

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
HELD ON MARCH 4, 2013
HAMILTON TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Mays Landing, New Jersey
William Davies Middle School Library**

The Special Meeting of the Hamilton Township Board of Education was called to order at 7:01 p.m. in the Michael H. Duberson Memorial Library at the Davies Middle School by Dr. Anne Erickson, President. **Call To Order**

Dr. Erickson led the Pledge of Allegiance. **Pledge of Allegiance**

ANNUAL NOTICE OF MEETING

This meeting is being held in compliance with the Sunshine Law, having been advertised in the Press of Atlantic City and the Atlantic County Record and a notice posted with the Township Clerk on the Bulletin Board at the following locations: Mizpah Social Services Center, Mizpah Post Office, Mays Landing Post Office, Atlantic County Library as well as all the schools of the district. A mechanical device is being used to record this meeting.

The following members answered roll call: Mrs. Peggy Capone, Mrs. Amelia Francis, Mrs. Barbara Kupp, Mr. Mark Ludwick, Mrs. Kim Melton, Mr. John Sacchinelli, and Dr. Anne Erickson **Roll Call**

Members Absent: Mr. Eric Aiken and Mr. Carl Anderson

Also present Dr. Michelle Cappelluti: Superintendent of Schools
were: Mr. Dan Smith, Board Secretary

2013-2014 Budget Workshop

Mr. Smith reviewed the PowerPoint presentation that was distributed to the Board. Dr. Cappelluti then gave an overview of budget changes that have been made over the last five years. She noted that the district was devastated in 2010-2011 when the State made extreme cuts to State Aid. She noted that we are still without many items that were cut from the budget.

Mr. Ludwick noted that we are \$385,000 short if we stay level. He asked Dr. Cappelluti what would be cut if we did not increase the levy. Dr. Cappelluti noted that we would have to cut staff since there are no real big ticket items to cut. Mr. Ludwick asked if we would lose staff members and the enrichment teacher at Hess. Dr. Cappelluti said yes.

Mrs. Capone asked how we are down 1.5 administrators. Dr. Cappelluti noted that

we eliminated 2 administrators in the curriculum department. She also asked when we lost preschool teachers. Dr. Cappelluti noted that we lost the teachers when we reduced the preschool program due to a loss of funding.

Mrs. Capone asked about not replacing two full-time secretaries at the Hess School. Dr. Cappelluti noted that the positions were reduced to part-time status as part of the budget cuts in prior years.

Mrs. Kupp asked about freezing all spending in the current year and utilizing some of the funds for next years budget. Dr. Cappelluti noted that we would have to look into that but most of the principals have already spent most of their budgets.

Mrs. Capone asked how much the teacher of social success position costs the district. Mr. Smith replied \$66,000 with benefits. Mrs. Capone asked how many coaches we had. Dr. Cappelluti noted that we have three literacy coaches in the budget. Mrs. Kupp stated that we are spending over \$200,000 for coaches and they are not teaching the students. She noted that she would trade the teacher of social success position for a BSI teacher at Shaner.

Dr. Cappelluti noted that the teacher of social success program is needed at Shaner and is doing great things. Dr. Erickson noted that the students at Hess are getting more services, and the students at Shaner should be getting the same services. She also noted that we need more resources in the classroom; like the BSI position. Dr. Cappelluti noted that the teacher of social success program was started to help teachers that were in need of help at the school.

Dr. Erickson stated that she would like to see the part-time ESL teacher become full-time and add a part-time BSI teacher for Shaner.

Mrs. Capone asked about the network switch and if the public knows the cost; \$95,000. Mr. Smith noted that the switch will replace the current switch at Davies; which controls the entire district. The price also includes installation, support, mounts, and things like that. Mrs. Capone would like a second opinion on the switch. Dr. Cappelluti noted that it has been cut from the budget the last few years.

Mrs. Kupp asked if the athletics and co-curricular in the budget maintain what we have now. Dr. Cappelluti responded yes.

Mrs. Capone asked about the vehicle budgeted for the maintenance department. Dr. Cappelluti responded that it will replace the van used by the courier. Mrs. Capone noted we should look into purchasing a used vehicle.

Mrs. Capone asked about the Automatic Temperature Control System. Mr. Ludwick noted that there is one wing left at Hess that needs to be done. This will complete the project.

Mrs. Kupp asked if we are keeping the class sizes the same. Dr. Cappelluti responded yes.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked if the gym floor project was in the budget. Mr. Ludwick stated that the funds are coming from the capital reserve account. Mr. Sacchinelli noted that we can receive a reimbursement from the State if we proceed with the project and finish the floor. Mr. Smith noted that we are not required to complete the project just because it is in the budget. Dr. Erickson stated that she would like the facilities committee to review the project and have a definite answer on moving forward.

