

**MINEOLA UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
MINEOLA, NY**

**Business Meeting MINUTES**

*The Mission of the Mineola Union Free School District is to inspire each student  
to be a life-long learner, pursue excellence, exhibit strength of character  
and contribute positively to a global society.*

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**Board Goals – 2008-2009**

- *Educational Expectations and Improvement*
- *School Quality*
- *Operations*
- *Fiscal Management/Stability*

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**DATE: November 20, 2008**

**LOCATION: Willis Avenue School**

**OPEN BUSINESS MEETING**

**7:00 p.m. 1<sup>st</sup> FLOOR CAFETERIA**

**Board of Education**

Stephen Siwinski, President  
Laraine Salvatore, Vice President  
John McGrath  
William Hornberger  
Terence Hale

**Central Office**

Dr. Lorenzo Licopoli, Superintendent of Schools  
Dr. Michael Nagler, Deputy Superintendent  
Sherri Goffman, Asst. Supt. of Curr. & Inst.  
John Waters, Asst. Supt. of Finance & Oper.  
Janice Patterson, Director of Pupil Services  
Donna Martillo, District Clerk

**A. Call to Order**

At 7:10 p.m. the meeting was called to order by President Siwinski.

**B. Pledge of Allegiance**

**C. Reading of Mission – Stephen Siwinski**

**D. Moment of Silent Meditation**

**E. Dais & Visitor Introductions**

After introduction of the dais, also in attendance were: Jack Feldman, Esq.; Pat Molloy, Elementary Principal; Deborah Shaw, Willis Principal; SueCaryl Fleischmann, Elementary Principal; Matt Gaven, Elementary Principal; and Lisa Lao, former Board of Education Member.

**F. High School Student Organization Report**

The High School Student Organization Representative discussed the following: conducted a survey among students to ascertain where the High School graduation should be held and the Tilles Center was chosen overwhelmingly over the HS Auditorium; the Thanksgiving food drive was successful and food baskets were delivered to individual families on November 18<sup>th</sup>.

**H. New Business**

President Siwinski requested to take the agenda out of order and address New Business before Old Business.

**I. Consensus Agenda**

**1. Accepting of Minutes**

- a. That the Board of Education accepts the minutes of the October 2, 2008 (Workshop) Meeting; and October 16, 2008 (Business) Meeting as presented.

**2. Instruction**

a. Resignations/Leave of Absence

- 1. That the Board of Education grants a leave of absence request to Lucia Barberio, using accrued sick days, for child-rearing purposes, starting approximately May 27, 2009.

b. Appointments

- 1. That the Board of Education approves the appointment of the following coaches for the Winter Interscholastic Season for the 2008-2009 school year:

- Lewis Levy Winter Track Coach Step 1 \$3,967.00  
(Fills vacancy due to resignation of Gregory Brink)
- Glen Steinberg Girls JV Basketball Coach Step 1 \$4,567.00  
(Fills vacancy due to resignation of Katherine Hock)

- 2. That the board of Education approves the following addition to the Per Diem Substitute Teacher list, at a salary of \$90.00 per day:

James Dunlop Childhood Education (Grades 1-6)  
Literacy (Birth-Grade 6)

- 3. That the Board of Education approves the appointment of Ryan Barry to the position of Band Drill Instructor for the 2008-2009 school year at a stipend of \$1,620.76.

**2.1. Instruction: Committee on Special Education Actions**

- a. That the Board of Education approves the CSE/CPSE/SCSE recommendations for programs and services for students with IEPs for the time period from September 1, 2008 to October 31, 2008 as set forth in Confidential Attachment "A".

**2.2. Instruction: Contracted Instructional Services**

- a. That the Board of Education approves a contract between the Mineola Union Free School District and Dr. Diana Kornreich for an evaluation of a student as an emergency situation that took place during the 2007/2008 school year.

**2.3. Instruction: Student Actions**

- a. That the Board of Education approves the Selective Classification request for the following students:
  - Brian Gaffney, 8<sup>th</sup> grade student, to compete on the Junior Varsity Basketball Team for the 2008-2009 school year
  - Matthew Long, 8<sup>th</sup> grade student, to compete on the Junior Varsity Wrestling Team for the 2008-2009 school year.

**2.4. Instruction: Other**

**3. Civil Service**

a. Resignations/Leave of Absence

None

b. Appointments

1. That the Board of Education approves the appointment of Diane Barnett, as part time Teacher Aide, effective November 24, 2008; salary, Step 1, \$13.74 per hour.

**4. Business/Finance**

a. Treasurer's Report

1. That the Board of Education accepts the Treasurer's Report for the period ending September 30, 2008 and directed that it be placed on file.

b. Approval of Invoices and Payroll

1. That the Board of Education approves the Invoices and Payroll for the period ending October 31, 2008.

Warrant #7

\$1,207,282.35

Warrant #8	\$1,676,178.53
Voids (2)	\$ 8,341.40 Cr.
Credits to Expense	\$ 125,449.70 Cr.
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$2,749,669.78</b>

<u>PAYROLL #7 &amp; #8</u>	
General	\$4,111,984.06
Fund F	\$ 45,957.12
<b>TOTAL PAYROLL</b>	<b>\$4,157,941.18</b>

**4.1. Business/Finance: Contract Approvals**

- a. **REMOVED** That the Board of Education approves a contract between the Mineola Union Free School District and Vision World in providing optical benefits to all eligible Retirees of the Mineola Public Schools prior to September 1, 2008 and their dependents.

