

**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 17, 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.

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, Harold Rowan III

Absent: None

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

Absent: None

A member of the Mayor and Council 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:: Marc Lordi, Wayne Howell, Richard Van Stone, Katieanne Harrison, Frank San Phillip

Absent: William Bathgate

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

Absent: Gregory Corcoran

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.

Amy Cullen, High School student, spoke in support of the school budget and urged no further cuts be made to the school budget.

William Gettler, Wantage Township, expressed support for cuts to the budget.

A High School student spoke in favor of supporting the budget as it currently is proposed, without further cuts.

Maria Kucinski, Wantage Township, expressed a desire for consideration of minimal cuts to the budget in consideration of the level of cuts already made to date by the Board of Education.

Brian McGuinness, High School Student, expressed support for the budget, and suggested that Dr. Hannum should have rearranged his schedule earlier this afternoon to show support for the entire student assembly.

Karen Dispenziere, Wantage Township, offered comparisons between the proposed school tax levy increase and the increase proposed by local governing bodies, and suggested taxpayer savings could be achieved through cuts in municipal budgets, such as health benefits for elected officials.

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

Nicole Demarest, High School Student, expressed support for the budget tax levy to remain as it is currently presented without further cuts to school programs.

A High School Student expressed support for the budget tax levy to remain as it is currently presented without further cuts to school programs.

Mike Mina, High School graduate, expressed support for teachers and the school budget

Jen Maikis, High School Student, expressed a desire for the governing bodies to cut as little as possible, and expressed a desire to know specific areas that are being proposed for cuts.

A Branchville resident expressed the opinion that the Board of Education needs to be more frugal, and remember that tax increases affect every one.

Art Jacobs, Wantage Township, expressed his views regarding teacher raises and recent budget cuts made at the Sussex Wantage School district meeting.

Bob Maikis, Wantage Township, agreed that the health benefits of Wantage Township committee members affects the tax burden, and offered the opinion that it is possible to better manage the school system.

Jill Schaffer, Branchville, expressed support for the high school's efforts on behalf of the community, and highlighted accomplishments of the student community service program.

Diane Snure, Wantage Township, stated that the referendum was defeated, the school budget was defeated, and spoke regarding debt service impact on the tax levy, offering suggestions for possible locations of budget cuts.

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION, continued

Nicholas Carrera, an Elementary School student, supported the budget as it currently is proposed and expressed concern for future impact on education opportunity if more cuts are made.

Katie Kohle, High School student, expressed support for teachers and for the school budget.

Sean Post, Frankford, suggested the need to support the school budget as it is presented without further cuts.

At this point in time, Board member Ken Nelson explained that he was required to leave the meeting at 7:30 p.m. because of a prior commitment made before this special meeting had been called; Mr. Nelson expressed a belief that all parties must be better stewards of the tax burden while also preserving programs for the future. Mr. Nelson stated his belief that most people do not want further drastic cuts, and that he personally could support the level of reductions being suggested by Sussex Borough.

Jennifer Craig, Wantage Township, suggested that State Government in Trenton was to blame for the present situation, and offered her support for the efforts and accomplishments of teachers. Ms. Craig expressed a desire that no further cuts be made, but believed that some level of cuts may be inevitable, so urged that those cuts be as minimal as possible.

Tom Ryan, Branchville, expressed support for teacher efforts to save money.

A Frankford resident expressed support for the Board's efforts, and a desire to see some school programs reinstated, along with a restructuring of the sports programs.

Diane Mulford, Wantage Township, expressed support for Teachers' efforts, and disappointment with the Governor's position as it relates to education.

Debbie Disanza, Wantage Township, expressed support for the schools and teachers, requested support for a recently-created 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.

Christine Henry, Wantage Township, expressed disappointment with the Governor, and support for the efforts of teachers and students.

Lisa Frisbie, Wantage Township, expressed support for the school budget and urged that minimal cuts be made.

Mr. Stumpf thanked every one for their comments.

