

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COMMITTEE OF
THE TOWNSHIP OF WANTAGE, HELD AT HIGH POINT REGIONAL HIGH
SCHOOL, 299 PIDGEON HILL ROAD, WANTAGE, N.J. ON MAY 3, 2010**

Mr. Walter Stumpf, High Point Regional High School Board of Education President, called the meeting to order.

All persons present participated in the Salute to the American Flag

Mr. Stumpf offered the open public meetings compliance act statement on behalf of the High Point Regional High School Board of Education.

Mr. Stumpf welcomed Mr. Neil Cramer, Sussex County School Business Administrator, to the meeting. Mr. Cramer stated his interest in assisting all parties to understand and accomplish the Defeated School Budget review process.

Ms. Linda Alvarez, High Point Regional High School Board Secretary, called the roll of the members of the High Point Regional High School Board of Education.

Present: Walter Stumpf Jr., Charles Musilli, III, Thomas Case, Joseph Hoffmann, Garrett Link, Joseph Luna, Kenneth Nelson, Edward Vander Berg

Absent: Harold Rowan III

Mr. Stumpf allowed the respective governing bodies of the five sending districts of High Point Regional High School to read their Open Public Meetings Statement, and call the roll of their respective governing body members.

Mayor Chris Parrott of Sussex Borough read the Open Public Meetings compliance statement of Sussex Borough. Upon roll call, the following members of the Sussex governing body were present:

Present: Bruce Labar, Katherine Little, Jonathan Rose, James Fransen, Edward Meyers, Mayor Parrott

Absent: Frank Dykstra (subsequently present later in the meeting)

Council President William Bathgate of Branchville Borough read the Open Public Meetings compliance statement of Branchville Borough. Upon roll call, the following members of the Branchville governing body were present:

Present: William Bathgate, Marc Lordi, Wayne Howell, Richard Van Stone, Katieanne Harrison, Frank San Phillip

Absent: None

Mayor William Hahn of Frankford Township read the Open Public Meetings compliance statement of Frankford Township. Upon roll call, the following members of the Frankford governing body were present:

Present: Mayor Hahn, Gary Larson, Sam Castimore

Absent: None

Mayor Clara Nuss stated, "This meeting is being held in compliance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, Public Laws 1975, Chapter 231. It has been properly noticed and posted to the public, and certified by the Clerk."

Mayor Nuss requested the Clerk to call the roll. Upon roll call, the following members of the Wantage Township governing body were present: Mayor Nuss, Committee members DeBoer and Gaechter. The following members were absent: None

Mayor Richard Bruning of Lafayette Township read the Open Public Meetings compliance statement of Lafayette Township. Upon roll call, the following members of the Lafayette governing body were present:

Present: Mayor Bruning, George Sweeney, John D'Angeli, Richard Hughes, Gregory Corcoran

Absent: None

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION

Mr. Stumpf opened the meeting to the public at this time for any questions or comments with respect to the defeated school budget of High Point Regional High School.

William Gettler, Wantage Township, expressed support for cuts to the budget totaling \$612,703 and an additional \$750,000.

Karen Dispenziere, Wantage Township, expressed support for the budget tax levy to remain as it is currently presented without further cuts.

Steve Peltier of Sussex Borough expressed support for the budget tax levy to remain as it is currently presented without further cuts.

Greg Youngman, High School Principal, expressed support for the budget tax levy to remain as it is currently presented without further cuts.

H. Dunleavy, a resident of Frankford Township, expressed his position in favor of regionalization of schools, and supported the suggested cuts identified by Mr. Gettler.

Debbie Disanza, Wantage Township, announced the formation of a parents group to support efforts at finding a solution to the school funding crisis, and urged that if cuts must be made, to make them as minimal as possible.

Additional statements expressing support for the budget tax levy to remain as it is currently presented without further cuts were made by Diane Mulford of Wantage Township; Eugene Emering, Mathematics Supervisor at HPRHS; Joan Smith, a teacher at HPRHS; a resident of Frankford Township; Gib Carter, Athletic Director at HPRHS; K. Lockwood of Sussex Borough; J. Heinke of Branchville, who also spoke in support of the special education program at HPRHS; John Tallamy, Assistant Principal at HPRHS; a resident of Frankford Township; Kathy Compa of Wantage Township; J. Myerson, a High School student; Linda Barry of Wantage Township; Kayeleigh Mallon, HPRHS Student President; Art Mina, Science Teacher at HPRHS who also pointed out that HPRHS is a Blue Ribbon School; Gabrielle Niejadlik, a HPRHS student; J. Sutton of Branchville; a HPRHS student; and Lisa Frisbie of Wantage Township.