**4.2. Business/Finance: Bids**

- a. That the Board of Education approves the participation of the Mineola Union Free School District in the following BOCES Cooperative Bids for an aidable fee of \$350.00 each:
- Fitness Equipment 08/09-046
  - Physical Education Supplies 08/09-056
  - Uniforms-General 08/09-039

**4.3. Business/Finance: Change Orders**

- a. That the Board of Education approves Change Orders EC-01, EC-02, EC-03, and EC-04 with Eldor Contracting Corporation for an increase to their contract in the amount of \$8,999.00.

**5. Other**

**RESOLUTION #37** – **BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Board of Education approves Consensus Agenda items H.1. through h.4.3.a. as presented.

**Motion:** John McGrath  
**Second:** Laraine Salvatore

**Discussion:** Ms. Salvatore inquired about item H.2.2. (Contracted Instructional Services) as to what type of emergency. Ms. Patterson responded that a student needed to have a special evaluation, but that information was confidential. Mr. Hornberger inquired as to why was a contract being signed now. Ms. Patterson replied that the evaluation was during the 2007-2008 school year and could not be paid until a contract was submitted. Ms. Salvatore inquired why the service could not be performed by current personnel. Ms. Patterson replied it was a CSE one time event.

Ms. Salvatore inquired about psychological services performed by someone else. Ms. Patterson responded it was a special circumstance that needed a familiar person. The Superintendent of Schools stated that this topic was discussed in executive session. Ms. Patterson stated that the district should have more than one contract to perform this type of service. Ms. Salvatore asked if \$300 was the going rate. Ms. Patterson responded that it is extremely cheap.

Mr. Hornberger inquired about item H.4.3.a. (Change Order). Ms. Waters responded that Eldor Electrical corrected 4 different items at the Middle School. Mr. Waters stated that an allowance is in their contract so by the time the contract is closed out the change orders will be absorbed by the allowance. The district retains 2% on every contract to be able to apply change orders to those lines. Mr. Siwinski inquired if the changes were an error on the Architect's part. Mr. Waters responded that things came up when they moved the electrical boxes. Ms. Salvatore inquired if they specked out the job, prior to bidding. Mr. Siwinski stated that being an old building you don't know what is behind walls. Mr. Waters responded that they had to make changes on the fly and the changes had to be done. Mr. Siwinski stated that no records or drawings of the Middle School exists, the only one found is of the annex (cafeteria area).

A motion was made to amend the Consensus Agenda with the removal of Item I.4.1.a. (Vision World Contract) pending further discussion with Mineola Teachers' Association.

**Motion:** John McGrath  
**Second:** Laraine Salvatore

**Discussion:** The Superintendent stated that language has not been finalized with the Teachers' Association.

**Yes:** Terence Hale  
William Hornberger  
John McGrath  
Laraine Salvatore  
Stephen Siwinski  
**No:** None

**Passed:** Yes

The Board now voted on the original motion to approve Resolution #37 as amended.

**Yes:** Terence Hale  
William Hornberger  
John McGrath  
Laraine Salvatore  
Stephen Siwinski  
**No:** None

**Passed:** Yes

## **STUDENT PRESENTATION**

The Superintendent of Schools stated that one of the things the Board asked him to do this year, as previously done, is to highlight students at Board meetings. In September he had students from students of Hampton who came to a Board meeting and did their rendition of *High Hopes*, also performed at opening day. He also asked 4 of our HS Seniors and leaders to present to the faculty their feelings and experiences at Mineola. He introduced Ms. Adria Giovanni, Class Valedictorian, who is hoping to pursue a career in medicine. She is the Drum Major in the Marching Band and participates on the HS Varsity softball team. The Superintendent of Schools welcomed Adria and asked her to speak about what her speech she presented on opening day. Ms. Giovanni spoke about her experiences at Mineola in education and how she felt about it. Her education and knowledge is power. Not only scoring well on tests, but it's about expanding minds in never learning something before. In Mineola you sit in class, teachers don't just give you curriculum, it's about expanding your mind, just knowing the information is not enough, you sit in class and in awe by the knowledge the teachers have. They give you all their experiences and knowledge pertaining to whatever subject. Going through the college process the teachers and she is taking their advice. They are wise and experienced people. Her education is precious to her. First grade they wanted to hold her back because she was not advancing as quickly as others. In 4<sup>th</sup> grade she had a great teacher who had a "success rug" as a reward. That year she remembers learning so much. After that she absorbed all the information she was given. She loves Mineola, it's a place to mature and expand your mind.

## **G. Old Business**

President Siwinski read a statement. *Set the record straight this is your school closings that came out of the Finance Committee. In 2005/06 the Board asked the Finance Committee to review ways to reduce spending. This committee is comprised of one Board Member, members of Central Office and district residents. A number of recommendations came back to the Board and one was to reconfigure schools, particularly at the elementary level. That year the Administration and Committee reduced 9 million dollars from the budget. The Board accepted a recommendation to reconfigure schools in order to explore other options in reducing the budget. Based on this advice the Superintendent of Schools recommended the Board send out an RFP and hired Leadership Inc. Dr. Fowler assessed all buildings, interviewed staff, analyzed building space, and utilization came up with scenarios, 5 were chosen. Next step community groups discussed the scenarios. An open invitation to the community for participation was advertised the Mineola American. The 6<sup>th</sup> scenario came to light at a Board meeting where a resident requested PreK and Kindergarten be put back into the home schools. After focus groups the Board sent a survey to all resident households. A tally of the surveys conducted and 3 scenarios came out on top. The Board challenged Administration to cut \$700,000 out of the current budget. Administration came back to close Cross and Hampton. This scenario has little impact to the budget and was a*

