

BOARD BRIEF

Regular Meeting

November 23, 2009

AT THE November 23, 2009 MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, THE BOARD TOOK ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS...

AUDIT PRESENTATION

Mr. William Colantano, Jr. presented the June 30, 2009 Audit Report. He indicated that he had met with the Finance Committee prior to the Board meeting this evening. The audit is over 100 pages in length, with some pages being more important than others. Mr. Colantano stated that taxation represents 90% of the district's revenues. In 2008-2009, the district actually had a slight decrease in state aid. The state aid has not been keeping up with the district's needs. Mr. Colantano explained that the decrease in the expenditures for transportation reflects the offset applied due to the subscription busing revenue received.

The district's surplus continues to be an issue of concern. The amount of surplus the district has is not adequate for the size of the budget. The actual unrestricted free balance is \$71,000. Mr. Colantano referred to the six year analysis of free balance that he had prepared. From a high of \$800,000 that amount has decreased to \$200,000. The largest portion of the \$200,000 is set aside - \$54,000 for outstanding encumbrances and \$94,000 for capital reserve. The remaining amount, \$71,000, would be the district's only source of revenue for emergency situations or unexpected special education expenses and is really not adequate. This is the second year that Mr. Colantano has recommended that the surplus be increased. The only way to rebuild the surplus is by underexpending the budget or realizing unanticipated revenue. Like Long Hill, most districts have also experienced a drastic decrease in their interest income. The state sets a limit on surplus. The surplus cannot be larger than 2% of prior year expenditures. For Long Hill that amount would be \$270,000 based on expenditures of 13.6 million.

Mr. Colantano noted that in 2008-2009 the budget was almost entirely expended. Mr. Esposito worked very hard to manage the situation so that the district did not overexpend the budget. Mr. Colantano referred to a worksheet that he had prepared showing the district revenues and expenditures over a ten year period. Over that period the local taxes have increased as state aid has not kept up with district needs.

It was noted that the district expenditures in the area of special education are a bit misleading. This is because the district also uses IDEA grant funding to support out-of-district tuition expenses, so not all of the special education spending is included in the current expense budget.

Mr. Colantano referred to the table in the budget that reflects the township's assessed valuation for the last ten years. The current assessed valuation is \$1,287,694,014.00. An increase in the tax levy of \$128,769 would translate to a one cent increase in the tax rate or \$75.00 for the home assessed at \$500,000.00. The appropriation of \$200,000 in fund balance into the 2007-2008 budget gave little tax relief to the average homeowner in town, but had a significant negative effect on district finances.

Schedule J-7 in the audit report provides an analysis of the last ten years of tax rates for the local school district, the regional school district, the county and the municipality. While there was a re-evaluation during that time period, the county had the largest decrease in the tax rate. The school district had the second largest decrease at 31%.

Schedule J-13 provides the legal debt margin information. The school district has an allowable debt limit of 55 million according to the formula, but actually only has 14 million in debt. The district's construction projects several years ago met the needs of the community and the district benefited from being able to take advantage of state financing of 40% of the eligible costs.

Mr. Colantano concluded his remarks by stating that his biggest concern is still the district surplus. He recognizes that the district has made some decisions to turn things around, such as the implementation of pay to play for sports and activities and subscription busing. Some gains have been made, but more are needed.

PRIVATE SESSION

The Board of Education then adjourned into private session to discuss the recommendation for appointment of a principal of Gillette School/Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Upon returning to Public Session, the Board continued with the Regular Meeting agenda.

COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee – Mr. McCarthy reported that the Finance Committee met this evening prior to the Board meeting. In addition to reviewing the audit with Mr. Colantano, the committee reviewed the five figures in resolution number 2. The Bills List and Payroll are in order and recommended for approval. In addition, the committee also reviewed the October Financial Reports of the Board Secretary and Treasurer. The Finance Committee also recommends approval of that resolution. Mr. McCarthy thanked Mr. Esposito for a good annual audit. Mr. Esposito has a tough job and he does it well. Mr. Esposito stated that he has a good staff in his office.

Buildings and Grounds – Mr. Dreyer reported that he met with Mr. Esposito, Dr. Rovtar, Mr. Salvatoriello of Temco and Mr. McNany, Director of Long Hill Recreation, this morning to review the facility use for the upcoming winter season. Temco has the buildings fully staffed at night and access to other areas of the buildings is limited. The basketball teams also have parents designated to supervise students outside of the gym. Things seem to be going smoothly.

Policy Committee – Mr. Carbone stated that Mrs. Herrmann has sent the Policy Manual to New Jersey School Boards Association for the free policy manual review service that they provide. The policy committee had been moving ahead with each member reviewing five policies at a time. Following a presentation at the Fall Workshop that Mr. Carbone attended, the committee will now be focusing first on the policies that have recently been updated by NJSBA.

