

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COMMITTEE OF
THE TOWNSHIP OF WANTAGE, HELD AT THE WANTAGE SCHOOL, 815 ROUTE
23, WANTAGE, N.J. ON MAY 12, 2010**

Mr. Tom Card, Sussex Wantage Regional School Board of Education President, called the meeting to order. Mr. Card offered the Open Public Meetings Act compliance statement on behalf of the Board of Education.

Ms. Christina Riker, Sussex Wantage Regional School Board Secretary, called the roll of the members of the Sussex Wantage Regional School Board of Education.

Present: Thomas Card, Kathryn Compa, Alba Martinez, Marina Krynicky, Robert Heiden, Theresa Pastore, John "Craig" Coykendall, Lisa Frisbie, Walter Krynicky

Absent: None

Mr. Card allowed the respective governing bodies of the two sending districts of Sussex Wantage Regional School District to read their Open Public Meetings Statement, and call the roll of their respective governing body members.

Mayor Clara Nuss of Wantage Township 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 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: Bruce Labar, Edward Meyers, Mayor Parrott

Absent: Jonathan Rose (subsequently present as of 7:15 pm), Frank Dykstra (subsequently present as of 7:21 pm), James Fransen, Katherine Little

Mr. Card offered introductory comments regarding the efforts of the Board of Education in developing the school budget which was presented to the voters for consideration on April 20, 2010.

FLAG SALUTE

All persons present participated in the Salute to the American Flag

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION

Mr. Card opened the meeting to the public at this time for any questions or comments with respect to the defeated school budget of the Sussex Wantage Regional School District.

Debbie Disanza, Wantage Township, reported the formation of a parents group to support efforts at finding a solution to the school funding crisis, and urged that no further cuts be made to the school budget.

William Gettler, Wantage Township, expressed support for cuts to the budget, suggesting the need for at least three quarters of a million dollars in cuts.

Art Jacobs, Wantage Township, expressed support for reductions in the school tax levy, identifying areas that he believed could be cut.

Karen Dispenziere, Wantage Township, inquired regarding levels of percentage of increase in municipal budgets made by the governing bodies in the prior year's budget, and expressed support for the budget tax levy to remain as it is currently presented without further cuts.

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Rudy Solar, Wantage Township, spoke in favor of teacher retirements as a means by which to accomplish budget savings.

Jennifer Craig, Wantage Township, expressed concern with a proposed bill being considered in the State Legislature which would reorganize decision making power at the county level and render local elected board members to an advisory role. Ms. Craig supported the existing proposed tax levy without further reductions.

Ken Karnis, Wantage Township, expressed disappointment with the tendency he sees for “teacher bashing”.

Diane Snure, Wantage Township, suggested cuts in busing, changes in bus routes, and no need to cut childrens’ programs to accomplish the necessary budget reductions and expressed concern that sports scheduling is interfering with academics.

There being no one else present wishing to address the governing bodies at this time, Mr. Card closed the meeting to the public and invited the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Wantage to offer comments on the defeated school budget tax levy.

Mayor Nuss stated her belief that she has an obligation to look at both sides in this issue; she does not wish to cut programs; the taxpayers did vote, so there is a need to address the expressed voice of the people; she recognizes and appreciates that the Board of Education has already made considerable cuts to the budget, but the people have voted in favor of doing even more. Mayor Nuss expressed a belief that the desire of the public was to see a pay freeze; Mayor Nuss suggested a need to seek a compromise. Mayor Nuss expressed some of the suggestions that were offered by the recently-formed concerned parents group, which included the areas of mowing, electricians, and business volunteers, among others.

Mr. DeBoer stated that no one is here at this meeting with the intention of bashing teachers, but the voters have spoken, and they are looking for cuts, there is no other choice. Mr. DeBoer questioned if cuts were possible in the busing program, and/or through reduced bus routes. Mr. DeBoer inquired if the Buildings and Grounds Supervisor was a “working Supervisor”.

Dr. Izbicki stated that he was.

Mr. DeBoer asked if there was a Buildings and Grounds Secretary.