*proposal only to the Board as a cost saving measure. The Board did not make a decision and as of tonight has not made a decision. The Board held a community meeting last Monday to listen one last time. The Board might not have a choice to close schools; they may have to do it. A message via Albany for districts to brace against school aid cuts. He felt the need to get this Board to commit to close schools or develop a budget to absorb a decrease in aid without closing schools. This direction is needed so administration can focus on a proposed budget. December 18<sup>th</sup> to make a decision by the Board. The turn of the economy brought to light the need to combine this discussion with the budget that there may be no choice but to close a school. Tonight's meeting the Superintendent of Schools set up a discussion with the Board regarding budget constraints, the practicality of closures and asked the Board's direction in formulating the budget. Many rumors out there and can't speak for Board, but he recommends no decision tonight. At Monday's meeting he stated the Board should be ready at the Business Meeting on December 18<sup>th</sup>. He felt in order to build the budget, direction to the Superintendent of Schools and administration on what the Board was doing. In light of a recent discussion with the Superintendent of Schools, we may not be able to decide by December 18<sup>th</sup>. The Board is split on this decision. One Member repeatedly stated that he does not want to close schools. This is a tough decision and he attends a lot of school functions and sees what the system is to children, parents and community. It is a community spirited atmosphere in the school system. On a personal note he is not in favor of closing schools, although staff can handle the closing in a seamless manner and programs will not suffer, neighborhood schools brings to the community an aspect that cannot be represented on a spread sheet. Administration can develop a budget at little or no impact to programs. After discussions with the Superintendent he can bring a budget in slightly higher than a contingent level. As an elected official he has a duty to explore financial aspects for the taxpayer and in light of current fiscal situation, he will keep an open mind. He will listen to the community before he makes a decision. He asked Mr. Schumacher to speak as to how all this came about, rationale and reasoning.*

Mr. Schumacher discussed he is only going to comment on history or background on reconfiguration study. He has been on the Finance Committee approximately 6 years. The Mineola district has a very high cost per student. Presented an analysis cost per student 2 years ago. What we noted: cost per student was in the mid 20s and now is approaching \$30,000. Reasons contributing to the high per pupil cost: a lot of staff in district, level of compensation, wider Fine Arts program, cost of transportation, class sizes are modest, and the number of relatively small schools. Also noted significant cost per student very steep trend line going up every year. Close to the highest amount in all districts in county. Not only above average, but getting further every year. Our buildings are 2/3 utilized. Reasons: less students than 10 or 15 years ago, i.e. 15 years ago High School had almost 1600 students in it; added a new building (Willis) moved Kindergarten from elementary schools so those buildings population went down. Our Finance Committee asked questions: Do we need 7 buildings to deliver a good education? I won't tell you the answer, but he will ask question. First, is education and educational programs for kids to preserve our collective ability to continue to pay for that program going forward? This Finance Committee is not district employees, not administrators and not staff, volunteers, taxpayers who are not paid. Trying to provide and seek facts for answers. Cost and savings are not the only factors, but cannot be ignored. The Finance Committee recommended gathering facts so the Board could make an informed decision, how to best deliver education now and in the future.

The Superintendent of Schools stated as Siwinski said and reinforced by Mr. Schumacher this exercise putting together a Finance Committee started in 2003/04 school year and it was a very complex task. Central job was to sort this budget apart. Mr. Hornberger came in year 2 or 3 on the Finance Committee. Two years ago a sub committee formed Zero Based budget committee. Most of them particular Ms. Darmstadt, Mr. Schumacher and himself spent more weekends sorting out the spending plan. Our budget, prior to 2002, brought percentage increases without examining per line. Started an effort to narrow and draw it down. There were distractions along the way particularly the John Jackson situation derailing them; all the more importance of getting an understanding to operate programs in the district. Not only dollars and sense, but how resources were distributed throughout our schools.

## 1. Grade Configuration Discussion

- Budget Planning Needs

The Superintendent presented a power point on the budget and financial planning, and recommendations to consider as they relate to grade configuration. He asked the Board to consider a few things. He met with Central Office Administrators and asked Mr. Waters to look at the current budget. Two years ago we had a plan, what would a status quo look like if the same budget as today, with no changes. What would budget to budget increase be in 2009-2010. The increase would be about, budget to budget, 3.2% which translates an additional 2.5 million dollars expense to carry on exact same programs as today.

Mr. Hornberger asked if the State Aid would be the same. The Superintendent of Schools responded just budget to budget increase 3.2%.

Mr. McGrath stated that it is not going to be 3.2% it will be something else. Assuming State Aid stays the same. The Superintendent of Schools responded that the revenue would have no effect on the budget to budget and nothing to do with tax levy.