Mrs. Capone stated that she is against a tax increase, and she compared the increases over the years. The tax levy was around \$9 million in 2000 and now it is over \$19 million. A lot of families in our township cannot pay their taxes. An increase does not sound like a lot, but it accumulates over time. She thinks we can do a better job and spend less money. Mrs. Capone wants to offer more after school activities. She would like to see the students not do school work during lunch or recess, but after school. She believes there are positions that can be abolished and reallocate the funds elsewhere. She also noted that our budget is over \$48 million and it was \$31 million 12 years ago.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked what level cuts should come from. He noted last time paraprofessionals were cut. Mrs. Capone said that she does not want to cut any paraprofessionals. Mrs. Kupp stated she wants more services for the students but realizes we are not in a position to hire right now. She thinks we can utilize what we have a little better.

Dr. Cappelluti noted that school districts attract people to communities. We are doing a great job and the students are succeeding.

Mrs. Capone noted that we should shift resources around to better utilize our funds. Mr. Ludwick noted the items that were requested by the administration that are not in the budget. He noted that reallocating the funds does not cut the budget and reduce the tax levy. Mrs. Capone stated that she would not tell the Board what to cut, but she would like to see additional items in the budget that have been discussed for the last year.

Mr. Sacchinelli noted that we should add teachers to have more student contact time. He noted taking the three coaches and teacher of social success and putting them in the classroom. Dr. Erickson noted that we are at 51% free and reduced which means half of our students are struggling and \$50 is a lot for families in our district. Mr. Sacchinelli also noted that the economy of the township is bad and there are people who are struggling. He noted that we need to show the community how we are changing and show them what we are doing for the kids.

Mrs. Melton asked what the coaches do and can they do more. Dr. Cappelluti stated that the coaches could be weaned from their positions. Mrs. Melton noted that if we

reallocate the coaches we are still are saving money.

Dr. Erickson asked if we need the autistic teacher as a next step to the program. Dr. Cappelluti noted that the position would be at Shaner but we are not sure if we will have the students for a classroom.

The board discussed the possibility of shuffling staff around after the budget is approved. Mr. Ludwick stated that positions can be swapped out within the funds that are approved.

Mrs. Dagit provided information about the cuts made in the curriculum department in the past budget cuts. She also outlined what the coaches do on a regular basis. Mrs. Dagit also spoke about the upcoming requirements for teacher evaluation. Mrs. Francis asked how much interaction the coaches have with the students. Mrs. Dagit responded that the coaches work the equivalent of a period a day working with children. Mrs. Dagit noted it is about an hour a day. Mrs. Dagit also noted that we can adjust the schedules of the coaches to have more student contact time.

Mr. Ludwick noted that we need to make up \$385,000 in order to stay flat. He noted that moving staff around does not make up the difference. He asked how we are going to shuffle people around and still save money. Mrs. Capone stated that she voted against hiring an administrator this year. She stated that our enrollment has decreased and we added administration. Dr. Cappelluti stated that we did not add an administrator this past year. Mrs. Kupp stated that going to cap and leaving everything the same is not agreeable to her.

Mr. Ludwick noted that as a taxpayer he does not want to see his tax bill go up, but he also realizes that education is important. He stated that he needs to see in black and white what would be cut to make up the \$385,000 and he needs to see that before he decides not to raise taxes. Mrs. Melton agreed that she is willing to go to cap in order to improve the district.

Mrs. Kupp asked if 2% is our only option. Mr. Smith stated that the Board can choose anywhere from 0% to 2%. Mr. Sacchinelli clarified that if the tax levy stayed at the same level as it currently is, it would be a tax increase of 0.008 cents. He asked if going to 2% includes the .008 or is it in addition to. Mr. Smith noted that the .008 increase is included in the 2%, in the example it would be a \$16 increase and then an additional \$34 for a total of \$50.

Dr. Erickson suggested looking at our low performing kids and seeing which ones attend Kids Corner and maybe utilize that time to help those students. Dr. Cappelluti noted that the most effective way for the students to learn is their daily instruction in the classroom.

Mrs. Capone stated that she heard two arguments. One is to not have any after school activities at Shaner; which she is against. She feels the students at Shaner

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would benefit from after school activities. Dr. Cappelluti noted that we can do that. Mrs. Capone stated that the three year tax comparison shows a reduction in ratables, where did the information come from. Mr. Smith noted that the ratables have decreased and the information comes from the township. The township prepares those figures in January. Mrs. Capone also noted that the district will receive under adequacy aid from the State for spending less than other districts. She wanted to point that out to the Board.

Mrs. Capone asked how many secretaries we have in the district and where were we five years ago with secretaries. Mr. Smith noted that the current secretary roster was given to the Board, there are 24 secretaries. Mrs. Capone asked **if (Amended by Board motion March 26, 2013)** a secretary could be shared to save funds.

Mr. Ludwick asked Dr. Cappelluti to put together a plan as to what would be cut if we lost \$385,000. He would like to see this information at the next Board meeting. The Board can discuss the information at the next meeting.

Dr. Cappelluti thanked the Board for their participation; she felt it was a very good discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

Motioned by Dr. Erickson seconded by Mr. Ludwick to adjourn the meeting.

Voice Vote: All in favor: (7-0-0)

The Hamilton Township Board of Education meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Daniel Smith
Board Secretary