

Board of Education
Minutes
Town Meeting
January 21, 2010

The meeting was called to order by President Webb at 7:30 pm in the High School Alumni Room. Present were Trustees Berliner, Beyer, Genovesi, Kolkhorst, Pombar and Sharkey. Also present were Dr. Melnick, Ms. Buatsi and Mr. Chlebicki.

Executive Session

At 7:30 pm, on motion of Trustee Pombar seconded by Trustee Berliner and all in favor, the Board went into Executive Session in the high school faculty room for discussions regarding proposed, pending or current litigation and matters leading to the appointment of a corporation.

At 8:00 pm, on motion of Trustee Beyer seconded by Trustee Sharkey and all in favor, the Board moved to come out of Executive Session and resumed the regular meeting in the alumni room. There were approximately 60 people in the audience.

Pledge of Allegiance

President Webb led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Preliminary 2010-2011 Budget Proposal

Dr. Melnick presented the preliminary 2010-2011 budget proposal. Currently the budget stands at \$88,605,356.49 or a 5.88% increase over last year's budget. Dr. Melnick explained that this will be a very difficult year for school budgets. In past years for the district to maintain programs and meet its contractual and mandated obligations the average increase has been between 3.5% - 4%. However, the additional expense needed for the New York State Teacher's Retirement System of approximately \$830,000 brings this year's budget increase to over 5%. Dr. Melnick reviewed the components of the budget and explained 56% of the budget is for contractual obligations, 36% is for State and Federal mandates leaving only 8% for plant maintenance and special programs that are unique to North Shore. Due to the Board's prudent planning, much of the plant maintenance portion has been funded through a repair reserve fund which is why it has not been necessary to cut staff up until now. He went on to say that this budget proposal reflects no new programs; it only maintains what we currently have.

Trustee Webb thanked Dr. Melnick and Ms. Buatsi for the tremendous amount of work in preparing the budget. He also expressed his appreciation to the building principals, the administrative team and all individuals involved in putting together the final proposal. He asked for participation from everyone who was present to help Trustees decide what the community feels is important during this budget process. He went on to say that the role of the Board is to ensure our children receive the best education possible and to maintain strong schools.

Track & Field

Trustee Webb then reviewed the issue of replacing the track and field. He updated the public on the previous discussions the board has had in this regard. He explained that due to the deteriorating condition of the track it must be replaced within 3 years. He went on to say that our district has a very strong track program and the Board believes it is important to maintain it. He explained that if a record is set at our track it is not an official record because of its condition. If the track is replaced, the Board also needs to decide what, if anything, needs to be done to the field which has drainage problems; the drainage problems need to be addressed whether or not the field is replaced. If the decision is made to replace the track, it makes the most sense to replace the field at the same time so as not to damage the new track by running

construction trucks over it. The Board also feels an artificial turf field would be more beneficial as it would enable the district to get the most usage, which is an ongoing problem. The cost to replace the track with 8 lanes will be approximately \$1.8 million. The cost for replacing the field with a new drainage system and natural turf (sod) will be approximately \$450,000, to replace it with artificial turf (including the drainage system) will be approximately \$1.2 million; a difference of approximately \$750,000. Finally, he explained the possibilities for funding this project. The Board would like to add the track and field replacement to the list of projects in an already established capital reserve fund; this would make available funds that are currently in place. The balance needed for the project would be raised by private donations through a capital campaign. In order to utilize the funds in the capital reserve, the community must first give permission for the track and field replacement to be added to the list of projects already established; this can be done through a referendum during the May budget vote. The next step would be to ask the community for permission to spend the funds that are already in the reserve; this would again be done through a referendum and voted on one year later (May, 2011). Once receiving permission from the community, the State would need to approve the project and then the work can begin a year later. Trustee Webb reminded the public that funding in this way would mean no additional cost to the tax payer; funds are currently in the reserve from projects which were completed at a lower cost than anticipated. He asked the public to please ask any questions they may have in this regard or on any issue and then opened the floor for questions.