The Superintendent of Schools stated that if we applied the contingent budget formula to the 2009-2010 school year, it would result in a maximum budget increase of 2.7% (1/2% less than status quo) or increase spending by 2.1 million dollars, \$400,000 less than a status quo budget. Right off the bat if we were going into a contingency status, which means expense side 2.7% or 2.1 million dollars additional monies to run our programs, under a contingent budget scenario. All things being equal we could still run neighborhood schools. Initial discussion on issue of grade reconfiguration, there was a time where we were concerned, because 2 budgets failed. If it was 2 consecutive years where budgets failed, there could be a real threat. Then the only way to reduce would be to close a school. Currently the financial planning goals recently approved by the Board calls for containment to force budget-to-budget increase not to exceed rate of inflation. Curtail tax increases and to align Mineola's cost per pupil with the county average. For 2008-09 good guess \$30,000 per kid and County average is about \$23,000/24,000 per student. We tend to be 5 to \$6,000



over the average on a given year. To align costs with the County average, the obvious remedy would be to close schools and even then our reduction would only slightly decrease the cost per pupil. Three to 3.5 million dollars brings us closer to County average by a small amount. It might go down \$1,000 per student. That was discussed on Monday, \$200 per assessed tax per household. He thinks the decision point and consideration for the Board is to figure out what specific educational, financial planning goals are for the school system. For the sake of trying to frame it for problem solving is the specific educational, financial planning goals to maintain neighborhood schools by maximizing cost effective possibilities without losing those elements and ensuring continual growth or is it to implement alternative configurations. Maintain the current programs, reduce spending in order that our budget decrease to the extent that a new budgetary plateau is created and thus a new financial slope, bringing us closer to the County average. His recommendation for the Board, in terms of their consideration, very tough and complicated: (1) table all discussions on grade configuration for 2009-2010 school year in order to ascertain the Board's financial goals along with assessing the state aid issues facing, not only Mineola, but all school districts in the State; (2) approving option 6, to maintain current alignment and direct administration to propose an educational Plan and Budget that supports small neighborhood schools in a more cost effective manner; direct administration to what are necessary expense side reductions not what the reductions are, and let them do their work so they can come back with a plan to support small neighborhood schools, detail reductions with rationale to support that, and ready to present on December 18<sup>th</sup>. In summary asking Board to consider basically one thing, ascertain what educational and financial plans are, several options to consider. He has been Superintendent for 7 years and said it many times only one way a Board knows what you value; is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday in May when you vote, the most democratic thing we do in U.S., most real demonstration of the power of the vote. He applauds you for the challenge. When you are talking about reconfiguration, everyone knows when Cross Street was closed, it was painful for the community to experience. Asked the Board for their direction.

Mr. McGrath commented that the \$200 a year reflects a savings of about less than \$17 a month. The Superintendent of Schools responded yes.

Mr. Hornberger asked where in a 60 million dollar budget is the State Aide. Mr. Waters responded that you have to look at an 80.8 million dollar budget, how you pay for that is where the State Aid is factored in. We pay for budgets 3 ways: State Aid; other income; tax levy. All things being equal, if we had an increase of 2.5 million dollars in a typical year we would expect State Aid to increase a certain percentage. We would hope to possibly earn a little more in other income, but unless you get a large increase in State Aid, the increase in the budget falls to the tax levy. Mr. Hornberger asked: what budgetary aspect of State Aid is included in the 80 million? Mr. Waters responded: In that budget there is nothing about State Aid. Mr. Hornberger inquired if in the documentation sent to the Board was 5.6 in State Aid included in the 80 million. Mr. Waters responded that it was an

estimate of State Aid for next year. Mr. Hornberger wanted to establish what estimates the district was using. Mr. Waters stated that has not been discussed. Mr. Hornberger inquired as to what State Aid projections are being used for a status quo budget. The Superintendent of Schools responded that on the 18<sup>th</sup> is look at different scenarios that includes the levy. Mr. Siwinski inquired about the amount of State Aid used in calculating 3.2%. The Superintendent of Schools responded that the 3.2% would be your budget-to-budget increase. Tax levy calculated at 5 and the question asked should be; what will the tax levy be? Mr. McGrath interjected and asked what will be the projected State Aid? The Superintendent of Schools responded, 5.6 million dollars.

Mr. Hornberger inquired that based on Governor Patterson's interim cuts, which he tried to put through last week, Mineola is down \$500,000 from last year so the district is projecting everything flat, no decrease based on 5.6? The Superintendent of Schools responded, yes at this point.

Mr. Salvatore commented that she thought the Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations said that due to the raises the budget would be increased by 3%. Mr. Waters responded, going from 78 to 80.8 million dollars includes all raises and all benefits, and Special Ed was factored in, so an estimate, at this point, the budget would increase 2.5 million to maintain the same programs. Mr. McGrath inquired if a \$500,000 decrease in State Aid was figured in. Mr. Waters responded no, nothing was offset on the expense side.

Mr. Waters stated to concentrate on what the district is spending, and not how to pay for it. Propose an 80.8 million budget next year and if the State comes back and says we are not giving you any money, we will still spend 80.8 million. How the district pays for it is the question. You have to look at expense side and try to match the reduction in State Aid with reducing the budget equally. To separate what you plan to spend and how you plan to pay for that spending.

Mr. McGrath inquired does the district have any projections regarding State Aid. Mr. Waters responded no. Nor does he have anything that tells him based on estimated numbers worked up for this presentation that we know 5.6 million dollars will be State Aid next year. These numbers put together based on Governor's proposed mid-year reduction for Mineola. Based on information at the time, we have put these numbers together. We decided to get an idea what costs would be. Took in 6 million in State Aid, backed out estimated mid-year cut, and came down to a 5.6 million dollar number. No idea whether an additional \$450,000 proposed cut by Governor mid-year, which was not acted on, not know if an additional 1 or 2% next year. Estimated tax levy used 5.6 million as State Aid, used 2 million as other income and balance was tax levy. 73.2 million dollar tax levy compared to 69.6 million tax levy this year would result in a 5.2% increase in the tax levy. Interest rates not going up, less money to invest next year. Felt 2 million is a conservative number to work with to discuss what the tax levy might be next

year. A lot of changes to be made, but 5.2 million, based on the numbers would be a reasonable estimate of what the tax levy would be if we went out with a 3.2 budget-to-budget increase.

