

Regular Meeting

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of the Northport-East Northport Union Free School District was held on Monday evening, March 9, 2009, beginning at 6:30 p.m., in the Library at Northport High School, 154 Laurel Hill Road, Northport, New York, with Mrs. Arlene S. Munson, President, opening the meeting and presiding.

Members present: Mr. Warren S. Arthur, Mrs. Liz Dragone, Mr. Joe Gannon, Mr. Rob Ingraham, Mr. Steven A. Meyerowitz, Mrs. Arlene S. Munson, Dr. Kay Hutchins Sato (arrived at 9:00 p.m.), Mr. Stephen V. Waldenburg, Jr., Mrs. Karen Wills

Members absent: None

Also present: Dr. Marylou McDermott, Superintendent of Schools

1. President Munson called the meeting to order.

Motion was made by Trustee Wills, seconded by Trustee Ingraham, to convene in Executive Session to discuss a personnel issue.

Unanimously carried by those present.

At 7:50 p.m., motion was made by Trustee Arthur, seconded by Trustee Gannon, to reconvene in public session in the library at Northport High School.

Unanimously carried by those present.

Public attendance: There were approximately 80 persons present.

2. Mrs. Munson led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance; and
3. Pointed out the emergency exits.
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES, TREASURER'S REPORT AND MONTHLY SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS

Motion was made by Trustee Waldenburg, seconded by Trustee Ingraham, to approve all items under 4.1:

- 4.1 Minutes
 - 4.1.1 Regular Meeting, February 23, 2009

Unanimously carried by those present.

Motion was made by Trustee Ingraham, seconded by Trustee Dragone, to approve all items under 4.2:

- 4.2 Treasurer's Report and Monthly Summary of Receipts and Disbursements:
 - 4.2.1 Treasurer's Report for the period January 1 - January 31, 2009
 - 4.2.2 Monthly Summary of Receipts and Disbursements for January 2009

Unanimously carried by those present.

4.2.3 For Information: Claim's Auditors Report for Warrants and Schedule of Claims for periods ending December 29, 2008, January 5, January 9, January 15, January 23, and January 30, 2009.

5. SPECIAL REPORTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

5.1 Accomplishments of Staff and Students

5.1.1 Ms. Jennifer Nesfield, Chairperson of World Languages K-12, introduced senior Christian Velasco, the English Language Learner Student of the Month. Ms. Nesfield stated that Christian is a natural language learner with a keen intellect who is curious about the world and contemplative about life. Ms. Nesfield commented that Christian has demonstrated that he not only wants to succeed in his English language classes, but in his native language as well. During his time at Northport High School, Christian has taken level four IB Spanish and Advanced Placement Spanish and was inducted into the World Language Honor Society. Christian's teachers have commented that he is a responsible contributor to his family, and works a full-time job while maintaining a challenging academic schedule.

The President of the Board and the Superintendent congratulated Christian on his accomplishments and presented him with a commendation from the Board.

5.1.2 Mr. Peter Falotico, Director of Art, Media and Computer, introduced high school sculpture teacher Rich Nunziato and Sculpture III student, Colby Grace. Colby was contacted by Northport Village Trustee Tom Kehoe to create a bronze, life size veterans memorial sculpture to be permanently placed at Northport Village Park and will be unveiled on Memorial Day.

5.2 For Information: Trustee Dragone presented a brief report summarizing the New York State School Boards Association "State Issue Conference" which she attended on March 1-3 in Albany, NY. Trustee Dragone stated that many speakers discussed the state mandates and working with legislators to give school districts relief. Other issues discussed were achievement gaps in education, foundation aid, the state's fiscal challenge and year to year budget process, and charter schools. Trustee Dragone urged community members to contact local legislators regarding two issues that will have a huge impact on local taxpayers. The Governor's proposed budget will shift preschool education costs currently paid through federal, state and county funds to local districts which would cost districts in Suffolk County over \$12 million and districts in Nassau County over \$11.6 million. The second issue is the proposed MTA payroll tax on all employers in the MTA region. This new payroll tax will cost the Northport-East Northport School District an additional \$255,000. Trustee Dragone stated that the federal stimulus money will come with guidelines on how that money is to be distributed.