Dr. Melnick added that the capital reserve was established to avoid spikes in the budget. He reiterated this would be no additional cost to the tax payer nor would it be added to the budget. He explained that the funds are already in the reserve due to projects that were estimated to cost more than they actually did. He further stated that the track and drainage system were the pressing issues and the additional \$750,000 needed for an artificial turf field would be a project funded through the Viking Foundation.

Town Meeting

Meaghan Capobianco, Old Brookville, asked what other projects are on the list in the Capital Reserve and if there is enough money in the fund for these projects.

Ms. Buatsi listed the projects already in the capital reserve fund; most are complete, there are a few pending, but there is more than enough funds to pay for these projects. Trustee Webb added that these were projects to make the buildings more energy efficient and were done for less than originally budgeted. He also explained that these funds are regulated and there is no flexibility on how the funds can be used. Trustee Beyer added that the district is only allowed to expend funds for projects that are listed in the fund which is why we are not able to use the balance without adding the track and field as a project. Trustee Genovesi explained that the State does not allow the district to have a retirement reserve fund so there are no tools available to prepare for these large increases in retirements costs. Dr. Melnick added the recent issue of the Record Pilot complimented this Board for their active lobbying and he commended them for working hard behind the scenes to take some of the burden off home owners.

Andrew Cross, Glen Head asked if a scoreboard or lighting would be part of the field replacement.

Trustee Webb responded lights will not be part of the track and field project. He added the track is the most used facility by the community and the community could use the field when it is available. Dr. Melnick added the district policy does not allow adult teams to use the fields and there is no plan for a scoreboard. Trustee Pombar added there had been talks with the Town of Oyster Bay in regard to an artificial turf field which would have included lighting, however, this is a different approach. Trustee Webb clarified, the Board has been discussing

the need for a field for some time in order to meet our needs and although there were discussions with the Town of Oyster Bay, an offer was never made.

Dayanand Hedge, Old Brookville, asked why there was such a large increase in the budget for principals' salaries and for the special education directors' salaries.

Dr. Melnick responded the budget for principal salaries includes 2 high school assistant principals; one of those was previously the dean of students, a position which is part of the teacher's union. The individual who is in the position maintained the same salary and works an additional 2 months and extra hours, therefore this represents no additional cost to the district and in fact is offset by a decrease in the line for teachers' salaries. In the case of the special education director, the position of CSE Chairperson, also part of the teacher's union, was changed to an assistant director of special education; again, for the same salary but with a longer work day and year. This position is also offset by a decrease in special education teachers' salaries.

Mr. Hedge then asked about the large amount budgeted for special education.

Dr. Melnick explained it is required by federal and state law that all children ages 4-21 be provided a free and appropriate public education. If a student has multiple handicaps or special needs for which we do not have programs in district, we must find outside services and institutions including residential facilities. These services are all state mandated with no discretion. He added most of the increases in the instructional budget over the past 20 years have been in the special education budget. He went on to say that although these are required services, this district is committed to educating every child. He also added that these services are audited by three levels of auditors and the rates charged by outside agencies are approved by the state.

Trustee Webb added, we are struggling this year with what to present to the community and are committed to keep North Shore strong but it is difficult to make an accurate assessment of what the community wants and it would be helpful if the public gave the Board an idea of what they feel is important.

Theresa Simone, Glen Head, asked if the board considered adding solar panels to schools as a way of cutting costs.

Trustee Webb explained the district did look into this possibility 3 years ago and state and LIPA regulations did not make it practicable. However, this investigation led to the energy management contract which is saving us a substantial amount of money. Ms. Buatsi added we are working with LIPA on this issue and it may be a possibility for the school house. Dr. Melnick added state regulations prohibit us from selling back energy to LIPA. He went on to explain some of the cost saving measures the Board has taken including the energy management contract and the transportation depot. Having a district owned depot realizes approximately \$1 million in savings as well as the ability to contract with other districts to use our depot for their maintenance repairs; this will generate revenue.

Trustee Webb said the Board will pursue any idea residents may have for cost cutting and in addition to the cost savings initiatives already mentioned, we bid with consortiums to get the lowest prices available.

Ms. Simone suggested that things may have changed in the three years since the district looked into solar panels and there may now be an opportunity for use on commercial buildings. She also recommended looking into the possibility of using solar panels on the new Victorian Studio.