Curriculum Committee – Mr. Carbone indicated that the Curriculum Committee is recommending the adoption of the Family and Consumer Science Curriculum for Grade 6 and the Physical Education Curriculum for grades Kindergarten through 8 this evening.

Technology Committee – Mr. Blocker reported that the Technology Committee met on November 16th. Business FIOS has been installed at Gillette and Central Schools and has greatly improved the bandwidth issue. Millington will be online with FIOS soon as well. The cost of the service is \$600.00 per month. The district plans to eliminate three of the T-1 lines currently in place which should save \$1,200 per month. We will need to evaluate the use of bandwidth. Our productivity and efficiency should be further increased when new computers are purchased down the road. Also at the meeting, Mr. Blinder demonstrated a new piece of technology that allows students to use a response device, about the size of a television remote control, to transmit answers to teacher-created questions. The responses are gathered and tabulated electronically, allowing the teacher to assess how well the students understood the lesson and mastered the concepts presented in it. Mr. Blinder will soon begin working on the new three year Technology Plan that the district will have to submit to the New Jersey Department of Education.

Mr. Blocker also noted that he visited the second grade classes of both of his daughters last week as part of American Education Week. He was very pleased with what he saw. There was excellent student participation and the classes ran very well.

Mrs. Scanlon echoed Mr. Blocker's comments, having also had the opportunity to visit classes for her children last week.

President's Report – Mrs. Scanlon stated that a number of Board Members had attended the Regionalization/Consolidation Informational Forum that was held last Thursday at Green Brook Middle School. Residents from all of the affected communities: Green Brook, Long Hill, Warren, Watchung and North Plainfield were in attendance. Attendance was higher than had been expected. Gwen Thornton, from the New Jersey School Boards Association, provided an overview of the legislation that called for the Executive County Superintendents

to make recommendations to the Commissioner of Education regarding regionalization or consolidation of the districts in their county. Dr. Trudy Doyle, the Somerset Executive County Superintendent, reported that at the present time the funding to do the feasibility studies is not being released so this issue is pretty much on hold at the moment.

A discussion ensued regarding the involvement of North Plainfield in the regional configuration. Dr. Rovtar noted that this was explained by Dr. Doyle as an attempt to pair the affluent districts with the less wealthy districts in the county to create more equity for students. A question was raised about the feasibility of having Long Hill regionalize with a neighboring Morris County district. Dr. Rovtar explained that the surrounding Morris County districts with high schools, such as Madison or Chatham, are all at capacity in their high schools. In order to accommodate the 500 plus high school students that Long Hill has, an addition would have to be built on to those high schools. Given the current economic climate and the fact that school districts, in order to gain state approval of construction projects, have to demonstrate that there are 'unhoused' students for which classroom space is needed, it is unlikely that the state would approve additions to Chatham or Madison High School to house Long Hill students when adequate space has already been constructed for them at Watchung Hills. In order for any consideration of consolidation to go before the voters, a feasibility study needs to be done according to the law. Since there currently is no funding for these studies, it does not appear that this issue will be moving forward for the foreseeable future.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Dr. Rovtar stated that she is very pleased this evening to recommend a candidate to the Board for appointment as the Gillette School Principal/Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Lori Jones is currently serving as the assistant principal of the Liberty Corner School in Bernards Township. She is a former Kindergarten Teacher and recipient of the Governor's Teacher Recognition Award, so she knows the needs of the early elementary student very well. She has been involved in curriculum work in Bernards as well as serving as an instructor for the Staff College. She has also been very involved in the school's character education program. The search committee was impressed with Lori's enthusiasm and feel that she will be an excellent addition to the administrative team. Dr. Rovtar thanked the members of the Search Committee: Mrs. Scanlon, Ms. Barone, Mrs. Plotkin, Mrs. Franklin, Mrs. Anasterio, and Mrs. Dawson for their willingness to be part of this process.

Dr. Rovtar reported on another Interim Decision that had been received from the Government Records Council regarding a separate complaint that had been filed by Howard Kupferman back in 2007. This decision was based on an "in camera" examination of a document (Mr. DiBenedetto's letter of resignation) which had been redacted by Mr. Esposito before it was released to Mr. Kupferman in response to an OPRA request. Mr. Esposito was required to submit an unredacted copy of the letter to allow the GRC to determine if the redaction was proper.

There were two redactions in the letter. The first redaction pertained to an affirmative action complaint. The GRC determined that this redaction was appropriate because Mr. DiBenedetto mentioned the personnel matter of another individual and the law exempts from disclosure all personnel records except for certain information and specific records. The personnel information contained in this resignation letter was not of the nature that is disclosable. The second redaction was deemed to be not appropriate because the information is not specifically exempt from access. This redaction amounted to six words: "curriculum and instruction portion of administrative..." Mr. Esposito disclosed this redacted information to the complainant upon receipt of the GRC's determination. The redaction had been made originally as it was felt that this statement referred to a specific district employee, not Mr. DiBenedetto himself.