Dr. McDermott stated that the District's website will provide a link to contact information of all local legislators for the community.

5.3 Superintendent's proposed budget for 2009-2010

Dr. Marylou McDermott, Superintendent of Schools, presented the proposed general fund budget which was developed in compliance with the Board's direction at its January 26, 2009 meeting. Dr. McDermott stated that the proposed budget of \$147,492,351 reflected a budget to budget increase of 2.94% and a 4.34% tax increase. The projected spending level includes maintaining the current program with extension of the kindergarten instructional day by 30 minutes. With the reallocation of funds the budget includes increased bandwidth to meet technological needs, and online interactive learning and Regent review for every 8th through 12th grader.

Dr. McDermott stated that the budget process began with the anticipated State Aid loss of \$895,215 and modifications to the 2009-2010 budget could include the partial or full restoration of State Aid and the impact of the Federal stimulus package.

Dr. McDermott reviewed the unfunded State and Federal mandates and the District's ongoing economies and efficiencies. Dr. McDermott also delineated the proposed districtwide reductions for 2009-2010, for a total reduction of \$1,089,246.

Dr. McDermott stated that the budget will be reviewed line by line at the Board Meetings of March 16th and March 30th and there will be opportunity for questions. Dr. McDermott also stated that a notice will be put on the District's website stating when the budget books will be available for pickup.

There was a brief discussion by the Board regarding the proposed budget and several Board members thanked Dr. McDermott and the staff for maintaining the integrity of the programs offered while finding efficiencies during these difficult economic times.

The President of the Board opened up discussion to the audience community members.

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Comment</u> |
|--|---|
| Kevin McGrath Resident | Thanked Dr. McDermott for following his suggestion of taking a salary freeze and asked the Superintendent to talk with the unions and ask them to do the same. |
| Jean Baron Resident | Asked about the \$100,000 in healthcare savings and if the teacher's contract was opened up again and renegotiated. |
| President Munson responded that the contract is a multi-year contract with various healthcare contribution levels kicking in at different times. | |
| Eugene Leavy Resident | Asked the Board to consider utilizing zero based budgeting, and not to use the prior year's budget as the starting point of formulating the new budget. Mr. Leavy stated that the District should go back to the absolute priorities. |
| Joseph Sabia Resident | Stated that he has been a resident of the district for 32 years and he can no longer afford the taxes. Mr. Sabia stated that young people can not afford to live on Long Island. Mr. Sabia suggested that District hire an independent auditor to look at where waste is in the District. Mr. Sabia stated that he does not want his tax dollars going outside of the District. |
| Dr. Nina Dorata Audit Committee Member | Read a letter to the Board and inquired regarding the inclusion pilot program at the high school level and where those funds are coming from. Dr. Dorata stated that underutilized discretionary fixed costs are excessive costs and should be eliminated from the budget. Dr. Dorata suggested the district consider doing zero-based review sequentially by department. Dr. Dorata also suggested that the departmental presentations include an evaluation of how efficiently tax dollars are being utilized. Dr. Dorata stated that unless there is a tax rate decrease it is probable that a negative vote will prevail. |
| Noel Brereton Resident | Stated that there are over 900 homes in foreclosure in the community and the unemployment rate in December was the highest since 1949. Mr. Brereton stated that the budget crisis is only going to get worse and that deeper cuts need to be made. Mr. Brereton stated that the quality of the programs and how money is spent need to be reviewed |

Audience Member Asked what the tax rate would be for an austerity budget.

Mr. Blake, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Business, stated that the contingency budget cap is 4%, but there are many laws, rules and regulations that come with it.

Carina Ranieri
SEPTA Thanked the Board for voting to extend the inclusion program to the 11th and 12th grades and asked Mr. Lynch to address how that will affect the taxpayers.

Mr. Lynch, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services, stated that the special education budget is based on number of children in the special education program. The children in the 11th and 12th grades would have been in self-contained classes or resource room classes with indirect teachers services, but with the pilot program those children will be shifted to general inclusion classrooms at no additional cost.