Mr. Stumpf thanked every one for their comments.

Mr. Hoffmann, speaking as the Chairman of the Board of Education Finance Committee, offered a statement of explanation regarding the budget preparation process, informing that the Board of Education has made almost 2 million dollars worth of cuts already to the Board of Education budget, and pointed out that the loss of revenue is outpacing all efforts to control costs.

At this time, Mr. Stumpf agreed to call for a five minute recess. After the recess, Mr. Stumpf called the meeting back to order.

Sussex

Mayor Chris Parrott expressed the Sussex Borough position with respect to the defeated High School budget, suggesting that \$241,180 in cuts be made, which would represent a 1.5% reduction in the proposed tax levy increase. Mayor Parrott suggested that cuts could be achieved in administrative staff and salaries, and by imposing a 1.5% salary contribution toward the cost of health benefits.

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION, continued

Branchville

Representatives of Branchville Borough's Mayor and Council questioned the Administration's role in the budget review process, suggested privatization of lawn service, and inquired if savings could be identified in the fuel and gas budgets through shared services.

Frankford

Frankford's Mayor Hahn identified the 3.7% salary increase in the teachers' contract, and inquired if a rollback was possible; inquired if it were possible to implement the 1.5% contribution toward health benefits; inquired if additional cuts could be identified; inquired regarding class size.

Mr. Larson expressed mixed feelings regarding the task presented, stating that he understands the need to properly fund a thorough education, and he understands the extensive amount of cuts already made by the Board of Education, but also must be cognizant of the results of the election in which the voters defeated the school budget. Mr. Larson stated that he sees very little that can be cut more from the budget.

Mr. Castimore stated his position with respect to the condition of the economy and the efforts required to find an acceptable funding level for the education process.

A request was made to compile a comparative analysis of tax levy increases over the past several years compared to this year.

Wantage

Mayor Nuss thanked the Board of Education for their efforts; stated her belief that the voters have spoken; stated that Wantage Township has not yet come to a consensus on what the cut in budget level should be; looked forward to receiving answers to questions as they are asked; expressed the belief that the voters desired to see a pay freeze for teachers.

Mr. Gaechter questioned the wisdom of the school review process as it exists, but having said that, will endeavor to make a balanced, fair decision between the needs of the school system and the expressed desire of the voters.

Mr. DeBoer asked if additional shared services could be implemented; asked if savings could be achieved through busing scheduling; asked if administration staffing was top-heavy; asked if it were possible to reduce the number of guidance counselors; inquired regarding mandated programs; inquired regarding clubs and organization expenses, and sports participation.

Mr. Earl Snook, Chief Finance Officer of Branchville, pointed out that there has been a reduction in the Net Valuation Taxable for all five sending districts, which leads to increases in tax levy burden.

Lafayette

Representatives of the Lafayette Township governing body expressed the belief that they were not prepared to make any recommendations for budget cuts this evening.

At this time, Mr. Stumpf agreed to call for a ten minute recess. After the recess, Mr. Stumpf called the meeting back to order.

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Ms. Alvarez, Dr. Hannum and Mr. Musilli offered responses to each of the questions posed by the members of the respective governing bodies of the sending districts.

General discussion continued with respect to the defeated school budget.

Mr. Hoffmann stated that a desire has been expressed to identify the level of savings that would have been achieved if a pay freeze were implemented. Mr. Hoffmann stated that figure was approximately \$420,000. Mr. Hoffmann stated this level of reduction would drastically alter existing working conditions. Mr. Hoffmann stated that all recommendations for budget cuts have been reviewed and will continue to be reviewed, but that since so much of the school budget involves salaries and wages, it becomes a matter of extreme likelihood that any cuts implemented would be applied to the salaries and wages line items.

Mr. Hoffmann also identified the subject of courtesy busing as a possible area of budget cuts.

General discussion took place regarding an acceptable date for the next meeting for review of the defeated high school budget. The date of May 17, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. in the High School was agreed upon.

As there was no further business to discuss, Mr. Gaechter moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. DeBoer seconded the motion. Upon roll call,

Ayes: DeBoer, Nuss, Gaechter **Nays:** None **Absent:** None **Abstain:** None

Mayor Nuss declared this meeting to be adjourned.

James R. Doherty, Administrator/Clerk