The second point of the complaint referred to an invoice from Schwartz, Simon, Edelstein & Kessler (board attorney) dated March 15, 2007. The GRC determined that there were four entries with redactions on the invoice. All redactions were proper because the redacted information is attorney-client privilege. The only exception was that the amount of time (0.75 hours) for one of the entries on the page should have been disclosed. Because the GRC disclosed the information as part of the findings, no further action was required on the district's part.

Dr. Rovtar noted that on Friday she received notification from the BASF Corporation in Florham Park that the grant application had been approved. A \$4,000.00 grant has been approved for the district to purchase an ELMO

and LCD projector. Funding was also provided to create a “young scientists” club for fourth and fifth grade students and to hold a Family Science Night at Millington School.

BOARD SECRETARY’S UPDATE

Mr. Esposito reported that there is a new representative that he is dealing with at the School Development Authority. Some additional documents regarding insurance certification were requested and Mr. Esposito provided them. It is expected that the \$175,000 owed to the district should be released soon.

Mr. Esposito has been meeting with the principals to review the particulars of their building budgets with them. The teachers will begin working on their individual requests. Mr. Esposito will be working on preparing the salary, benefit and insurance information.

It was noted that there is an item on the agenda to join the Alliance for Competitive Telecommunications. This cooperative will allow the district to take advantage of better pricing for these services if better rates are obtained through cooperative bidding. There is no cost to the district to belong to this cooperative.

It was suggested that the Buildings and Grounds Committee and the Finance Committee schedule meetings to discuss budget related issues prior to the next Board meeting.

With regard to the audit report, Mr. Esposito thanked his staff. They are excellent employees and have contributed much to the solid audit reports we have received over the last few years.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr. Sandow stated that he was watching the Board meeting from home and was confused by the auditor’s presentation, particularly the comment about the taxes going down by a certain percentage. Mr. Blocker clarified that it was the tax rate, not the taxes, that the auditor was referring to. Mr. Sandow stated that he would like to obtain copies of the documents the auditor had prepared. Mr. Esposito stated that the audit report is very complex and a difficult document to present in such a limited amount of time. Mr. Sandow stated that the primary function of the auditor is to ensure that the business functions are performed properly.

Mr. Sandow questioned the resolution for the demographic study and why it was being done now as we are about to have a new census done. Dr. Rovtar explained that the district’s five year long range facilities plan is coming to an end and the district the preparation of a demographic study is one component of the preparation of a new five year plan.

RESOLUTIONS

Minutes

- Approved the minutes of the Worksession Meeting of November 9, 2009 as presented.

Financials

- Approved the Payrolls for October 15 and 30, 2009 and the List of Bills for October 27, November 17 and 23, 2009 for payment as follows (as attached):

Payroll for October 15, 2009	
Fund 10	\$ 22,885.32
Current Expense-Fund 11	\$ 360,567.27
Capital Outlay-Fund 12	\$ -
Special Revenue Fund-Fund 20	\$ -
Capital Projects-Fund 30	\$ -
Debt Services – Fund 40	\$ -
Total	\$ 383,452.59

Payroll for October 30, 2009	
Fund 10	\$ 22,635.12
Current Expense-Fund 11	\$ 354,632.87
Capital Outlay-Fund 12	\$ -
Special Revenue Fund-Fund 20	\$ -
Capital Projects-Fund 30	\$ -
Debt Services – Fund 40	\$ -
Total	\$ 377,267.99

Bill List for October 27, 2009	
Fund 10	\$ -
Current Expense-Fund 11	\$ -
Capital Outlay-Fund 12	\$ 25,794.50
Special Revenue Fund-Fund 20	\$ -
Capital Projects-Fund 30	\$ -
Debt Services – Fund 40	\$ -
Total	\$ 25,794.50

Bill List for November 17, 2009	
Fund 10	\$ -
Current Expense-Fund 11	\$ 91,373.24
Capital Outlay-Fund 12	\$ -
Special Revenue Fund-Fund 20	\$ -
Capital Projects-Fund 30	\$ -
Debt Services – Fund 40	\$ -
Total	\$ 91,373.24

Bill List for November 23, 2009	
Fund 10	\$ -
Current Expense-Fund 11	\$ 411,992.70
Capital Outlay-Fund 12	\$ 3,548.00
Special Revenue Fund-Fund 20	\$ 81,484.14
Capital Projects-Fund 30	\$ -
Debt Services – Fund 40	\$ -
Total	\$ 497,024.84

