

Special Meeting

A Preliminary Public Hearing of the Board of Education of the Northport-East Northport Union Free School District was held on Wednesday evening, April 15, 2009, beginning at 6:30 p.m., in the Career Counseling Center at Northport High School, 154 Laurel Hill Road, Northport, New York, with Mrs. Arlene S. Munson, President, opening the meeting and presiding.

Members present: Mr. Warren S. Arthur, Mrs. Liz Dragone, Mr. Joe Gannon, Mr. Rob Ingraham, Mr. Steven A. Meyerowitz, Mrs. Arlene S. Munson, Dr. Kay Hutchins Sato, Mr. Stephen V. Waldenburg, Jr., Mrs. Karen Wills

Members absent: None

Also present: Dr. Marylou McDermott, Superintendent of Schools

1. The President of the Board called the meeting to order.

Motion was made by Trustee Wills, seconded by Trustee Ingraham, to convene in Executive Session to discuss personnel matters.

Unanimously carried.

At 8:00 p.m., motion was made by Trustee Arthur, seconded by Trustee Dragone, to reconvene in public session in the large cafeteria at Northport High School.

Unanimously carried.

Public attendance: There were approximately one hundred ten persons present.

2. Mrs. Munson led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance; and
3. Pointed out the emergency exits
4. ADDITIONAL BUDGET INFORMATION FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT
5. BOARD AND COMMUNITY DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED 2009-2010 BUDGET

5.1 The President of the Board addressed the following letters received by the Board of Education regarding the 2009-2010 proposed budget:

The following letters were received regarding the fourth grade class size at Fifth Avenue Elementary School:

5.1.1 Nancy Cunningham, received March 30, 2009. Ms. Cunningham read her letter to the Board and urged them to consider using an unallocated teaching position to keep six classes in the fourth grade for the 2009-2010 school year.

5.1.2 Denise & Mark Logan, received March 30, 2009. Mrs. Logan asked the Board to consider keeping six classes for the fourth grade in the 2009-10 school year.

5.1.3 Mr. & Mrs. Martin Williams, received March 31, 2009. Mr. & Mrs. Williams were not present.

5.1.4 Krisann Tallman, received March 31, 2009. Ms. Tallman stated that she concurred with Mrs. Cunningham and noted that with a sixth section in the fourth grade the class size would average 19.8 students.

The President of the Board stated that the Board is very cognizant of the difficult economic times and will take all comments into consideration.

The following letters were received regarding the proposed budget:

- 5.1.5 Ms. Maria Shields, received March 25, 2009. Ms. Shields was not present.
- 5.1.6 Mr. Douglas W. Duval, received March 26, 2009. Mr. Duval was not present.
- 5.1.7 Mr. David J. D'Auria, received April 3, 2009. Mr. D'Auria was not present.
- 5.1.8 Ms. Gina Paveglio, received April 6, 2009. Ms. Paveglio was not present.
- 5.1.9 Mr. & Mrs. Gerard Sparacino, received April 6, 2009. Mr & Mrs. Sparacino were not present.
- 5.1.10 Mr. Richard Krulik, received April 6, 2009. Mr. Krulik was not present.
- 5.1.11 RPL, received April 6, 2009. RPL was not present.
- 5.1.12 Mr. & Mrs. Paul Smith, received April 6, 2009. Mr. & Mrs. Smith were not present.
- 5.1.13 Mr. Charles E. Libby, received April 7, 2009. Mr. Libby was not present.

5.1.14 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Slevin, received April 7, 2009. Mr. Slevin addressed the Board and stated that he was disappointed that the proposed budget did not include salary freezes or teacher cuts and that a 0% tax increase is the only acceptable budget. Mr. Slevin also stated that the Board should eliminate some electives to reduce costs.

The President of the Board stated that the Board is continuing to look at every single line item in the budget and are still looking for additional savings. Mrs. Munson also stated that the District is educating students for the 21st Century.

Dr. Marylou McDermott, Superintendent, noted that the administration has found over \$1.2 million in reductions.

- 5.1.15 Mr. Raymond Ritchel, received April 7, 2009. Mr. Ritchel was not present.

5.1.16 Mr. & Mrs. Albert Prisco, received April 7, 2009. Mr. Prisco addressed the Board and stated the only way to reduce the budget is for the unions to give back benefits. Mr. Prisco stated that the District should negotiate with the unions to reduce Medicare B payments, cap sick leave payouts on retirement, and stop matching 403b. Mr. Prisco also stated that the community cannot take any more tax increases.

Mr. Larry Blake, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Business, stated that the Medicare B premium are mandated by law and the health insurance contribution is a requirement of the Civil Service Department and the District pays the minimum required. Mr. Blake also stated that the District does not match 403b contributions.

