

School Consolidation History

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School consolidation issues and their implications for Clover Valley High School and North Shore Elementary were the subject of a report made by Alvin Ness, St. Louis County Superintendent, to the Clover Valley Community Council in November 1968.

In 1967 the Minnesota Legislature passed a law requiring school consolidation with the chief objective of the 1967 law “to equalize the education opportunities of all children” (The Landmarks I, 4, p1). Ness reported on Proposal No. 4 which had the most support by county school boards and advisory committees. The proposal would make a new independent district out of what had been Unorganized Territory. (The term “Unorganized Territory” indicates an area in which local government either does not exist or exists in a rudimentary form.) Clover Valley High School and North Shore Elementary would be included in a new independent district.

The Landmarks article reported some problems with this proposal. North Shore Elementary did not have a kindergarten program; Clover Valley High School did not offer foreign languages. Adding both would cost an estimated \$189,000.

Two further problems were identified: 1) the new independent district encompassed a great amount of low value property and practically no industrial or commercial property. There was also much tax exempt property in the district. 2) 95% of the students living in the new district rode to school and transportation costs were much higher than other districts in the county. Given these problems, Ness proposed the state should furnish 75% of the funds necessary so the people living in this new independent district would not be taxed beyond their means in order to be assured of an acceptable educational program for their children.

In 1967, informative meetings had been held for those residents interested in the consequences of this redistricting plan. Parents of North Shore Elementary children favored, by a significant margin, joining Lake County School District. On the other hand, 59% of Clover Valley High School parents favored joining Lake County School District, and 41% the Duluth school system.

In September 1970 members of the Clover Valley community who represented both North Shore Elementary and Clover Valley High School sent a letter to the Board of (St. Louis) County Commissioners notifying the Board the community favored consolidation with Lake County. Clover Valley Community members had canvassed local as well as regional educators who said a larger facility (Two Harbors schools) would be “more economical and advantageous to the children.” Anticipating objections on the part of Lake County residents to consolidation, Clover Valley parents also pointed out that the Lake County School System would benefit from increased enrollments with the addition of students from Clover Valley and North Shore Elementary. Also, Clover Valley was located in the Two Harbors area; “the southernmost boundary of the McQuade Road is about the same distance from Two Harbors as that of Gooseberry Falls, a distance of 14 miles.”

The Landmarks, January 1970, published the Lake County Superintendent of Schools denial of the proposed consolidation. Among the reasons given were: 1) the inability to handle 200 additional pupils in the Two Harbors High School in September 1971, and 2) public opposition to consolidation. The superintendent did state "my personal feeling is that consolidation would be a mutually beneficial thing in the long haul."

A public hearing was held in September 1970 by the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners to discuss the resolution to attach a portion of St. Louis County Unorganized School District to Independent School District No. 381, Lake County. The Minnesota Board of Education approved this resolution. Subsequently, a Two Harbors resident filed suit on the behalf of Lake County taxpayers to block the merger. The resident acknowledged the group he spoke for stood in opposition to their own school board and school officials.

In December 1973 the Minnesota Supreme Court upheld the merger of Clover Valley High School and North Shore Elementary with the Lake County School District. Clover Valley High School graduated its last class in May 1974. North Shore Elementary came under the jurisdiction of Lake Superior School District in 1974. In the fall of 2002, under the authorization of the Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center, North Shore Elementary became North Shore Community School, a member of the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools. North Shore Community School serves students pre- K to grade 6.