



PUBLIC SESSION MINUTES

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mr. Richard Young, President

Mrs. Jane Luciano, Vice President

Ms. Leslie Dee

Mrs. Sharon DeVito

Mr. Vito Galluccio

Mr. Thomas Halm

Mr. Craig Heilman

Mrs. Lisa Temple

Mr. Scott Veisz

SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Kathleen A. Foster

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

Dr. Kim Tew

SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR / BOARD SECRETARY

Ms. Beth Brooks

ROBBINSVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
PUBLIC SESSION AGENDA

March 26, 2018

I. CALL TO ORDER PUBLIC MEETING

President Rich Young called the March 26, 2018 special meeting of the Robbinsville Board of Education to order at 7:02 PM. He read the *Statement of Public Meetings and Adherence to School Ethics Act* and led the flag salute.

Mr. Young issued the following statement.

Thank you all for coming. Budgetary discussions are not necessarily the most exciting school event to be a part of, but this is really one of the most important nights of the year for a school district. What we do in terms of funding will provide direction for how our district moves forward financially and programmatically for the coming year.

About 10 days ago, I was disappointed once again to learn that our district and our taxpayers are getting a subpar increase in state funding for education. As of the moment, in total, we're slated to receive about \$3 Million dollars in the next fiscal year, but that's far smaller than the \$9 million that we should receive under the state's so-called fair funding formula. Next year, under the Governor's proposed budget, we are slated for a 5% increase in state aid, which totals about \$156,000. This is far less than what some of our neighboring peers are getting...including a 13.4% increase in Princeton and a 9% increase in West Windsor.

I'm sure that somewhere in the State's Bureaucracy, there is some make believe justification for this 5 percent increase. Regardless of what it is, in my personal opinion, it's just wrong. We should be getting \$9 million and we're getting about one third of that. Unfortunately, for another year, the burden falls on our taxpayers. For another year, we're being asked to come up with new and creative ways to manage our growing district's budget and while maintaining great programs for children. And for another year, we're challenged with being mindful of number the one concern that I hear from residents – ever increasing school taxes.

I can tell you that once again, we have a growing committee of very dedicated administrators, board members and residents who are willing to commit their time and effort to go to Trenton to argue for more. That group was successful last year in bringing in an additional \$600,000 – on top of what was originally proposed. We need them to do so again. We also need to reach out individually and collectively to our State representatives – Senator Linda Greenstein and Assembly members Wayne DeAngelo and Dan Benson. We need them to do their part to ensure that our district is not left behind.

In the meantime, our board and our administrators have spent many, many hours over the past few weeks literally looking line by line at our budget and trying to come up with solutions that meet several critical needs, including the implementation of new security measures, a new guidance counselor, a new program for children who have special needs or emotional issues and more.

What you'll see tonight is a budget proposal that has reductions many line items including continuing education, travel, supplies and in other areas. This budget does not reduce full time head count and helps us to maintain appropriate and workable class sizes.

We're also unveiling several new, proposed partnerships or shared-service agreements with our town. I believe this is the start of an enhanced pathway of working together with our municipal leaders in new, uncharted ways. We need to work hard to ensure that this partnership continues. We need to look at ways of doing even more.

To be frank and open, this proposed budget includes a tax levy increase. I don't believe anyone at this table takes pride in that. The biggest part of the increase was a new teacher contract that this board believes will help reduce the number of teachers who've been leaving our district each year for new, high paying opportunities that are found just a few miles down the road.

In a couple of minutes, our business administrator will outline our latest proposal. Following that, members of the board will be offered another opportunity to ask questions. The public will have an opportunity to provide us with their feedback as well.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Dee	Present	Mr. Galluccio	Present	Mrs. Temple	Present
Mrs. DeVito	Present	Mr. Heilman	Present	Mr. Veisz	Present
Mr. Halm	Present	Mr. Luciano	Arrived 7:06 PM	Mr. Young	Present

III. 2018-2019 PRELIMINARY BUDGET PRESENTATION

Dr. Foster and Ms. Brooks provided the budget presentation and detailed the district's fiscal forecast for the 2018-2019 school year. The average Robbinsville homeowner (with a home value of \$375,000) is looking at a tax increase of \$62.86 for the year. They discussed the impact of living within a mandated cap of 2% combined with state aid that continues to remain flat in a time when enrollment continues to rise. Since March 2013 the district has seen an increase of 304 students. The district plans to maintain current programs and extra-curricular offerings and will offer a new behavioral health program at the high school. While the Chromebook initiative will be scaled back, the district will purchase one new small school bus and add two new SROs. An architect's fee for a new Energy Savings Improvement Plan is also included.

Board members discussed the unique fiscal challenges facing Robbinsville Schools. As a high performing district, the Board is proud of the district's continued efforts to do more with less. Board members discussed a variety of topics related to the budget including how best to plan for the future, the possibility of reinstating the district's lawsuit with the state over the lack of equitable funding, continued enrollment growth, shared services with the township and banking excess unused cap. The Board expressed appreciation to Dr. Foster and Ms. Brooks for scheduling a special meeting for the presentation.

IV. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

A. DEBBIE BAER

Ms. Baer indicated that adding money to the salary guide was a good idea. She also said that the amount of money teachers are allocated for supplies (\$150) does not go far and urged the Board to look at the disparity among I districts. Ms. Baer also mentioned that NJEA is working consistently behind the scenes to encourage full school funding.

B. JANICE SADULA

Mrs. Sadula asked why when the district per pupil spending is so low, is the cost of extra-curriculars so high. Mrs. Luciano pointed out that kids develop a myriad of skills by participating in extra-curricular activities, i.e., leadership skills, empathy, social and emotional skills that make a difference.

C. MIKE MCGOWAN

Mr. McGowan said that the district will have to sue the state and, if successful, could possibly be reimbursed for legal fees.

D. NOUSHIN KANANI

Mrs. Kanani asked if the district could meet with the new state officials regarding the funding dilemma. Mrs. DeVito said that the district has met five times within the past eight years and no one at the state level can adequately explain the inequity. Mr. Halm added that Robbinsville is politically insignificant so state officials are not motivated to help.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Mrs. Luciano and seconded by Ms. Dee, the Robbinsville Board of Education voted to adjourn the March 26, 2019 special meeting at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Brooks
School Business Administrator / Board Secretary