The Superintendent of Schools stated that would be with the exact same program as today. He does not want to get into a discussion here tonight, and not prepared to discuss expense side and revenue side which included several scenarios. If reduce a million dollars from today's budget, tax levy would reduce from 5.2% to 3.7%. Broke out per household cost and monthly expense. Focus on tonight, expense side of the budget.

Mr. Hornberger stated that in your scenarios we are discussing maintaining the program right around contingency at 3.2%. The Superintendent of Schools responded if our budget were to fail using the applied formula in what has to be taken out, we would be able to run the same programs. Mr. Hornberger inquired if additional programs could be added, i.e. Foreign Language, healthier lunch menu, streamline professional learning communities, maintain all those class sizes. Mr. Siwinski responded would we want to? Adding Foreign language would take away educational time from students. We would have to go back to administration and curriculum development people to find out.

Mr. Hornberger asked if the district could we add to the program without increasing the budget. The Superintendent of Schools responded that if it was determined that Foreign language at elementary was something to bring to school system and not want to add staff. How do we re-allocate resources we have? Class sizes in grade 6, 1-19; would serve district better to have class sizes 1-22 in grade 6 under current guideline. The question is a lot bigger than just money. We have a 6 hour 42 minute day, 15 minutes longer than it was. How do we incorporate so that we have a meaningful program for kids and what the goals would be as long as we keep the journey going for continuous improvement? Improving the lunch program should not be an issue. That is a different problem that should be done through the RFP process.

Mr. Hornberger inquired if the labs could be updated next year. The Superintendent of Schools responded that the district maintains \$500,000 in capital upgrade reserve. Yes there are monies targeted to upgrade labs, not earmarked yet.

Ms. Salvatore inquired if – Consider cutting some things out of the budget so that we don't have to do an increase at all, i.e. Syntax (PR Firm) \$74,000. Go through budget and cut things that won't hurt the children until we get through this point in the economy. It wouldn't kill us to not receive an Outreach 2 or 3 years until we get through this economy.

The Superintendent of Schools stated that they can create a list of all non-mandated items. Part of the budget building process back in the day we created a Bulls-eye. We did it several times and it communicated very well to the community. In that particular year we reduced 4 million dollars from

the budget and if budget failed and had to reduce to 1.7 and when the budget failed no one was surprised because the cuts were right there: Driver Ed, Summer School program. These programs became self funded.

Ms. Salvatore inquired if 3 million dollars was taken out of the budget would taxes increase? The Superintendent of Schools responded that if 3 million dollars came out of the budget it still would go up by \$47 per household per year. To attempt to reduce the budget by 3 million dollars and maintain small elementary schools would be very hard to do. Ms. Salvatore recommended that the Board sit down and look at that. The Superintendent of Schools asked if the Board was challenging Administration to maintain elementary schools and reduce the budget by 3 million dollars. We will try. So for the sake of argument let's say it is not possible, what would be the alternative. Ms. Salvatore responded, that she is optimistic to let's see if it's possible. The Superintendent of Schools inquired if the Board would agree to increasing class sizes, i.e. 25 students in second grade with one teacher and ½ time aide.

Ms. Salvatore recommended cutting security at \$220,000, clerical overtime at \$15,000, Willis parking at \$30,000. She doesn't want to touch the kids.

Mr. Siwinski requested clarification as to what they were directing the Superintendent of Schools to do: keep neighborhood school concept, reducing the budget by 3 million dollars without reducing class sizes. If he can't do that what are we directing him to do?

Ms. Salvatore responded, help him. She will show him savings she would like to cut. Mr. McGrath stated cutting 3 million dollars from the budget requires closing schools. Ms. Salvatore disagreed.

Mr. Hornberger commented to layer other scenarios onto buildings as they are, not reduce class size, and reduce by 3 million.

Mr. Siwinski commented maintain status quo budget and closing. Ms. Salvatore responded, how about closing Willis Avenue and rent it out. Mr. Siwinski responded run a dual thing; if we can't reduce 3 million, dual scenario they come back to us as to what we can do running programs and keep schools open. Run a budget reducing 3 million. To close this school putting PreK and Kindergarten into the elementary schools. At this time Mr. Siwinski asked the audience if they would approve a bond issue to increase school sizes. The audience responded no. Mr. Siwinski asked if they had clear direction so they could point the Superintendent of Schools to. Ms. Salvatore responded keep buildings as they are, class sizes, and reduce budget by 3 million dollars. And if there was an alternative to close a building it would be Willis and put Kindergarten back into elementary. The Superintendent of Schools stated that by putting Kindergarten back into the elementary buildings creates more teachers. 200 students in Kindergarten creates 10 sections of classes at Willis, putting them into the 4 elementary schools creates 12 sections, 2 additional teachers needed, more sections of classes, more teachers and more support staff. He is not saying it can't be done.

Mr. Hale suggested the Superintendent of Schools come back with 4 scenarios with reducing 1 million, 2 million and 3 million from the budget and closing Willis, but looking at it all. Ms. Salvatore stated we are not talking about any other schools other than Willis. Mr. McGrath inquired if incorporating Willis into elementary schools by September 2009 was possible, if decision was made in January? Ms. Goffman responded that moving kids back is not an issue. It is about space and cost. Ms. Salvatore inquired if transportation and everything could be done by September 2009. Mr. Siwinski reiterated 3 scenarios and Ms. Salvatore's scenario.