Eugene Leavy
Resident Stated that when you work from last year's budget all the increases are permanently in the budget and the Board needs to come up with actual reductions, find out what programs can be cut and start with a zero based budget. Mr. Leavy stated he thinks the budget will be voted down even though the contingency budget will be more.

Dave Ambro
Resident Asked for clarification of the 4.34% increase cited in the presentation, if that is the tax rate or the tax levy, and what the tax rate and levy will go to and from.

Mr. Larry Blake stated he does not have that information but it will be within the budget book and the 4.34% is the projected tax rate increase.

Dr. McDermott stated that the rate is reflective of the \$895,215 reduction in state aid, but if the state aid is restored the rate will go down to 3.64%.

Noel Brereton
Resident Asked if the District has a five year strategic plan to handle the decrease in home value, tax grievances and the reduction in revenues.

Dr. McDermott stated that the District is continuing to take a comprehensive look at every program to see if further reductions can be implemented. Dr. McDermott also stated that if there is a reduced number of students the district may lose some positions through attrition.

Richard Van Dyke
Resident Inquired about the expenditures for bandwidth and cameras.

Dr. McDermott stated that the bandwidth is a reallocation of funds. Dr. McDermott stated that there is not enough bandwidth to cover educational programs as well as administrating the buildings. The increase in bandwidth is looking toward the future and planning ahead.

Denise Mumm
Resident Stated that a five or seven year plan can be done and would hope the Board would contemplate doing it, asked if the Board thought zero based budgeting was a good idea, and if the District had strategic planning for required GASB45 reserve fund.

The President of the Board stated that the District cannot create a reserve for the GASB45 fund.

Armand D'Accordo
Resident Asked if the contingency cap of 4% is based on the inflation rate for the prior year. Mr. D'Accordo also stated that revenue cannot be predicted but expenditures can 100% be predicted and you can control expenses.

Mr. Blake, stated that the contingency cap by law is 120% of the inflation rate, so the cap by New York State Law is 4%, based on specific formulas. The cap relates to the budget that is defeated taking out debt service, capital projects, interfund transfers and new equipment.

Brian Murphy
Resident Stated that by doing itemized budget the Board is validating decisions made in past as continuous improvement, but in three years they may not be the right decision. If the Board went through and looked at every item, reallocated funds and had substantial cuts, that would lend credibility and transparency to the process.

The President of the Board thank everyone for the comments and asked them to continue to come to the meetings.

5.4 The President of the Board announced the upcoming Board of Education meetings of March 16th, March 30th, and April 15th. The detailed budget discussions will be held on March 16th and March 30th. A preliminary public hearing will be held on April 15th to receive additional input from the public on the budget.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

6.1 Letter from Ms. Amy Connor, received March 3, 2009, re: Proposed cut to Investigate Program. Ms. Connor was not present to address her letter.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Comment</u> |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Andrew Rapiejko Resident | Stated that on September 8, 2008 a motion was made by Trustee Meyerowitz, seconded by Trustee Dragone, directing the superintendent to consult with the District's attorney to prepare a draft policy regarding asbestos abatement and that no such projects will be undertaken while students or staff on in the building. Mr. Rapiejko asked if that policy will be prepared. |

Dr. McDermott stated that Ms. Sadowsky is going to prepare a Board of Education policy regarding asbestos abatement and the District's concerns.

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| Tim Madden Parent | Inquired about the Investigate Program and the possible elimination of the first grade section because of the number of students in the program and to what extent the kindergarten teachers are trained in identifying students who have certain abilities. |
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Ms. Carol Anderson Hoffmann, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, stated that the program is not being eliminated and that a decision has not been made yet. There has been discussion about offer an enrichment program in each of the elementary schools for all first graders. Ms. Anderson Hoffmann stated that it is quite unusual for a teacher recommendation to keep a child out of the program.

In response to a question from a Board member, Dr. McDermott stated that this was only a recommendation at the administrative level and the cost would be the same for either program.

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| Jean Baron Resident | Inquired about the feasibility study regarding the full day kindergarten. Ms. Baron also state that she spoke with the state auditor who stated that RFPs should go out for professional services and asked when the last time an RFP was sent out for legal services. |
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Dr. McDermott stated that the District received the final copy and it could be emailed to anyone who wants it.