5.1.17 Ms. Denise Summers Mumm & Ms. Jean Baron, received April 8, 2009. Ms. Baron read her letter to the Board. Ms. Baron suggested that the Board undertake a cost analysis to evaluate the array of electives offered and rotate electives as a cost saving measure. Ms. Baron stated that the District should change its overtime policy for all bargaining units and institute a flex-time policy. Ms. Baron also stated that the District needs to change its Use of Facilities policy to better compensate the taxpayers.

President Munson noted that there is some misinformation regarding under subscribed classes stating that very few classes are under subscribed. Mrs. Munson noted that there are several factors which could affect class size including co-seating, AIS mandates and breaks in scheduling where one section has a lower number.

Irene McLaughlin, principal of Northport High School, stated that electives are not extra courses that the students do not necessarily need, but students are required to take three additional courses outside of core required courses in order to meet graduation requirements.

5.1.18 Mr. Armand D'Accordo & Dr. Nina T. Dorata, received April 8, 2009. Dr. Dorata read her letter to the Board. Dr. Dorata stated that school budgets should not be prepared on a year to year basis and that it is fiscally irresponsible to propose a budget that increases spending and the tax rate given the state of the economy. Dr. Dorata stated that community members can add to the budget process by being a part of a budget committee. Dr. Dorata also noted that the District should hire a qualified, independent and objective permanent Assistant Superintendent for Business with extensive business experience, preferably a CPA, from outside the district to take control of and improve the budget process and all financial controls in the district.

5.1.19 Mr. Paul Diggs, received April 8, 2009. Mr. Diggs was not present.

5.1.20 Mr. & Mrs. Fred Leonardo, received April 8, 2009. Mr. & Mrs. Leonardo were not present.

5.1.21 Mr. Vincent Thorn, received April 8, 2009. Mr. Thorn was not present.

5.1.22 Ms. Sheila Whitlow, received April 8, 2009. Ms. Whitlow addressed the Board and addressed certain concerns in her letter. Ms. Whitlow inquired regarding the 2007-2008 school year actual expenditures which were approximately \$131 million and the budget amount was \$135 million, and where that difference went. Ms. Whitlow asked about the \$250,000 in payroll for school monitors that did not exist in 2007. She also inquired about creating or increasing participation fees for summer music, community services, driver's education, extracurricular activities and custodial/grounds care.

Mr. Larry Blake stated that the 2007-2009 fund balance was utilized to give back \$2 million to the taxpayers to reduce the tax levy for the following year.

Dr. McDermott stated that all District schools added school monitors for health and safety reasons and that it is the District's responsibility to protect the children.

Trustee Ingraham stated that the District's Use of Facilities policy is in the process of being reviewed and recommendations will be made to the Board of Education to improve that policy.

The Board noted that Ms. Whitlow will be receiving a written response to all of the questions in her letter.

5.1.23 D. Mancuso, received April 9, 2009. Ms. Mancuso was not present.

5.1.24 Ms. Maryann Lertora, received April 14, 2009. Ms. Lertora was not present.

5.1.25 Ms. Sally Prisco, received April 14, 2009. Ms. Prisco was not present.

5.1.26 Ms. Monica Murphy, received April 14, 2009. Ms. Murphy was not present.

The following letter was received regarding fourth grade class size at Fifth Avenue Elementary School:

5.1.27 Mr. Patrick McNelis, received April 9, 2009. Mr. McNelis was not present.

The following letter was received regarding second grade class size at Ocean Avenue Elementary School:

5.1.28 Ms. Mary Gilmore, received April 14, 2009. Ms. Gilmore read her letter to the Board and stated that there has not been any significant change in enrollment in the first grade at Ocean

Avenue School and currently there are four sections and only three sections are proposed for next year. Ms. Gilmore stated that cutting this section for the second grade will have detrimental results for every child in that grade and that these are very important years academically because they are transition years. Ms. Gilmore asked the Board to keep the four class sections for the second grade at Ocean Avenue School.

Dr. McDermott noted that a decision has not been made regarding the number of sections for the second grade at Ocean Avenue. Dr. McDermott stated that the numbers are fluid and will continue to be watched.

