

APPROVED MINUTES

HARBORFIELDS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT GREENLAWN, NEW YORK

Kind of Meeting	-	Special Meeting
Date of Meeting	-	January 23, 2008
Place of Meeting	-	OMS – Auditorium
Board Members Present	-	Mr. Brennan, Mr. Mastroianni, Mrs. Boba, Dr. Chen, Mr. Giuliano, Mr. Schoer
Board Members Absent	-	Mr. Toles
Others Present	-	Mrs. Kelly, Mr. Kelly

Mr. Brennan called the special meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. He then led those in attendance to the Pledge of Allegiance and instructed them where to exit the building in case of an emergency.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Several residents spoke regarding full-day kindergarten. Most residents were in favor of having full-day kindergarten stating that a majority of the districts in Nassau and Suffolk Counties already have full-day kindergarten or at least extended day kindergarten programs. One resident stated that since a grant has been offered to the district, the Board should take advantage of the grant by starting the full-day kindergarten program. One resident stated that the district is doing a disservice to themselves and certainly to the community by not having a full-day kindergarten program. He continued that he understands the fiscal pressures and spatial issues the Board is facing. Another resident asked if there was anything on the table whereby residents could pay for full-day kindergarten if they chose to do so. He continued that he heard a district in Nassau County was doing this. Dr. Wilson responded that she was not aware of any district charging tuition for full-day kindergarten. Another resident stated that we need to get more information out to the community regarding these special meetings.

Other residents stated that they were happy with half-day kindergarten and the time they are able to spend with their children at home.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Wilson stated that we are still not looking at a completed state budget. She continued that she had communication from Senator Marcellino with reference to the state's first budget meeting. According to Senator Marcellino's office, Harborfields should be receiving an additional \$1.2 million in state aid. Dr. Wilson stated that this money will offset some of the needs we will have in our upcoming budget.

Dr. Wilson advised the community that the district received a fax from SED informing us that grant funding was available during this school year to school districts that operated half-day kindergarten during the 2006-07 and 2007-08 school years. This information was originally sent out in early December; however, Harborfields was inadvertently left off their list and we never received a copy. Ms. Todaro received a fax from the State Education Department stating that it was not too late for Harborfields to apply for the

grant, however, time is of the essence as they must approve budgets in the next few weeks. The State Education Department extended the application deadline for Harborfields which resulted in scheduling this meeting. Dr. Wilson continued that the Board is trying to play catch up from the contingency budget of two years ago. At this time, we do not have a definite budget nor do we know what state aid will be for 2008-2009. The Board is dealing with soft numbers which makes accepting this grant a difficult decision for the Board of Education.

The grant of \$110,000 for full-day kindergarten would cover furniture, material, and supplies, but not the cost of additional staff and transportation. The tax rate increase would be approximately ½% on the tax rate which is not a miniscule amount of money. This year the district may benefit from some additional state aid, however, we do not know what state aid will be in future years.

Dr. Wilson stated that once we accept the grant it cannot be returned to the state. If we do not use it properly, the district could be audited.

Board members questioned the spatial issue for full-day kindergarten and Dr. Wilson responded that Mr. Cacciola has gone over that information and that we do have space to accommodate the youngsters at Washington Drive. A Board member stated that if the district went forward with this program, we are not even close to being informed about the state budget. The state is forcing us to make a decision. What effect will this have on our budget? If the Board went ahead with full-day kindergarten and our budget was defeated, what programs would be cut in order to accommodate full-day kindergarten? The Board hasn't even been afforded time to review this program. One thing this Board doesn't want to see again is the spatial situation that occurred at TJL. What assurances do we have that this will not happen at WDPS. Will we be looking at floating another bond? Another Board member stated that it was unclear as to what the program benefits are other than more time for youngsters in school. The Board member asked what the clear cut goal is and the need to try to prevent a contingency budget again in the future. There are a lot of pieces missing from proceeding with full-day kindergarten.

Dr. Wilson stated that it was her recommendation to go ahead with accepting the grant application at this time.

State Education Department Grant Application for Full-Day Kindergarten Program

Upon motion duly made by Mrs. Boba, seconded by Mr. Schoer, and carried (6-0), and upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent of Schools to apply for the State Education Department grant for partial funding for the district to transition to a full-day kindergarten program.

The Board stated that this approval was for the grant application only and that they were not approving the full-day kindergarten program at this time.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A resident stated that she was very impressed about the thought out discussion the Board had this evening. It is difficult for the Board to make a decision if you don't have hard numbers.

A resident asked if the grant applied to extended day kindergarten. Dr. Wilson responded that the grant was for full day only and not extended day kindergarten.

A resident stated that he felt full-day kindergarten would help property values.

Dr. Wilson stated that the Board will adopt their proposed budget in April. At that time, we are hopeful that we will have hard numbers from the state. If the state budget gets passed in a timely manner we will be able to give more information. We need to have state aid figures before the Board can make a decision.

A resident stated that she was pleased that the Board was moving forward with the grant.

Mrs. Boba left the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

A resident stated that the research is clear and he believes that the Board needs to market all day kindergarten effectively. He continued that he expected a lot more enthusiasm on the Board's part. As a community we have to get the word out. We must educate the community.

A resident stated that this meeting should have been announced via the Connect-Ed system. Mr. Brennan stated that we must advertise meetings to the entire community and not just parents of students attending our schools.

A resident stated that checks have been given to private schools for enrichment programs and because of the timing of the state budget, she hoped that these private schools would not penalize the parents.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Schoer, seconded by Mr. Giuliano, and carried (6-0), the Board adjourned the special meeting of January 23, 2008 at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Muller
District Clerk