Trustee Arthur stated the Board adopted a policy where the District does not go out for bid regarding doctors or lawyers.

Armand D'Accordo Resident Stated that he spoke to the state auditor also and you are not required to take the lowest bidder.

Courtney DeBrino Parent Stated she was concerned about the possible change to the first grade Investigate Program and adding to the responsibilities of the first grade teachers. Ms. DeBrino is concerned that the change will not foster growth. Ms. DeBrino encouraged the Board members to attend the GTPA meeting on March 23rd.

Mrs. Munson stated that the Board will not make any frivolous decisions in offering the best possible education for every child.

8. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT, GENERAL - FOR BOARD ACTION

Motion was made by Trustee Meyerowitz, seconded by Trustee Sato, to approve all items under 8. and 9., including Supplemental 8.1.2 (Schedule B, #7) and 8.3:

8.1 Personnel Schedules, each dated March 9, 2009, and each attached and made part of the official minutes:

- 8.1.1 Schedule A - Certified Staff
- 8.1.2 Schedule B - Non-Instructional Staff (including Supplemental Schedule B, #7)
- 8.1.3 Schedule C - Salary Transfers
- 8.1.4 Schedule D - Extra Pay

8.2 Authorizing the administration to survey the community to determine the extent of need for a school breakfast program for the 2009-2010 school year.

8.3 Approving the revised Special Education Plan 2007-2009 which reflects the expansion of the inclusion program at Northport High School to include 11th and 12th grades.

9. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT, FINANCIAL - FOR BOARD ACTION

9.1 Approving the following change orders:

9.1.1 Change Order No. 1, East Northport Middle School, SED No. 58-04-04-03-7-999-003, increase in the amount of \$9,200.

9.1.2 Change Order No. 2, Fifth Avenue Elementary School, SED No. 58-04-04-03-7-999-003, increase in the amount of \$2,300.

9.2 Authorizing the Board President to sign a contract with the following district to provide Health Services for Northport-East Northport students attending school in that district during the 2008-2009 school year:

9.2.1 Jericho Union Free School District, 14 students attending Long Island Lutheran and 2 students attending Solomon Schechter @ \$872.59, totaling \$13,961.44

9.3 Approving the attached Special Education Services Contract for the 2008-2009 school year between Northport-East Northport Union Free School District and Half Hollow Hills Central School District.

9.4 Approving the attached Special Education Services Contract for the 2008-2009 school year between Northport-East Northport Union Free School District and Greenburgh-North Castle Union Free School District.

9.5 Receiving the following donation to the District:

9.5.1 Thirty pedometers per school from Heart Links Project at Stony Brook University to be used in the physical education classes as well as various clubs and school activities, and one Dance, Dance Revolution game that will be shared amongst the district physical education programs, value estimated to be \$2,890.

9.6 Authorizing the administration to apply for the following ExxonMobile Education Alliance Grant:

9.6.1 \$750 which will allow Ocean Avenue Elementary School to enhance their current math and science programs.

9.7 Approving transfer of general fund appropriations in the 2008-2009 budget.

Vote on Trustee Meyerowitz's motion to approve all items under 8. and 9., including Supplemental 8.1.2 (Schedule B) and 8.3, was unanimously carried.

10. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT - FOR INFORMATION ONLY

10.1 Student Activity Account Reports for January 2009 from:

- 10.1.1 Northport High School
- 10.1.2 East Northport Middle School
- 10.1.3 Northport Middle School

10.2 Schedule H - Use of Facilities

10.3 School Facility Report Cards

10.4 Schedule I - Home Instruction

10.5 Investment Report for January, 2009

10.6 Monthly Revenue & Budget Status Report as of January 2009

11. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

12. NEW BUSINESS

There being no further business to discuss at this time, motion was made by Trustee Meyerowitz, seconded by Trustee Sato, to adjourn the meeting.

Unanimously carried.

At 10:20 p.m., the Chair declared the meeting adjourned.

Beth M. Nystrom
District Clerk

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