Trustee Webb responded if it will be economical the district will do it. He added we are a public school district committed to public education and the situation is forcing us to look at alternative ways to raise and save funds. A capital campaign to raise funds for the track and field proposal will serve as a test to see if we can raise funds in this way and what the impact will be.

Ms. Simone suggested there may be an opportunity here to lobby for green legislation.

Trustee Webb responded that we have begun to work with a grant writer who is looking at grant opportunities for the innovative things we are currently doing and things we would like to do. Dr. Melnick added we are just finishing a grant proposal for heating and cooling for the Victorian Studio; this structure was done without taxpayer funds.

Trustee Genovesi added this Board is leading the cause with other local boards to push for legislation to lessen the burden on the taxpayer. She went on to say that David Little the Director of Government Relations for NYSSBA, spoke to a group of local school representatives and community leaders to hear their concerns. The group will lobby together for the Senator Oppenheimer bill which would give BOCES the ability to provide additional shared services to school districts and to contract with other entities to achieve cost savings through consolidation of services. She went on to say the hope is to also push through legislation that will change the state law in regard to the requirement that school districts have available a seat on buses for every student eligible for transportation whether or not they use the bus. This creates situations where a bus must be run with empty seats. She requested that residents keep an eye out for a letter writing campaign.

Siobhan Falk, Sea Cliff, read the article in the Record Pilot and asked about lobbying efforts in Albany this March.

Trustee Webb explained the New York State School Boards Assn. will hold their annual conference in Albany in March; this is when lobbying occurs. However, he is hoping to contact our legislators sooner because the Albany event is basically a ritual. Dr. Melnick added the issues that regulate school property taxes lies in Albany & Washington. He went on to say there is a limit to what the district can control in regard to increase in costs and asked that all residents participate in a letter writing campaign; sample letters will be available on the website for convenience.

Trustee Beyer explained that every year Trustees hold informational budget gatherings and this year these gatherings have already begun in order for the Board to get feed back from the community early in the process. She went on to say it is very clear that significant cuts will have to be made and the unique piece Dr. Melnick referred to is the only piece the Board has discretion over. She added in order to make these tough decisions it is important to hear from residents about what they think is important; maintaining what we have, class size, breath of program, AP courses and the like. She stressed the importance for residents to share their thoughts with the Board so they are aware of the wants and needs of the community.

Doug Wefer, Glen Head, asked the Board to explain why we are in a unique position this year as opposed to previous years.

Trustee Webb responded that last year when the economy collapsed the district was in good financial shape, however the economy will continue to be a problem for another year or 2 and this can be a potential disaster for the district. Dr. Melnick explained the state's formula for contingency which results in a zero percent increase to the budget if it were to fail. With mandated expenses & the additional retirement contribution expense, we would be forced to cut \$4.9 million from the proposed budget and the only way to reduce the budget by that amount would be to lay off 30-50 positions; this would cause a significant difference in the way our children are educated.

Trustee Webb reported he just attended a NYSSBA conference and stated this is the major item of concern for all school districts. He wants the community to understand what we are facing and what the possible dismantling of our schools will mean for our kids. He said this Board understands the difficulty tax payers are facing and wants the community to know they represent the best of public education.

Terry Glassman, Old Brookville asked if athletics, after school programs and extra curricular programs would be affected in addition to having massive layoffs.

Dr. Melnick responded, if the budget were to fail, all extra curricular programs would be eliminated, only Regents courses would be offered and there would be a huge increase in class

size. Trustee Genovesi added the schools are the center of a community. The recent PRIDE report noted the presence of extra curricular opportunities for students reduces substance abuse among teens. She also asked the community to decide what they can support in a budget increase and to share their thoughts on increase in class size.

Dayanand Hedge, Old Brookville, said he feels a 4% budget increase would be the maximum residents would be able to accept.

Kerri Crocco, Glen Head, said she feels class size should be part of what Dr. Melnick described as what makes the district unique. She went on to say she found having individual time with teachers when she was a student was as important as grades and this is impossible with large class sizes. She asked that the Board explore ways to maintain what we have.