5.2 Opportunity for public input regarding the school budget for 2009-2010

<u>Name</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Louis Ohlig Resident	Stated that he has been a resident for over 52 years and the Board needs to stay aware of the current economic situation. Mr. Ohlig stated that the children educated here cannot afford to live here. Senior citizens are hurting and unemployment is getting worse and the STAR rebates are being discontinued.
Steven G. Brown Resident	Stated that he is in support of all students but something needs to be done so that the next generation can afford to live in the community. Mr. Brown stated that there should not be any pay increases and staff should be cut back. Mr. Brown also commented that district chairpersons should be able to teach a few classes.
Joe Sabia Resident	Stated that there seems to be an invisible wall between the Board and the community. Mr. Sabia noted that the county and state are laying off employees and everyone is falling on hard times and everyone is going to have to hurt. Mr. Sabia asked why the district chairpersons are not teaching a class. Mr. Sabia stated that the district has to tighten its belt and learn to say no.
Phil Fortuna Resident	Asked if the Board is considering doing an RFP for legal counsel. Mr. Fortuna also asked if the Board is looking into the teacher retirement system, if anyone is monitoring tax grievances and if the Board has considered buying new buses.
<p>Mr. Larry Blake stated that he spoke with the assessor's office and the estimated assessment was decreased and that is why the tax rate increase might be a little higher than the tax levy increase.</p> <p>President Munson stated that the District does not have the ability to reserve funds in anticipation of TRS.</p>	
Mike Kucza Resident	Inquired regarding the analysis of retiring teachers and asked the Board to consider the request to have community members involved in the budget process who may have alternative methods that may be beneficial. Mr. Kucza stated that the budget process will not change unless the community is invited in.
Barrie Bischoff UTN-EN	Ms. Jean Baron asked Ms. Bischoff's questions in her absence. Ms. Baron asked if the private nurses are district employees or outside contract and if those costs are reimbursed by insurance.
<p>Mr. John Lynch, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services, stated the school nurses are district employees and the district does seek Medicaid reimbursements following state guidelines.</p>	
Thomas Shortell Resident	Stated that the 77% of the budget is made up of salaries and benefits and the Board should negotiate with the teachers union and other unions to forego salary increases or reduce the percentage of their salary increase.

At 11:00 p.m., motion was made by Trustee Sato, seconded by Trustee Dragone, to extend the meeting.

Unanimously carried.

Joe Dragone
Resident

Stated that the per pupil costs when adjusted for inflation have grown by only about 1% per year for the past 20 years and the reason why they have grown is because the District has to accommodate state mandates. Mr. Dragone cautioned the Board regarding the savings found in this year's budget and stated that the problem will be the following year. Mr. Dragone stated that the District has had a steady \$4 million fund balance and the \$750,000 found in hiring replacement teachers will result in only having \$3.25 million left in the fund balance and then the following year instead of having \$2.375 million to return to the taxpayers the District may only have \$1.5 million to return and the tax levy will increase by the same \$750,000 found this year. Mr. Dragone stated that reserves are extremely important, don't cut back for one year's gain when for the next few years you will have tremendous increases in the budget for short-sightedness.

Tim Madden
Resident

Inquired regarding the extension of the kindergarten day and if there will be teaching assistants or teacher aides in the classroom and if there was funding in the budget to train teachers in the Words Their Way Program. Mr. Madden also expressed his concern over the class size at Ocean Avenue School.

Dr. McDermott stated that certified teaching assistants will be in the classroom.

Mrs. Sabina Larkin, principal of Ocean Avenue School, stated that the facilitators of the Words Their Way Program trained teachers on site and there is ongoing professional development in the school community as well as outside professional development which will continue next year.

Dr. McDermott stated that a particular grade level may always have a large number of students and it is a challenge to balance appropriate class size.

President Munson thanked everyone for attending the public hearing and stated that all comments made this evening will be considered by the Board while deliberating the final 2009-2010 budget number.

Motion was made by Trustee Meyerowitz, seconded by Trustee Sato, to approve all items under 6. and 7.

6. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT, GENERAL

6.1 Personnel Schedules, each dated April 15, 2009, and each made part of the official minutes:

- 6.1.1 Schedule A - Certified Staff
- 6.1.2 Schedule B - Non-Instructional Staff
- 6.1.3 Schedule C - Salary Transfers
- 6.1.4 Schedule D - Extra Pay

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT, FINANCIAL

7.1 Taking specified action on the following BIDS:

EDUCATION

- 7.1.1 Award - 09-116 Physical Education Supplies & Equipment
- 7.1.2 Award - 09-117 Athletic Supplies & Equipment

7.1.3 Award - 09-118 Art Supplies & Equipment

Vote on Trustee Meyerowitz's motion to approve all items under 6. and 7. was unanimously carried.

8. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT - FOR INFORMATION ONLY

8.1 Schedule I - Home Instruction

There being no further business to discuss, motion was made by Trustee Meyerowitz, seconded by Trustee Sato, to adjourn the meeting.

At 11:10 p.m. the Chair declared the meeting adjourned.

Beth M. Nystrom
District Clerk

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