The meeting was called to order by President Shawn White at 5:00 p.m. The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Shawn White, Bob Sayles, Phil LaMaire, Craig Staudinger, Brad Wait, Dan Griswold, Nick Rush
Absent: NONE
Admin: Geoff Bontrager, Laurie Lewis, Kim Carney, Mick Evans
Visitors: Cindy Devereaux (Recording Secretary)
Approx. 40 in attendance

Shawn White, Board President, welcomed those in attendance to the Board Meeting and noted that Community Comment forms were located in the back of the room for those who would like to address the Board.

Superintendent Geoff Bontrager thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Superintendent Bontrager summarized the process that the district has taken during the food service company search. The RFP (Request for Proposal) process was presented along with the finalists bids and reference checks.

In April 2019, Requests for Proposals were solicited from food service companies to allow Northwest Community Schools to perform a cost and service analysis to use as a comparison tool with the district’s current practices. The District has now completed that study. Representatives from Taher, Inc. and SFE (Southwest Food Excellence) made presentations to the Board of Education for information and discussion.

2. **Taher, Inc. Presentation** (5:05pm)
Representatives from Taher, Inc. made a presentation to the Board of Education on their company and the services and benefits they would be able to provide Northwest Community Schools. Taher, Inc. covered many areas within their organization, including: introduction of their team, background information on the company, commitments to health and wellness, safety and training, chef-based program, communication, promotions, shared opportunities, Food4Life app and webpage, commitment to retain the current management team, and noted that they were the lowest bid and will retain all current Northwest employees.

Following the presentation by Taher, Inc., the Board of Education did not have any questions at that time.

Superintendent Geoff Bontrager and the Board of Education thanked Taher, Inc. for their presentation.
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3. **SFE (Southwest Food Excellence) (5:40pm)**
   Representatives from SFE made a presentation to the Board of Education on their company and the services and benefits they would be able to provide Northwest Community Schools. SFE covered many areas within their organization, including: introduction of their team, background information on the company, commitments to health and wellness (fresh, scratch, organic), safety and continued training, pride in great food and a guarantee to increase participation, monthly professional development, staff and student driven with an emphasis on partnership, transition is assured to meet the needs of the district, mobile ordering, menus with details available 24/7, local presence with support teams in the field, chef-based program, treats each district as an individual, interactive classes and events, commitment to retain all current Northwest employees.

Following the presentation by SFE, discussion took place on the transition to SFE and whether there was enough time to allow for a smooth transition. SFE noted that they were 100% confident on a smooth transition and have plans in place should they be awarded the contract.

Superintendent Geoff Bontrager and the Board of Education thanked SFE for their presentation.

4. **Community Comment**
   - Pete Jancek, district resident and Blackman Township Supervisor, noted that whichever company is selected, they need to make sure that everyone is properly trained and our staff and children are taken care of. Superintendent Bontrager noted that references were checked for each company and both companies were highly respected.
   - Taylor Keel, Food Service employee, spoke on behalf of the Food Service employees summarizing all the great things that Taher does for the district and asking for the Board to support Taher.
   - Jill Maxwell, President of the Northwest Education Association, noted her support for Taher, their management team, and the staff. She asked the Board to consider selecting Taher for their Food Service company.
   - Jessica Grant, Food Service employee, noted her support of Taher and complimented Taher’s willingness to donate. Ms. Grant requested that the Board keep a good thing going.

*(Recess from 6:20pm-6:25pm)*

4. **Food Service Contract Discussion**
   Bob Sayles recognized each member of the Interview Team: Geoff Bontrager, Laurie Lewis, Lisa Petersen, Shawn White, and Bob Sayles. Mr. Sayles presented the Interview Team’s unanimous decision that SFE be invited to make a presentation to the Board and be recommended for a food service contract for the 2019-2020 school year. Superintendent Bontrager clarified that SFE was the Interview Committee’s first choice and Taher was their second choice, with a decision to allow both companies to present to the Board. Mr. Sayles noted that SFE was the Interview Committee’s unanimous first choice.
Shawn White publicly reviewed notes from the interviews compiled by the Committee. She did note that both company headquarters are based out-of-state, although SFE has a management/support team located in Michigan. Ms. White also noted that both companies were committed to retaining all current staff with no lost wages.

Brad Wait noted that Taher hasn’t done anything to warrant going with a new company after being committed to serving Northwest for many years.

Dan Griswold noted that the district has had a partnership with Taher for 18 years and feels a sense of loyalty to them.

Nick Rush noted that Board Members are elected by the taxpayers and are accountable to the taxpayers of the district. Mr. Rush was concerned that seeing the presentation for the first time at the Board Meeting and voting on a recommendation for a food service company for the 2019-2020 school year that same evening does not give the Board enough time to poll the taxpayers to get their feedback on such an important decision.

5. **Food Service Contract – Approval**
Moved by Sayles, seconded by LaMaire, that the Board of Education approve a recommendation to move forward and enter into a contract with SFE (Southwest Food Excellence) to provide Food Service support for Northwest Community Schools, effective July 1, 2019, pending MDE (Michigan Department of Education) approval, as present.

**Discussion:** Mr. Sayles noted that the motion is the recommendation of the Interview Committee following a very intensive interview process over the past two years. He stated that there were many hours put into the process.

Craig Staudinger asked each person who addressed the Board during community comment if their questions had been answered. Mr. Jancek noted that he does have concerns with the transition process and whether employees will be paid for their training. Chef Monty Staggs, SFE President, assured Mr. Jancek, the Board, and the audience that SFE has the resources in place for an efficient transition. It was noted that all training is paid training and it will be a 100% partnership with Northwest.

Phil LaMaire asked if the current employee’s wages will be affected, and SFE noted that all wages are protected per the terms of the RFP.

Craig Staudinger asked if SFE was confident they would be able to meet all state and federal guidelines for food service. SFE noted that they have never had any audit findings in any of their schools.

At this time, there were no other questions.
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The Board was reminded that they did have a motion on the floor to move forward with SFE for food service support during the 2019-2020 school year.

**Roll Call Vote:** **AYES:** Phil LaMaire, Craig Staudinger, Bob Sayles, Shawn White, Nick Rush  
**NAYS:** Brad Wait, Dan Griswold

**Motion Carried 5-2**

Superintendent Geoff Bontrager noted that both SFE and Taher were great companies and even though the vote was a split vote, the Board of Education will come together as one unit to support the outcome. Superintendent Bontrager noted that each of the Board Members does have their own thoughts and opinions.

Superintendent Bontrager noted that Taher has served the district well over the past 18 years and are very much appreciated for their commitment to Northwest.

Superintendent Bontrager announced that SFE is willing to meet with any employees who may have additional questions on their future with SFE and/or the transition phase. It was again noted that all employees will be offered their current roles with the new company and their wages and benefits will be held harmless.

Moved by LaMaire, seconded by Sayles, that the meeting be adjourned. **Motion Carried 7-0.** The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Devereaux,  
Recording Secretary

[Signature]

Secretary, Board of Education

Date Approved _6/10/2019_