

APPROVED MINUTES

HARBORFIELDS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT GREENLAWN, NEW YORK 11740

Kind of Meeting	-	Special Meeting
Date of Meeting	-	March 7, 2009
Place of Meeting	-	OMS Auditorium
Board Members Present	-	Mr. Brennan, Mr. Mastroianni, Mr. Banks, Mrs. Boba, Mr. Giuliano, Mr. Schoer, Mr. Toles
Board Members Absent	-	None
Others Present	-	Mr. Carasiti, Ms. Todaro, Mr. Nimmo, Mr. Hartner, Ms. DeVivio, Principals, Assistant Principals, Directors, Community Members

Mr. Mastroianni called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon motion duly made by Mrs. Boba, seconded by Mr. Schoer, and carried (6-0), the Board moved into Executive Session at 8:31 a.m. for the purpose of negotiations regarding personnel.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Giuliano, seconded by Mr. Toles and carried (6-0), the Board returned to the special meeting at 9:10 a.m.

Mr. Mastroianni led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance and instructed those in attendance where to exit the building in case of an emergency. Mr. Mastroianni stated that Mr. Brennan is not in attendance at this time.

Superintendent's Statement

Mr. Carasiti advised the community that during the next several weeks the Board and Central Office staff will finalize the 2009-10 budget. He continued that this is by far the most difficult and discouraging budget he has ever worked on. We must present a budget that is educationally sound and fiscally responsible. We must evaluate and reevaluate our budget to make it less costly and have a more efficient operation. We cannot count on additional financial aid from the state. Mr. Carasiti went on to say that this is not a one year problem and it will last for several years. We are looking into alternatives such as video conferencing at the high school as well as sharing services with other districts and with the Town of Huntington in order to save money.

Presentation of Banner by HHS PTSA

Ms. Seery and Ms. Ramme, co-presidents of HHS PTSA, presented a banner to Dr. Bennardo in recognition of the Silver Medal stating that Harborfields High School has been recognized as a Silver Medal School in the annual ranking of the nation's top high schools reported by "US News and World Reports."

Budget Presentations

At this time, Ms. DeVivio, Mr. Cacciola, Dr. Bennardo, Mr. Valente, Mr. Gellert, Mrs. Giordano, Ms. Tuzzi, Mrs. Kelly, Mr. Pisano, Mr. Nimmo, Mr. Hartner and Ms. Todaro made their budget presentations discussing estimated proposed budget reductions for the 2009-10 school year. The total reduction in all areas is approximately \$2,560,192. A comprehensive listing of all reductions by building is on file in the Superintendent's office.

Mr. Brennan entered the meeting at 10:32 a.m.

The Board took a break at 11:20 a.m. and returned to the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A resident asked about the physical education teachers being cut at WDPS.

A resident stated that TjL's largest 4th grade class had 27 children and this was her child's worst year due to increased class size. Mr. Carasiti stated that he believes the teachers will do the job as they have always done. He continued that he wished we didn't have to increase class size and make these cuts.

A resident remarked that administration and the Board have a very difficult task, especially this year, putting a sound budget together. It is imperative that our community is not taxed beyond what they can afford without cutting programs. The resident thanked the Board and administration for the job that they do.

A resident asked that if a miracle occurred and the district does get additional state aid would the district restore any of these cuts? Mr. Carasiti responded that this is a Board decision. Mr. Brennan advised that the district must be very careful of the fact that if the district does get additional monies it will not be an ongoing thing. We must be very careful as to how we apply these funds. The stimulus plan is for 27 months. Mr. Mastroianni stated that the district must treat this money as a windfall and not something that we receive every year. Mr. Carasiti stated that it will just get us back to where we are this year "maybe." Mr. Brennan stated that the state wants to place the cost of Special Ed pre-k back on the district. Mr. Schoer stated that the MTA payroll tax of \$107,000 will cost the district money. He continued that Long Island educates 17%

of the students in New York; we only receive 13% of state aid, and are faced with 27% of the cuts. The district will take a huge hit with the employees' retirement system. A resident asked if administration has approached the teachers regarding their contract. Mr. Mastroianni stated that he would like to see the Superintendent reach out to all bargaining units. Mr. Schoer stated that he thinks the entire Board agrees with Mr. Mastroianni – we are at a breaking point. The step increase and cost of living under the current contract for teachers is between 7% and 8% from this year to next year. We are in a fiscal crisis. We all have to hurt. We need to think out of the box and our staff needs to think out of the box and help. Mr. Carasiti advised the Board that Central Office administration has taken a freeze and they will not take any increase next year.

A resident stated that we have students who thrive on the Gifted and Talented program. It should be the goal of the school district to maintain this program. The benefits outweigh the small cost. There were a number of parents at the meeting showing their support of the Gifted and Talented program.

Mrs. Boba stated that this is a time for concessions and they need to be made everywhere.

A resident stated that with regard to the science research program, it is a mistake to shave off the extra cost. Another resident suggested that parents look outside the district to fulfill their students' needs. If the Science Research program is eliminated, perhaps they can enroll in the Cold Spring Harbor Lab or the Dolan Center.

A resident stated that we need to look at the cost per pupil for the Science Research program. We are just starting to build on this program. She further stated that she believes it speaks to the reputation of the school district. Having this program at our school inspires our students to join the program. She asked the Board to consider keeping this program.

A resident asked if the teachers have been approached regarding a freeze in their salary. Mr. Mastroianni stated that the Board has given direction to Mr. Carasiti to meet with all bargaining units. She continued by asking if a 1% or 2% freeze would solve the issue. Mr. Carasiti responded that it would help, but certainly would not solve the problem.

Mrs. Boba stated that she has concerns about cutting the clubs and second teams at OMS.

Mr. Giuliano advised that administration came in with a 4.3% tax rate increase and that contingency would be a 6.8% tax rate increase. He thanked administration for showing concern for the residents of the district. He asked if administration could come in a little lower. Mr. Mastroianni said that he agreed. He stated that he has concerns with a budget over 4% as it may not pass. Mr. Schoer stated that he agreed and that we need to get down to a 3% tax rate which would cut an additional \$700,000 from the budget. The Board will need a list of priorities with respect to additional cuts. Mr. Carasiti stated

that the money is in staffing, This reduction can only be reached by reducing staff which means cutting approximately 10 staff members which equals cutting programs.

A resident stated that he would spend his last dollar on his child's education.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Schoer, seconded by Mr. Mastroianni, and carried unanimously, the Board moved to Executive Session at 1:45 p.m. for the purpose of negotiations for a particular bargaining unit.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Toles, seconded by Mrs. Boba, and carried unanimously, the Board returned to the special meeting at 2:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Toles, seconded by Mr. Schoer, and carried unanimously, the Board adjourned the special meeting of March 7, 2009 at 2:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Muller
District Clerk