Dr. Izbicki responded that there is a shared secretary with the IT Director.

Mr. DeBoer asked if any additional retirements had been announced since the school budget was defeated, and if it were possible to achieve any savings through attrition in this regard.

Dr. Izbicki stated that there were two retirements announced, but it has not yet been determined what savings that would produce.

Mr. DeBoer asked if the enrollment reduction figures are taken into account for budgeting purposes.

Dr. Izbicki stated that this was indeed already included in the budget planning process.

Mr. DeBoer stated that senior citizens are faced with a social security freeze, and suggested a corresponding need for a teacher pay freeze to accomplish a school tax levy reduction of \$420,000.

Mayor Nuss stated that she recently saw statistics which indicated that a great number of households in New Jersey are currently child free.

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Mr. Gaechter stated that in his introductory comments, Mr. Card had indicated that the teachers had already agreed to several concessions, and asked for further detail regarding those concessions.

Mr. Card explained that concessions were reached in terms of Retroactive pay, cost of living adjustments, and medical benefits.

On behalf of Sussex Borough, Mayor Parrott read letters in which the Mayor and Council of Sussex Borough requested teacher pay freezes and supported reductions in the tax levy of \$221,883. Mayor Parrott expressed support for teachers and their efforts. Mayor Parrott suggested that a reduction in the over all tax levy of 1.5% was an appropriate reduction.

General discussion took place regarding anticipated savings that could be anticipated through the retirements identified by Dr. Izbicki earlier in this meeting. After general discussion, Ms. Riker stated that, while the actual number will vary based on several different variables, for planning purposes it would be accurate to anticipate approximately \$40,000 in savings from each retirement.

General discussion took place among all parties in an attempt to reach an agreed-upon figure for a tax levy reduction.

Mr. DeBoer suggested hiring an outside auditing firm to review the budget and offer recommendations for cuts. This suggestion did not receive consensus support based on possible cost and time constraints in the budget review process.

Dr. Izbicki suggested re-implementing a semi-annual joint meeting between the Board of Education and the municipal governing bodies to provide an on-going dialogue regarding school budget status.

After additional consideration and discussion, general consensus among the majority of members present indicated the likelihood that support could be achieved by all three bodies of elected officials present, to decide upon a tax levy reduction in the amount of \$221,883.

On behalf of Wantage Township, Mr. Gaechter moved to adopt the following resolution, which was seconded by Mayor Nuss:

**RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND COMMITTEE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF
WANTAGE CERTIFYING THE TAX LEVY FOR THE SUSSEX WANTAGE
REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET FOR THE 2010-11 YEAR**

WHEREAS, the original Tax Levy on the ballot for the base budget of the Sussex Wantage Regional School District on April 20, 2010 was \$14,792,444; and

WHEREAS, the Amount of Reduction to the Tax Levy for the Base Budget is proposed to be \$221,883, and

WHEREAS, said reduction would establish the amount of tax levy being certified by the municipal government for the base budget as \$14,570,561, and

WHEREAS, the specific line item reductions, by mutual consent of all governing bodies involved in the defeated school budget process, shall be identified by the Sussex Wantage Regional School District Board of Education, and

WHEREAS, the revised budget is sufficient to provide a thorough and efficient education,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Township Committee of the Township of Wantage does hereby enact the above-established tax levy.

Prior to roll call vote, Mr. DeBoer expressed the belief that additional cuts were possible, including the possibility of creating a shared Business Administration staffing arrangement to achieve savings. There being no further discussion desired, Mayor Nuss called the question.

Upon roll call,

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

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At this time, the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Sussex adopted a similar resolution, calling for the same amount of tax levy reduction.

At this time, the Board of Education of the Sussex Wantage Regional School District adopted a similar resolution accepting the tax levy reduction called for by Wantage Township and Sussex Borough.

As there was no further business to discuss, Mr. Gaechter moved to adjourn the meeting on behalf of Wantage Township. 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 on behalf of Wantage Township.

James R. Doherty, Administrator/Clerk