

EAST ROCKAWAY UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
East Rockaway, New York  
Regular Meeting of the Board of Education  
7:30 P.M., February 15, 2012 – East Rockaway Jr./Sr. High School  
Preceded by an English as a Second Language Presentation and the Andrew J. Stern Memorial  
Essay Contest Winners and a Public Forum

MINUTES

Present: Neil Schloth, President; Michaelene Abbott-Cooper, Vice President; Linda Schmidt, Patti Nicoletti, Kristen Ochtera, Roseanne Melucci, Superintendent of Schools; Marcy Tannenbaum, Director of Finance and Operations; Denise Lobascio; District Clerk, staff and members of the community.

1. The meeting was called to order by Neil Schloth at 8:10 pm and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Kristin Ochtera.
2. Upon motion by Kristin Ochtera, seconded by Linda Schmidt, the minutes of the January 17, 2012 meeting were unanimously approved.
3. Acknowledged Receipt of Financial Reports from December 2011.
4. Correspondence – Five
5. Action Agenda

A. Personnel

Upon motion by Michaelene Abbott-Cooper, seconded by Linda Schmidt, the following items numbered 1 – 8 were unanimously approved:

1. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, accept, with regret, the resignation of William Fortgang, for the purpose of retirement, from his position as secondary principal of East Rockaway Jr./Sr. High School, effective June 30, 2012.
2. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, accept, with regret, the resignation of Lorraine Liberti, for the purpose of retirement, from her elementary teacher position, effective June 30, 2012.
3. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, accept the resignation of Kelliann Torlincasi from the position of teacher aide, effective January 30, 2012.

4. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, accept the resignation of Lawrence Faas from the position of cleaner, effective February 15, 2012; and approve the appointment of Lawrence Faas to the position of groundskeeper, effective February 16, 2012, at the Step 1 annual salary set forth in the East Rockaway Custodial Unit contract for the 2011-2012 school year.

5. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board of Education of the East Rockaway Union Free School District ratifies a Stipulation of Settlement concerning the employee named in Confidential Attachment "A"; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Board authorizes the Superintendent of Schools to take all such action necessary to execute said Stipulation on behalf of the Board.

6. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the spring sports 2011-2012 coaching assignments as more fully set forth on the 2011-2012 Spring Coaching Schedule dated February 15, 2012.

7. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the appointment of Linda Lindsley to the position of monitor, effective February 16, 2012, at the Step 1 hourly salary set forth in the East Rockaway Food Service & Monitor Union contract for the 2011-2012 school year.

8. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the following temporary assignment at the salary established by the East Rockaway Board of Education:

a. M. Denise Winter, Short Term Substitute School Social Worker, effective January 26, 2012, through April 3, 2012.

9. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the continuation of the "emergency, conditional" personnel appointments for the following individuals pending receipt of notification of their fingerprint clearance from the State of New York, Department of Education:

None

B. Other Items

Upon motion by Michaelene Abbott-Cooper, seconded by Kristin Ochtera, the following items numbered 1 – 3 were unanimously approved:

1. Approve the tuition agreements for special education services with the following school districts for the 2011-2012 school year and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the contract on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education:
    - a. Lynbrook UFSD, one (1) student.
    - b. Island Park UFSD, one (1) student
  2. Approve the recertification of the 2012 Biennial Review of the Shared-Decision Making Plan and authorize the President of the Board of Education to sign the Statement of Assurances on behalf of the Board of Education.
  3. Approve the award of the contract for the exterior doors at Rhame Avenue Elementary School, Capital Improvement Program No. 28-02-19-03-0-002-008, to the lowest responsible bidder, C & M Door Controls, and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the contract on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
- C. Budget Transfers - None
- D. Upon motion by Michaelene Abbott-Cooper, seconded by Linda Schmidt, the CSE Recommendations were unanimously approved.
- E. Upon motion by Linda Schmidt, seconded by Michaelene Abbott-Cooper, the CPSE Recommendations were unanimously approved.
6. Policy Matters:
1. Upon motion by Kristin Ochtera, seconded by Michaelene Abbott-Cooper, the following policies were unanimously adopted:
    - a. 1230, Public Participation at Board Meetings
    - b. 1741, Home Schooled Students
    - c. 2120, School Board Elections
7. Superintendent's Report
- Congratulations to our winners of the Andrew J. Stern Essay Contest—Taylor Clarke; Joanna Ambrosio; and John Pareti. Taylor's essay talked about cyber bullying. When we think about that we usually connect that to what teenagers are doing. As many of you are aware, adults are also capable of cyber bullying. Please practice what you would preach to your children about participating in cyber bullying.

Other good news about our students includes:

1. One of graduates, Neil Schloth, Jr., is featured in the Hofstra brochure for the Honors College.
2. Sarah Reid was accepted to Northeastern University's Honors Program. This is a new program and Sarah was chosen, along with 49 other students throughout the country, to receive a full scholarship based on her academic talents. Congratulations to Sarah.
3. Congratulations to Jacqueline Olewnicki, grade 10, and Kim Stroh, grade 11, whose art work will be on display for the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual All-County Art Exhibit. This will take place on Sunday, March 18, 2012 at the Ruth S. Harley University Center of Adelphi University.
4. I want to commend Anthony Capone, Tom Scagnelli, Ian Reill, Gerard Clayton and Danny McClure for their compassion toward a young man from Oceanside who has learning differences. I received a letter from the teacher in Oceanside who informed me that our students have shown compassion and kindness to this young man who is in a school to work program at a local pizzeria. Gentlemen, we are very proud of you.

During the Superintendent's report I usually share what is happening in our schools. Tonight I would like to share what is happening to our schools.

#### Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) Legislation

We are all for accountability. There's not an effective teacher in this room who wants ineffective teachers in the ranks. We have been implementing an evaluation rubric before we were mandated to do so. However, the legislation increases the amount of testing at all grade levels for all subject areas and there is no relief for the costs of testing. Therefore, to be in compliance with the law we have had to add tens of thousands of dollars in testing costs and have had to cut something else to balance this expense.

#### Common Core Curriculum

There's not an educator in the room that would not support a more focused curriculum that requires students to do more than report out factual knowledge. We support the change in curriculum and teachers are meeting regularly to discuss the changes and implement them. If you attended recent Board meetings you would have heard Mr. Piccarella talk about these changes. His presentations on mathematics and English Language Arts Core Curriculum are available on our website. With the change in curriculum comes the need for new resources. Textbook companies will be very successful over the next few years. It used to be that a district would adopt a new series and rotate the schedule every five years. Now, most textbook/materials are subscription based so that the expense exists every year. This is going to be a struggle for school districts with tight budgets. We are limited in the amount of money for which we receive aid on textbooks. It is based on a per pupil expense. Under the current legislation we will not receive aid for much of the expense for new resources that we need to implement the new common core curriculum.

#### Tax Levy Cap

Just a reminder that there is a Budget Advisory Committee that meets to learn about the

school district budget. The next meeting is on March 8<sup>th</sup>. The tax levy limit as of February 15, 2012 for East Rockaway is 2.28%. This will require closing a \$1.4 million dollar gap to maintain all of our programs that are in practice. To override the tax levy limit will require a Super Majority vote of 60% or more. In the past ten years that only happened once and it was in 2010 at the revote. Based on the data, the Board will be presenting a budget within the tax levy cap. If the pattern should change and the community can show that 60% can be achieved, the Board will consider that for future budgets. The 2012 budget will meet the tax levy cap and will require a majority vote, which is 50% plus 1 more.

#### Gap Elimination Adjustment Letter

I have mentioned to many that for the third year the Governor is closing his budget gap by removing state aid that schools should receive based on the formulas that exist. For East Rockaway this amounts to a loss of \$847, 914 from the current year's state aid and \$825,690 for next year's state aid. At the same time the Governor is offering competitive grants for \$250,000,000. Not all schools will be eligible for these grants. I urge you to write to your representatives and to the Governor to ask that the \$250,000,000 be used to reduce the Gap Elimination Adjustment. I have a sample letter available for your use and it has also been sent to the Co-Presidents of PTA.

#### Mandate Relief Letter

In addition to getting back our state aid, we need mandate relief. There are things that your representatives can do to stop cost shifting and to provide mandate relief to schools. I have some of them listed in a second letter. Please help your school district by communicating with your representatives.

#### Elementary Reorganization

The Board and I originally planned to meet on Tuesday, February 28<sup>th</sup> for a work session to discuss the elementary reorganization. On Monday evening, February 13<sup>th</sup>, we met for a budget work session. During the discussion on the budget for next year, it became clear that drastic changes will have to be made in the district to meet the tax levy limit of 2.28% (as of February 12, 2012). As a result we will not be able to deliver on the vision of five sections of classes in grades K-2, a teaching assistant assigned to each grade level, additional reading support at the K-2 building and an enrichment program for all students at the upper elementary school, grades 3-6. The budget simply will not be able to support the instructional vision that I expected to achieve through reorganizing the elementary schools into grade level bands. Therefore, after reviewing all of the items involved, I will not be making a recommendation to the Board for the Princeton Plan for September 2012. This is not the right time for this instructional vision.

Please know that we will continue to do our best to address the main purposes that were given for researching the elementary reorganization: to increase the consistency of curriculum, instruction and assessment across grade levels; and to provide, to the best of our ability, equitable distribution of staff and materials.

I thank the community for attending the meetings and for sharing your thoughts both publicly and privately. I look forward to working with all community members to keep our schools moving forward and help our students perform to the best of their ability.

This concludes my report.

8. Privilege of the Floor

- Dr. Melucci was thanked for deciding not to recommend the Princeton Plan to the board.
- Mr. Fortgang will be missed and was thanked for all he has done for the children of East Rockaway.

9. Board Member Comments

**Kristin Ochtera** – Thank you for coming. And thank you to Mrs. Wayar for being the first to the microphone tonight and asking, "What can we do?" We need everyone to get to the mindset "what can we do" because we have a very difficult road ahead of us. We will continue to look for innovative solutions to all of the issues that face our district. We will strive to reach higher and move the district forward. Hopefully, there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

**Linda Schmidt** – Thank you to the Stern family. I look forward to this every year. Our students are so talented. Thank you to the students and teachers of our ESL program. Congratulations Mr. Fortgang on your retirement. Thank you all for coming.

**Patti Nicoletti** – Thank you Stern family. These essays allow us to reflect and remember. Congratulations to the winners. Thank you Ms. Kallinikos, Mrs. Best and the ESL students. You are so brave to stand up in front of a large audience and speak English. I am happy that you are happy about the Princeton Plan. These are bad financial times and we will need your continued support to get through them. Mr. Fortgang – when I saw your retirement I was tempted not to accept it – you are a great man and we appreciate everything you have done.

**Michaelene Abbott-Cooper** – Congratulations Mr. Fortgang on your retirement. Thank you all for coming. We keep doing what we do because we value education. Listen and you will hear. Thank you for coming and enjoy your vacation.

**Neil Schloth** – Thank you to the Stern family for continuing this program. Thank you to the ESL teachers and students. Thank you Mr. Fortgang for all you have done. You will be sincerely missed and we wish you the best. We urge the community to stay involved.

10. Upon motion by Michaelene Abbott-Cooper, seconded by Linda Schmidt and unanimously passed, the meeting was adjourned at 8:49 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Lobascio  
District Clerk