- Approved a contract with Statistical Forecasting, LLC of Secaucus, New Jersey for the preparation of a demographic study and presentation to the Board of Education for the period 2010 through 2014 at a cost of \$3,800.00.
- Certified that as of October 31, 2009 after review of the Board Secretary's monthly financial report (appropriations section) and upon consultation with appropriate district officials, to the best of our knowledge, no major account or fund has been over-expended in violation of N.J.A.C. 6:20-2.13(B), and sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligations for the remainder of the year.
- Accepted the financial reports of the Board Secretary and Treasurer of School Funds for the month ending October 31, 2009.
- Approved the transfers for October 2009.
- Approved the Travel/Conference registration for the staff indicated for professional improvement or development as per the attached listing
- Accepted the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), as prepared by William Colantano, School Auditor, for the period ended June 30, 2009.
- Authorized the Business Administrator to submit and implement the Corrective Action Plan in order to implement the recommendations submitted in the June 30, 2009 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.
- Approved the following resolution:
The Long Hill Township Board of Education agrees to participate in the **Alliance for Competitive Telecommunications** with the Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission and the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials (NJASBO) for the period of July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2012. The

Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission shall be the lead Local Educational Agency (LEA) for this program. All New Jersey School districts are invited to participate in the **Alliance for Competitive Telecommunications, which is intended to fulfill the districts obligation under 18A:55-3.**

The Board of Education shall provide the Commission with accurate data, i.e. telephone line numbers for each number included in the bid and any other appropriate information necessary for the development of bid specifications.

The Board of Education shall not solicit bids or enter into a contract that would jeopardize the award of a contract for cooperative telecommunication services by the Commission. The Board shall abide by the award of contract made by the Commission. The Board shall not withdraw from this agreement prior to June 30, 2012.

The Board understands that the services to be provided under this cooperative purchasing agreement will include dial tone/local calls (where available), regional toll calls, long distance toll calls and voice over internet protocol (VOIP) when such option is chosen by the participating district.

All fees for the work of the Commission and the expenses of NJASBO will be incorporated into the price for services as provided by the successful vendor (s).

This participation agreement was approved at a regular board meeting of the Long Hill Township Board of Education held on November 23, 2009 and the Board of Education authorizes the School Business Administrator to execute this agreement on its behalf.

Special Education

- Approved the cost of a one-on-one aide for a trial period for student #5986153941, as per the student's IEP. The trial period is September 29, 2009 through December 31, 2009. The per diem rate is \$131.34 for 57 school days. The payment is to be made to the Cerebral Palsy Association of Middlesex County and is not to exceed \$7,486.38.
- Approved the payment of a tuition adjustment for the 2007-2008 school year for students #7521077232 and #8997839272 who attended the extended school year program in the amount of \$86.00 to the Banyan School based on the certified tuition rate as determined by the New Jersey Department of Education.

Personnel

- Appointed Lori Jones as Principal of Gillette School/Director of Curriculum and Instruction at the annual salary of \$103,000.00 to be prorated for the period January 25, 2010 through June 30, 2010.

- Approved the following appointment:

<u>Sport/activity</u>	<u>Advisor</u>	<u>Stipend</u>
Cheerleading	Christie Cortese	\$2,026.86*

*Stipend to be paid from pay to play fees paid.

- Approved the appointment of the following people to the Substitute Teacher List for the 2009-2010 school year:
Jennifer A. Carriker Josie Smith Christopher Wheeler

Curriculum

- Approved the following curriculum guides:

Family and Consumer Science
Physical Education

Grade 6 cycle class
Grades K-8

- Approved the field trip as listed below:

March 17, 2010
\$20.00 approx. (parent paid)

Kindergarten Trip
Crayola Factory

Easton, PA
5 teachers/19 parents
1 nurse

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr. Sandow asked about the Veteran’s Day Ceremony that is typically held on the front lawn at Central School. He had been told that the school district would not permit the ceremony since it involved an invocation. Dr. Rovtar explained that there might have been some miscommunication. Due to the fact that the ceremony involved prayer, we could not, under federal guidelines, allow our students to participate in the ceremony. The ceremony could have been held on school property, with school in session, as long as students were not present. Dr. Rovtar stated that while she is the daughter of a veteran and appreciates the service and sacrifice of our servicemen, she is charged with upholding the law and therefore cannot allow our students to participate in any event that involves prayer.

PRIVATE SESSION

The Board entered into Private Session for the purpose of discussing a professional services contract and for an update on a legal matter. Disclosure of the above will be permitted following formal action by the Board at an open public meeting. Formal action is anticipated as soon as these matters are no longer of a confidential nature.

ADJOURNMENT

FUTURE MEETING DATES

December 14, 2009 – Workshop and Regular Meeting – Town Hall – 7:30 p.m.
January 11, 2010 – Workshop Meeting – Town Hall – 7:30 p.m.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IS ENCOURAGED AT ALL BOARD MEETINGS
THE BOARD BRIEF DOES NOT REPRESENT OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF
EDUCATION.**