Mr. Hornberger clarified as per the budget worksheet status quo, and one million reduction and status quo, 2 million and 3 million in reductions.

Mr. Siwinski inquired if the reconfiguration was on hold or done and is one of the scenarios closing. Mr. Hornberger stated leasing out Willis. Mr. Siwinski inquired if the Board was still talking about closing buildings other than Willis? Mr. McGrath responded yes. Mr. Hornberger responded no. Mr. Hale responded no, status quo and look at Willis needs more information on the closing of Willis. Viable scenario of closing Willis, rental fee. Where kids are going and transportation costs.

Mr. Siwinski asked for a sense of the Board, let's not reconfigure except for looking at Willis. The Board responded yes.

## **J. Public Comments**

- ❖ A resident asked where the all day Kindergarten and PreK programs would be placed if Willis closes. Ms. Salvatore explained that the Board will not do anything to affect children, it has to be a sound educational program. The same or better. Mr. Siwinski stated that we are asking the Superintendent of Schools as to how this would be done.
- ❖ A resident stated they feel the schools are at full capacity now, where will the children be placed? The Superintendent of Schools responded before Willis opened Art was on a cart and the Music room was on the stage or basement. The rooms we now use for Art and Music would have to be shared. The resident suggested redistricting instead, and if they had to close schools, only one elementary. Mr. McGrath stated that the Board just said they are taking school closing out of the scenarios.
- ❖ A resident commented on the past that he was on the Building Utilization Committee years ago: High School was the site of PreK program (Dedicated 2 classrooms); Middle School complaints about cafeteria being small; Central Administration in the Middle School with 700 kids, independent auditor stated 800 max people, Central Administration had to go; Hampton built a classroom in basement; Previous Jackson Principal spoke passionately and showed pictures of converted rooms, stage and library; teachers gave up leisure rooms; all maintenance equipment and supplies placed outside of the building; and Music taught behind cafeteria. The higher the number the truer the percentage, and the only elementary school in this community that meets the mathematical principal is Jackson. He is in favor of clustering. He doesn't believe the district should close 2 elementary schools. He also stated that E. Williston has an 8-12 and 5-7, centralizing grades saves money. He also commended Mr. Hale on his proposal at the October 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.

- ❖ A resident thanked the Board for allowing everyone to voice their opinions. Thanked the gentleman before her for his facts that were helpful and enlightening. She grew up in Mineola and was the first year of the baby boomers. In 1998 Hampton was to be a PreK/Early Childhood learning center. What happened? PreK and Kindergarten up to 5<sup>th</sup> grade were housed at the elementary from 2000 to 2003. If we need to increase class sizes in order to save buildings, the parents would be willing to do that. Teachers have a lot more administering duties to do in addition to teaching the children. When she attended school she was in the 12:30 pm to 5:00 pm (split session) session. The parents are more than willing to work with you.
- ❖ Mr. Siwinski asked for the consensus of the audience if they would rather increase class sizes than close schools, as long as it is within the educational plan? The audience responded No, they want the students evenly distributed among the schools.
- ❖ A resident commented that she came from the city area six years ago and was paying tuition to a parochial school. Her son was in a class size of 40 kids. She is happy to have small class sizes. If you close schools her next move is out of the district.
- ❖ A resident praised the Middle School administrators and requested not taking the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> graders out. It would be detrimental. Mr. Siwinski responded that the consensus of the Board was not to do anything.
- ❖ A resident presented a petition not to close schools and the children from Hampton were present to tell how they love Hampton. Numerous students from Hampton spoke in support of their school.
- ❖ A resident expressed disappointment in the process. Consultants were hired, spending a lot of money, conducted good focus group sessions where concerns were expressed. Does not know how you can ignore that. The mistake was opening Willis years ago. Your personal views should not come out until you make a decision. Mr. Siwinski responded the Board gave direction to the Superintendent and this is the next step. The resident stated the Superintendent's presentation was very biased in not closing schools.
- ❖ A resident commented that this Board should not take anything off the table. To be fair to the community everything at this point should be on the table. The resident inquired of Central Administrators how many secretaries they had. The Superintendent responded 2. Mr. Siwinski stated 1 is the Board's secretary. Dr. Nagler responded 3. Mr. Waters responded 6. Ms. Goffman responded 2.5. Ms. Patterson responded 3.5. The resident asked Dr. Nagler how he will configure his office when Superintendent. Mr. Siwinski responded that he has to come back to the Board with his configuration. The resident felt this number of staff was excessive. Mr. Siwinski responded that there is a civil service person that just deals with that and a personnel person with professional staff. The Board has asked Dr. Nagler to look at that. The resident felt no consideration is given to Senior Citizens. Mr. Siwinski asked if she thought the Board should keep the option open. The resident responded don't stop at 3 million. She doesn't want to take away the \$12,000 for the High School graduation at Tilles, but that money can go to a program to benefit more students.
- ❖ A resident asked what conclusion did the Board come to this evening. Mr. Siwinski responded the Superintendent of Schools will present scenarios to the Board as well as and Ms. Salvatore's request in moving PreK and Kindergarten out of Willis in 1 or multiple buildings, excluding High School and Middle School, and cut 3 million dollars right out of the budget. 4 scenarios, closing no elementary schools only Willis.
- ❖ A resident asked if the elementary schools were still in jeopardy. Mr. Siwinski stated if we cannot cut 3 million out and the Board's sense is to reduce, take one of these scenarios and act on it. Mr. McGrath stated that is not what he agreed to. Ms. Salvatore stated not closing any options at this point. If 3 million cannot come out of the budget.

