



MINUTES

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Mr. Steven J. Mayer

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Kathleen A. Foster

SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR / BOARD SECRETARY

Mr. Robert M. DeVita

ROBBINSVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

March 18, 2010

I. CALL TO ORDER PUBLIC MEETING

President Mike Reca called the March 18, 2010 Special Meeting of the Robbinsville Board of Education to order at 7:08 PM.

II. STATEMENT OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

The New Jersey Open Public Meeting Law was enacted to insure the rights of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this act, the Robbinsville Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time and place thereof posted in the Trenton Times and the Township of Robbinsville Bulletin Board. In addition, this notice was faxed to the Trenton Times and posted at Windsor School, Sharon School, Pond Road Middle School and Robbinsville High School.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. ROLL CALL

Mrs. Silvestrov was absent. All other Board members were present. Also present were Superintendent Steven J. Mayer, Assistant Superintendent Kathleen A. Foster, School Business Administrator Robert M. De Vita and Board Attorney Matthew Giacobbe.

V. DISCUSSION – 2010-2011 Budget

Board members expressed frustration with the anticipated impact the Governor's cuts in state aid will have on district programs and noted that aid in the mandated areas of Transportation and Special Education has also been slashed. This led to questions regarding the legality of aid reductions to programs required by statute.

VI. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

A. Debbie Muench

Mrs. Muench expressed her appreciation to the Board and administration for their efforts on the referendum.

B. Mike Morton

Mr. Morton indicated that he agrees with the Governor's ideas and suggested cutting salaries to save jobs.

C. John Ruch

Mr. Ruch thanked the Board and administrators for their referendum efforts and noted that the district is still in need of a long-term solution to the overcrowding situation. In addition, Mr. Ruch indicated

that the Governor's actions – imposing unparalleled cuts in aid with virtually no notice – have been nothing short of irresponsible. He suggested the district consider exceeding the budget cap this year.

VII. DISCUSSION

Superintendent Steven Mayer echoed Mr. Ruch's sentiments. He agreed that executing the necessary and unprecedented budget reductions within the state-required time frame is a monumental task and one which requires thoughtful consideration. He provided a review of initial budget priorities established by the Board in November and noted that in addition to a continued enrollment increase, as the lowest spending district in Mercer County Robbinsville has an ongoing track record of responsible spending – currently \$4.1 Million below the what the state defines as adequate for a thorough and efficient education.

Faced with an aid reduction of \$1.7 Million, Mr. Mayer stated that he does not think it fair to pass the entire burden on to the community and pointed toward a goal of exploring all options and meeting half-way. Due to a recent re-evaluation performed by the township it is difficult to translate a potential tax increase (in terms of the number of cents on the dollar) that the decrease in state aid will pose to taxpayers. Prior to the Governor's release of aid figures however, the average homeowner was facing an approximate increase of 5 cents on the dollar, or \$200. This calculation was based on the average home value of \$400,000.

Board Attorney Matthew Giacobbe expressed apprehension about the Governor's plan to cut aid to programs that are state mandated (Transportation and Special Education) and Board members agreed that it is in the district's and community's best interest to pursue this concern legally. Therefore if the legislature passes the state budget, the district will likely file an injunction against the state for imposing cuts to these programs.

The Board created a list of potential reductions / options to offset the additional slash in state aid:

Idea	Potential Savings / Revenue
Add entire \$1.7M to Tax Impact	\$1.7Million
Introduce half-day Kindergarten / Close Windsor	\$325,000
Charge for full-day Kindergarten	\$300,000
Increase Student Activities Fees per season or activity	\$ 25,000
Charge for Graduation Tickets, etc.	\$5,000
Develop an RFP for Cell Tower Income	\$100,000
Billboard at Turnpike property (Sharon School)	\$ 25,000
Raise advertising revenue	\$25,000
Secure corporate funding & grant opportunities	Unknown
Shift Kindergarten Starting Age	\$65,000
Reduce staff by 32 Teachers	\$1.7 Million
Safety Busing	Unknown

Idea	Potential Savings / Revenue
Reduce benefits costs for Instructional Assistants	\$ 100,000
Increase fees for facility rental	Unknown
Outsource all custodial, maintenance, secretarial staff	Unknown
Eliminate School Resource Officer	\$44,000
Eliminate all clubs / athletics	\$1,077,885
Eliminate modular classrooms and increase class size	\$102,000
Stop curriculum development	\$24,000
Salary freeze for all employees	\$750,000 - \$800,000

Regarding the idea pertaining to a salary freeze for all employees, Mr. Giacobbe recommended that the district adhere to the premise of abiding by the contract. As one way to meet the new budget constraints, the district will consider the elimination 16 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. This will equate to half of the \$1.7 Million decrease in aid. Mr. Giacobbe recommended that the district move ahead with this plan, notifying employees by May 15, 2010. If, at that point in time, the Association agrees to reopen the contract to negotiate salary freeze, the district will then be in a position of bringing back the 16 employees.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Mike Morton

Mr. Morton made a recommendation to eliminate Kindergarten for all district children and to ask employees to contribute to the cost of health care.

B. Elizabeth Borsuk

As a Kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Borsuk pointed to studies which conclude that children without access to kindergarten suffer from large-scale learning gaps in comparison to their kindergarten educated peers. She stated that eliminating kindergarten would adversely affect the children of Robbinsville.

C. Richard Kasper

Mr. Kasper suggested that the district explore corporate grant opportunities to generate revenue.

IX. DISCUSSION

School Business Administrator Robert De Vita posed a question to the Board and asked how far the Board wanted to go in expanding the tax levy. Board members agreed that they are left with no choice but to pass on a portion of the decrease in state aid to residents. It was noted that Robbinsville is facing a watershed moment; specifically that the erosion of the educational system will directly result in the erosion of home values.

Mr. Mayer stated that all district administrators have agreed to a salary freeze for the 2010-2011 school year.

Mr. Reca appointed Mrs. Boyne to fill a vacant seat on the Negotiations Committee.

X. ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Mrs. DeVito and seconded by Mrs. Potter, the Board voted to adjourn the March 18, 2010 Special Meeting at 9:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert M. De Vita
School Business Administrator / Board Secretary