Trustee Berliner stated he would like to preserve everything the district currently has but a 6% increase would be difficult for residents to accept. Trustee Webb responded the Board believes time with teachers is important and they would like to maintain that. Currently class size is at the county average, this translates in cost, teacher salary & benefits, to be the largest part of our budget. This is the only area to look for reducing the budget by a substantial amount and it has an immediate impact on the student. Trustee Beyer added we used to be below the county average for class size but over the past few years we have been at the county average, therefore it is not something that makes us distinctive.

Jerry Blackburn, Sea Cliff, stated he does not believe a 5.88% budget increase is passable. He also said in considering the costs for a new track and field, the community should know what the maintenance costs will be and the length of time before replacement will be needed again.

Trustee Webb responded that these figures will be available as we move forward with the project.

Pete Escalla, Glen Head, said he believes most people who come to these meetings are parents who are in agreement that they want good schools. He went on to say that the Board needs to convince people who do not have kids in the school and although the letters from Dr. Melnick have been effective he wondered if there were plans to reach out to residents who do not have children in the schools.

Dr. Melnick responded both groups need to be addressed as only 50% of parents vote on the budget. He stated there will be several budget coffees over the next few months and he asks residents to invite their neighbors to attend one to get first hand information. In addition to residential gatherings, the Board will meet with the senior citizens and civic groups to do everything they can to explain the budget and what the district is facing. Trustee Genovesi added we must have the support of parents for the budget to pass and we need to find a way to get them out to vote.

Kathy O'Brien, Glen Head, asked if the teachers have been approached in regard to concessions and asked if the bargaining units make concessions would there still be lay offs.

Trustee Webb responded this would involve re-opening of contracts. He said they will engage in conversations but it does not appear that it will happen and at this point the Board is not counting on it. Dr. Melnick responded he does not anticipate that the units will agree to re-open their contracts so he does anticipate a reduction in staff.

Mark Wheeler, Sea Cliff, asked if Dr. Melnick would describe the efforts the district has taken in regard to re-opening the contracts and what was discussed with teachers.

Dr. Melnick responded the discussions are protected by collective bargaining laws so he is not able to share specifics however the district has tried to find several solutions to avoid staff cuts. He went on to say there is no indication that the teachers are willing to make concessions and without concessions there will be a reduction in staff. Trustee Beyer said it is important for the community to know it has been a two way discussion and they are working together to try and come up with solutions.

As there were no further questions from the community, the Town meeting portion ended.

Regular Business

On motion of Trustee Beyer and seconded by Trustee Kolkhorst and all in favor it was agreed to add discussions for Old and New Business to the end of the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

On motion of Trustee Sharkey and seconded by Trustee Kolkhorst and all in favor, the minutes of January 7, 2010, were approved.

Approval of Treasurer's Reports

On motion of Trustee Genovesi and seconded by Trustee Pombar and all in favor, the treasurer's reports of August 1, 2009 through August 31, 2009, September 1, 2009 through September 30, 2009 and October 1, 2009 through October 31, 2009 were approved.

The board decided to act simultaneously on action items A-E

On motion of Trustee Berliner and seconded by Trustee Sharkey and all in favor, it was

Personnel

Leave of Absence for Child Rearing Purposes

Resolved: To approve a leave of absence for child rearing purposes for Jennifer Fischer, Special Education, effective January 12, 2010 through June 30, 2010

Resolved: To approve a leave of absence for child rearing purposes for Kristen Ollendike, Elementary, effective December 21, 2009 through June 30, 2010

Resolved: To approve a leave of absence for child rearing purposes for Jill Schwarz, Elementary, effective February 1, 2010 through June 30, 2010

Increments for Advanced Study

Resolved: To approve an increment for advanced study for Paul Girolamo, Special Education, from Step 30 of the MA+30 salary schedule o Step 30 of the MA+45 salary schedule, effective February 1, 2010

Resolved: To approve an increment for advanced study for Michelle Lever, Special Education, from Step 4 of the MA salary schedule o Step 4 of the MA+15 salary schedule, effective September 1, 2009

Resolved: To approve an increment for advanced study for John Pace, Math, from Step 11 of the MA+15 salary schedule o Step 11 of the MA+30 salary schedule, effective February 1, 2010