Mr. Siwinski asked Mr. Hale to repeat his understanding of what the sense of the Board was; status quo, status quo 1 million, status quo 2 million, status quo 3 million and a 4<sup>th</sup> scenario Willis and 3 million dollars.

- ❖ A motion was made to accept option 6 to maintain all school buildings.

**Moved:** John McGrath

**No second**

Mr. Siwinski directed the Supt. to look at 4 scenarios for December 18<sup>th</sup> meeting. He asked if those scenarios were viable to do.

- ❖ A resident commented that everyone talks about money has anyone spoken about the repercussions of closing 2 elementary schools in what that does to resale of homes in Mineola, because people like the types of schools we have. Mr. Siwinski asked the Board if the Superintendent of Schools came back with 4 scenarios, could they get a different vote whether to close schools or not.
- ❖ A resident stated he also moved from the city area and sees what his child receives here. Mr. Siwinski explained why his parents moved to Mineola in 1958, because of the small schools. He is not in favor but has an obligation to the taxpayers who are not here.
- ❖ A resident commented the amount of tax dollars talked about, you can't put a price tag on the teachers care and the school system.
- ❖ A resident requested clarification on Status quo. Mr. Siwinski stated \$47 less if we cut 3 million. Mr. McGrath stated no increase if you cut 3 million out of the budget. Mr. McGrath stated if you divide \$200 you get \$16.60.
- ❖ A resident inquired that if you agree to work with community look at other options before last resort taking away neighborhood schools. Mr. Siwinski responded yes.
- ❖ A resident commented that her children had a great experience at Willis, classes were equal. If they go back to elementary, inequities could happen again. The resident felt that PreK and Kindergarten is an important foundation and that there are educational benefits of slightly larger schools. If schools closed she would trust administration and staff, children would still have a great education.
- ❖ A resident commented that this was the first time she was hearing to close Willis. Drs. Fowler and Beni were paid a lot of money why did they not come up with that option.
- ❖ A resident stated that if anything is closed she does not want lose Mr. Gaven.
- ❖ A resident commented that everyone has an opinion, commended Board for how they have acted. If the Superintendent of Schools is coming back December 18<sup>th</sup> the community won't see it that night. They recommended that the Board vote at the next meeting. Mr. McGrath responded that everybody thinks the Board did something tonight that they did not do.
- ❖ A resident stated that no one wants to see a school close or programs sacrificed. But non-essential programs sacrifice some secretaries and not athletic program. Look at transportation, may be these people who enjoy the benefit can pay \$20 a month. Mr. Siwinski stated that in the support of Ms. Salvatore's proposal we are charging the Superintendent of Schools with that.
- ❖ A resident complained that the High School is spending \$23,000 in paper and elementary \$6,000. This is the paperless age, internet.
- ❖ A resident inquired if it was possible to revisit the teachers' contract. Ms. Salvatore responded that the district's attorney asked if we could open up contract that were settled and it is not an option. We can ask the union to pay more for their insurance.

- ❖ A resident commented that as a taxpayer she is looking for a value of her dollar. Mr. Siwinski asked her about what she thinks about Willis. She responded that her daughter loves her teacher she would do the same anywhere. If we asked every union to give back 1%, the Superintendent gives back 2%. Mr. Siwinski responded we don't have any choice if we close a school we may have a cap a line for \$500,000 for capital improvement. The Superintendent of Schools stated that our capital upgrade is \$650,000. The resident asked does she need to go to a finance committee meeting? Mr. Siwinski stated that some thing about neighborhood schools transportation benefit to education. Transportation has no educational value. Finance did a transportation study. PreK is unfunded.
- ❖ A resident inquired about a 3 million dollar reduction from an 80 million dollar budget. Mr. Hornberger responded that the Board has asked administration to come back to the Board with recommendations. He is not optimistic, like the Administration, that State Aid will come in flat next year. Mr. Siwinski stated his biggest motivation is to provide the best education for our students. Ms. Salvatore interjected at the best cost. There is a big construction project on Old Country Road that will influx tax dollars for the school district. Maybe Ms. Salvatore is right to hold the line during the hard times and until construction opens up. Mr. Hornberger stated that the other aspect from financial perspective is the district may have to set aside 3 million dollars per year for GASB 45. Mr. Siwinski stated that Albany may hold off. Mr. Hornberger stated that the Board delivers different things at different buildings. We need to do better by our children, and smarter. If we made some adjustments by program and/or by model, the incline will be lessened.
- ❖ The Superintendent of Schools explained rezoning might create a little more equity. The trick to rezoning cannot be done on a grade by grade level. Rezone first grade to Meadow and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Cross. May be some merit. The Superintendent stated that some schools that have small neighborhood schools maximize mileage instead of ½ mile to one mile. That can only happen by a vote.
- ❖ A resident inquired as to how much does it cost to run a bus for a year, i.e. driver salary, gas, insurance. The Superintendent of Schools responded approximately \$90,000. The Transportation budget is 3.5 million dollars. Mr. Siwinski stated that we can take transportation out.
- ❖ A resident commented that one of the Board's goals is to ensure fiscal stability of the school district. Fiscal stability is not one year planning it is for the future. The district has 29-39 million dollars in long term debt. Your total budget goes up 4% every year. The Superintendent's presentation before was to maintain a status quo program with a 2.2% increase and if forced to go to a contingent budget and still main neighborhood schools. Credible for one year not a prayer that that budget maintained at a major increase the next year. Point out to the Board don't take a one year view, things come behind next year. Discretionary spending one time cut. Mr. Hornberger responded that accrued pension and medical benefits teachers' are entitled to when they retire. All teachers in the past are being paid pension and medical benefits. No money put aside when they were working. They are entitled to it. That is the change coming when it gets clarified by NY State. The Superintendent of Schools stated the State has not given us a place to put it.
- ❖ A resident commented that it is coming but he guesses several million dollars a year. Mr. Siwinski stated that sitting on this side of the table we work very hard on this aspect. This is not a knee jerk reaction. A budget is out there that is acceptable to the people. Dynamics of this Board are diverse and is very healthy. We do have things to plan for and it might take a meeting to go through these viable options, maintain not increase