Linda Alvarez, School Board Business Administrator, offered a power point presentation to review changes in state aid, \$1.9 million in cuts already implemented by the Board of Education; 27 staff members eliminated; and additional areas of the budget reviewed for possible cuts.

Mr. Hoffmann, speaking as the Chairman of the Board of Education Finance Committee, offered a statement of explanation regarding the board's efforts on behalf of the taxpayers, and the attempt to minimize tax burden. Mr. Hoffman illustrated the likely impact of a \$100,000 cut in the tax levy.

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Dr. Hannum, Superintendent, expressed the position that this entire process is the result of a state-created crisis, in which Trenton has attempted to shift blame for their own fiscal shortcomings by taking away revenues that were supposed to be dedicated for property tax relief, and using those funds instead to deal with a state-level budget shortfall. Dr. Hannum expressed his support for the efforts and accomplishments of the High School staff and teachers, and support for the school budget as it has been proposed.

At this time, the High Point Regional High School Board of Education took action to recess their regularly scheduled meeting until such time as the Defeated Budget Review meeting is completed.

Mr. Stumpf invited the various members of the governing bodies to express their positions with respect to the defeated school tax levy.

Branchville

Representatives of Branchville Borough's Mayor and Council offered a proposal for a 2% reduction in the proposed tax levy, which they calculated to be in the amount of \$317,686.

Frankford

Representatives of Frankford's governing body expressed their various positions with respect to potential school budget cuts, then expressed consensus that they, also, would support a 2% reduction in the proposed tax levy, in the amount of \$317,686.

Wantage

Mayor Nuss stated that Wantage Township governing body has taken the position that \$460,965 in cuts is the appropriate tax levy reduction to enact.

Mr. DeBoer expressed a desire to see an Administration wage freeze and the resulting reduction in costs associated with a pay freeze.

Mr. Gaechter expressed his dissatisfaction with the entire school budget review process, expressing the belief that the system is flawed. Nevertheless, the process calls for him to consider cuts to the school budget, and he suggested that Administrative staff should lead the way by agreeing to a wage freeze.

Lafayette

Representatives of the Lafayette Township governing body offered a detailed analysis to support their recommendation for a \$564,618 reduction.

Sussex

Mayor Chris Parrott repeated the Sussex Borough position with respect to the defeated High School budget, that \$241,180 in cuts be made, but expressed a willingness to move the amount up to the \$317,686 figure in the spirit of seeking a unanimous resolution.

General discussion continued at this time with respect to the defeated school budget, with all members of the various governing bodies and Board of Education offering input and opinions regarding the proposals for budget cuts and tax levy reductions.

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Representatives of Lafayette Township suggested a compromise figure of \$400,000.

Representatives of Branchville and Sussex declined to agree to that level of cuts.

Mr. Stumpf reminded all parties present that in the event of a failure to reach a unanimous resolution, the issue of certifying the tax levy would be sent to the County Office of Education.

Representatives of Lafayette Township stated their willingness to accept the proposed reduction of \$317,686 in the spirit of obtaining a unanimous resolution.

Representatives of Wantage Township stated their willingness to accept the proposed reduction of \$317,686 in the spirit of obtaining a unanimous resolution.

Each of the municipal governing bodies, and the High Point Regional School District Board of Education, adopted respective resolutions in support of reducing the tax levy in the amount of \$317,686.

Mr. DeBoer moved to adopt the following resolution. Mr. Gaechter seconded the motion.

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

WHEREAS, the General Fund portion of the original Tax Levy on the ballot for the base budget of the High Point Regional High School District on April 20, 2010 was \$15,884,307; and

WHEREAS, the Amount of Reduction to the Tax Levy for the Base Budget is proposed to be \$317,686, and

WHEREAS, said reduction would establish the amount of the General Fund portion of the tax levy being certified by the municipal government for the base budget as \$15,566,621 and

WHEREAS, the specific line item reductions is as established in Appendix A herein, 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.

Upon roll call,

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

Each of the governing bodies present offered motions to adjourn their respective participation in the joint meeting.

As there was no further business to discuss, Mr. DeBoer moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Gaechter 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