually just looks at you without much response and the issue is therefore dropped, dead in its tracks.

It's hard to believe that this set-up is not by design.

It's hard to believe that the Superintendent does not do this to make himself look good because if it looks like the administrators are doing a good job and good things are happening, Clare has no problems then. In fact, it looks like it is orchestrated to look like Clare is a great school system.

This is not to say that Clare Schools is bad. Clare Schools do a lot of good things. But from going to a Board meeting you would think that Clare is a stellar school system with little or no problems. This would raise a red flag for anybody that is an objective observer. Looks like the problems are being hidden from view. Clare is not a stellar school system; it is a good school comparatively speaking to other area schools.

So whether it is by design or happenstance, the Board meetings appear to be worthless for the public.