Resolved: To approve an increment for advanced study for Alessandra Robertazzi-Torti, Italian, from Step 9 of the MA+45 salary schedule o Step 9 of the MA+60 salary schedule, effective February 1, 2010

Regular Substitute (Leave Replacement Appointment) - Certified

Resolved: To approve the regular substitute (leave replacement) appointment for Julia Blad, Elementary, on Step 9 of the MA salary schedule, fective January 16, 2010 to June 30, 2010

Resolved: To approve a regular substitute (leave replacement) appointment for JoAnn DeLucia, Special Education, on Step 4 of the MA+60 salary schedule, effective January 14, 2010 through June 30, 2010

Resolved: To approve a regular substitute (leave replacement) appointment for Dena Weiner, Elementary, on Step 8 of the MA salary schedule effective February 1, 2010 through June 30, 2010

Resignation - Non Certified

Resolved: To accept the resignation of Kathy Kennedy, Assistant Business Administrator, effective January 31, 2010

Approval of Additions to the Per Diem Substitute List

Resolved: To approve of the addition of the following name to the list of per diem substitutes:

Adam Holtzer Physical Education/Health

Approval of Extra Curricular Activity Coach

Resolved: To approve the following extra curricular activity coach for the winter season:

Men's Varsity Track

Assistant Coach Robin Cooper

Approval of Change Orders

Resolved: To approve change order #1 from Suffolk Paving Corp. for parking lot modifications at Glenwood Landing Elementary School in the amount of \$3,690.00 (deduction)

Resolved: To approve change order #1 from Pioneer Asphalt Paving Corp. for playground resurfacing at Sea Cliff Elementary School in the amount of \$18,443.48 (addition)

Approval of Budget Transfers

Resolved: To approve budget transfers in the amount of \$15,705, effective January 21, 2010

Approval of Agreement with South Huntington UFSD for Special Education Services

Resolved: To approve an agreement with the South Huntington UFSD for Special Education Services for 1 parentally-placed student with disabilities attending St. Anthony High School located within the South Huntington UFSD and residing within the North Shore School District during the 2008-2009 school year

Addition of Parent Members to the Committee on Special Education

Resolved: To approve the addition of the following parent members to the Committee on Special Education:

Liz Saccone	Effy Jable
Cathy Gugliucci	John Beyer
Dale Tyminski	Irene Andreadis
Erika Crabb	

Old Business

Trustee Pombar received a letter from a student in regard to hand washing. Dr. Melnick offered to respond to the student.

Trustee Webb reported that the East Williston Board is having a meeting on February 3 to discuss lobbying ideas. Trustees Webb, Beyer and Pombar plan on attending. He also reported that the article that appeared in the Record Pilot on the meeting with David Little, as well as an editorial that appeared in the same paper, was sent to our sister districts.

Trustee Webb requested a discussion on whether or not to put up a referendum at this year's budget vote to add the track and field as a project to the capital reserve.

Trustee Beyer reported that she would like the Board to explore the possibility of having a community legislative action committee similar to one the Manhasset School District has. She feels this might be a good way to engage some of the negative energy in the community and suggested enlisting a former board member.

The Board had a brief discussion and concerns were raised that it is difficult to sustain committees over the long run. Trustee Pombar reminded the board that a few years ago it was decided to reduce the number of committees. It was agreed that this type of committee would require a strong lead person and a knowledgeable group. Trustee Beyer recommended reaching out to former board members to see if there is an interest in leading this type of committee. It was agreed that she would do so.

New Business

Dr. Melnick suggested postponing a vote on the referendum for the track and field until the fall. The Board had a discussion and all agreed it would be better to focus on the budget for the May vote and place a referendum to add the track and field to the list of projects in the capital reserve next fall.

Trustee Beyer asked if tours of buildings could be arranged, preferably prior to scheduled board meetings.

Dr. Melnick responded he would set up dates and let them know.

Adjournment

At 10:10 pm on motion of Trustee Genovesi and seconded by Trustee Kolkhorst and all in favor, the meeting was adjourned.

Elizabeth Ciampi
District Clerk