class sizes beyond 21, 22. A lot of people on all sides of the issue whether 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students should be in a High School building.

- ❖ A resident inquired as to which position Board Members feel it is appropriate to have 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the High School. Mr. Siwinski responded his son graduated 2 years ago in accelerated classes and think he would have benefited being in the High School sooner. If we have an opportunity to send a bright student into the High School in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, we send 8<sup>th</sup> grade to play JV sports. Ms. Salvatore responded that she also agrees with Mr. Siwinski. Her son would have had more benefits at the HS. The kids today benefit from the AP classes and the earlier they are getting it the better off they are. Mr. McGrath stated that there are enough problems with the 9<sup>th</sup> graders are at the High School. Mr. Hornberger stated he sees from an 8<sup>th</sup> grade perspective an educational value and benefit for certain children utilizing a larger scope at the High School. We don't allow underclassman to leave the campus only Seniors. The resident commented that after-school parties. Mr. Hornberger stated that High School congregate outside of the Middle School and their schools are separated by 9 blocks and you still have that issue. Not 7<sup>th</sup> grade, but considering 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Mr. Hale responded that 7<sup>th</sup> grader absolutely not, but 8<sup>th</sup> grade probably say no, but to look at it feasibly is something he would be open to.
- ❖ A resident commented that nothing is off the table. Options 3 and 4, community voted strongly, #1 option 4, 2.9 savings doesn't see where that gets you to where you want to go. Mr. Siwinski stated that if we go back in time we wanted to have this option as a cost saving entity. Current economy, the Aid brings all of this more urgency. If this was not the crash year, and State Aid was there, we probably would not be discussing this with budget. Mr. Hornberger referenced Drs. Fowler and Beni that at the end of May broke down by components. You say the community had said, 3,4,6, which was presented last Monday gave a full scope, focusing on 3,4,6 a layering prospective.
- ❖ The Superintendent of Schools stated that Adria articulated how you cannot assess quality of a school district by test scores. What it is like to be raised in our school system. He has been part of 5 or 6 school systems, what makes Mineola unique is a real sense of raising kids. We do these things and the students appreciate it.
- ❖ A resident commented that he graduated from the High School went through district 4 year college no regrets works at a MS/HS environment combined program. The resident stated that his school is interested in renting a school. Before you close a school, great insight not to sell buildings. Mr. Siwinski suggested calling Dr. Nagler or Dr. Licopoli about this.
- ❖ A resident inquired if the Board understood a school like Jackson that has a large population. Just voting in general is going to skew your outlook. They just don't want their school touched. A school like Hampton has a small voting population. How do they get an equal vote. Mr. Siwinski stated he represents the voting population who send their children to our schools and those who don't. The resident stated that Hampton and Meadow should have an equal voice even though they are not as large as Jackson.

Mr. Siwinski stated that it is late and the gentleman under the video camera has to take the Board's picture, and he probably has an AP test tomorrow and recessed the meeting at 10:35p.m.

At 10:40 p.m. the meeting resumed.

#### **K. Board of Education Reports**

- Comments from Board President

Mr. Siwinski stated that when he first got on the Board part of the configuration came up by him and spoke to Senior Members. This Board has the courage to ask the questions and thanked them for doing that. Mr. Siwinski needs to hold a meeting on Tuesday evening, 11/25/08 at 6:30 p.m. to meet with district's counsel Florence Frazer.

Mr. Siwinski will attend the Willis PTO meeting; Mr. McGrath will be attending Cross on December 1<sup>st</sup> and Willis on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. There will be no other PTA meetings in December.

- Board Committee Report
- Superintendent of Schools' Reports & Comments
  - Superintendent Comments

The Superintendent of Schools announced that the High School was putting on the play, *The Crucible*, this evening and tomorrow and encouraged all to attend. Next Monday PTA Presidents and Administrators would be attending a dinner of Nassau County PTA Presidents. Also, Mr. Amitrano was named Physical Education Teacher of the year. He extended a Happy Thanksgiving to everyone.

- Status Report: State Aid – Potential Budget Impact & Projections
- Table Reports
  - Finance and Operations Report
    - Monthly Financial Report
    - Building & Grounds Report
      - Building Usage
      - Vandalism
      - Work order status
    - Transportation Report
  - Special Reports
    - \*Public Questions - Board Committee Reports; Student Organization Report; Superintendent's Report; Table Reports (All Finance & Operation Functions); and Special Report

**L. Adjournment**

At 10:47 p.m. a motion was made to adjourn this meeting of the Board of Education.

**Motion:** Laraine Salvatore  
**Second:** William Hornberger

**Yes:** Terence Hale  
William Hornberger  
John McGrath  
Laraine Salvatore  
Stephen Siwinski

**No:** None

**Passed:** Yes

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Donna Martillo  
District Clerk**