

**MINEOLA UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
MINEOLA, NY**

BUDGET HEARING/Workshop Meeting MINUTES

The Mission of the Mineola Union Free School District is to inspire each student to be a life-long learner, pursue excellence, exhibit strength of character and contribute positively to a global society.

Board Goals – 2010-2011

- **Educational**
 - *To further expand the district initiative of differentiated instruction specifically focusing on individual student achievement.*
 - *To continue our growth as professional learning communities focusing on common formative assessments to demonstrate individual student growth*
 - *To continue to provide the resources to attain a Intel finalist within the next three years*
- **Facilities**
 - *To investigate and embrace projects that incorporate 'green' technologies that over time will decrease our dependency on fossil fuels*
- **Finance**
 - *To continue the district initiative to actualize a five year plan to maintain a stable tax levy*

DATE: May 5, 2011

LOCATION: Willis Avenue School

OPEN WORK SESSION

7:00 p.m. 1st Floor Cafeteria

Board of Education

Terence Hale, President
Christine Napolitano, Vice President
John McGrath
William Hornberger
Irene Parrino

Central Office

Dr. Michael Nagler, Superintendent of Schools
Jack Waters, Asst. Supt. for Finance & Operations
Patricia Burns, Asst. Supt. of Curr., Instr., Assessment
Donna Martillo, District Clerk

A. Call to Order

At 7:00 p.m. the meeting was called to order by President Hale.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

C. Reading of Mission

- D. Moment of Silent Meditation**
- E. Dais & Visitor Introductions**

Also present: Dan Romano, Director of School Facilities & Operations.

President Hale stated the Board will be going out of order of the agenda and have the Superintendent of Schools make a presentation.

The Superintendent of Schools presented an overview of the budget. He discussed the following: proposed budget in the amount of \$84,221,638 and what it represents; budget to budget increase of 5.11%; budget transfer of \$2.6 million to capital reserve line for Hampton and Meadow projects; if removed transfer from budget the increase is 1.83%; how revenue is generated; deferring Federal monies until next year; tax levy increase of 2.37%; contingency budget removed items (Expense side reductions in the amount of \$2,791,933); what happens if the budget fails regarding the designated funds for Hampton and Meadow projects; vote after June 30th may be necessary if budget fails to access capital reserve fund; 2011-2012 budget, all programs continue; addition of world language for 3rd graders; expand iPad for grades 5, 6, and 7; introduce algebra and earth science to 8th grade; expand AP science; upgrade softball field at HS; conversion of HS tennis courts into parking; purchase of PE equipment and cabinetry for HS Art Room; and presented pictures of the Meadow project.

Mr. McGrath inquired about world language. The Superintendent of Schools explained the 2 schools of thought in teaching a language. Mr. McGrath inquired if only 2 grades were involved. The Superintendent of Schools responded yes and overtime the program would expand to all elementary grades. The Superintendent of Schools also discussed the following: longer periods, increasing intervention block; earning credits; 8th grade curriculum requirements; most of Cross Street's equipment will go to Jackson; planning moving teachers; dismantling Cross' library.

The Superintendent of Schools announced that a candidate officially withdrew his candidacy and explained the process in moving forward. The Superintendent of Schools offered Mr. Hornberger the option to move his ballot position to 1D instead of 1E. The Superintendent of Schools also reported on the following: ELA testing is ongoing; May 17th is the Annual Election and Budget Vote; recognized Ms. Denise Maynard for her time in organizing a performance of Willis teachers and Central Office Administrators in the production of Snow White and the 7 Dwarfs to raise money for the Japanese Tsunami relief. Two thousand dollars was raised.

F. Old Business

Mr. McGrath inquired about an e-mail regarding the Cross Street lease. The Superintendent of Schools explained that Solomon Schechter Day School was paying a higher rent to Glen Cove because it was compounded over 12 years, but since then the real estate market has declined. A resident stated that he felt the Mineola School District could have gotten more money in leasing Cross Street. The Superintendent of Schools responded that there are 4 vacant schools in Nassau County and gave an example, Island Trees. The Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education also discussed the square footage of Solomon Schechter at the Glen Cove site. Ms. Parrino inquired if Willis was ever looked at. The Superintendent of Schools responded there was no interest because

of the limited parking. Ms. Parrino inquired if Meadow had 100 parking spaces. The Superintendent of Schools responded no.

Mr. McGrath inquired if the Board would allow Mr. Castiglia, a resident, to address the Board. President Hale asked Mr. Castiglia if he would come up to the podium.

Mr. Castiglia stated that the Superintendent of Schools responded to his e-mail and he didn't want to discuss it at this evening's meeting. When he wrote the e-mail he was concerned that the district was getting less rent and felt the district should get as much rent as possible.

The Superintendent of Schools commented that he has no problem answering questions and added that Solomon Schechter's enrollment was declining and was looking for a smaller facility. Mr. Castiglia compared their Glen Cove site to Cross Street and felt Cross was a nicer facility. The Superintendent of Schools remarked that portable facilities are not considered squalor, and pointed out that New York City uses these types of trailers.

Mr. Hornberger addressed a suggestion Mr. Castiglia made in his e-mail regarding an open house at Solomon Schechter's Glen Cove site. The Superintendent of Schools inquired about this request. Mr. Castiglia responded that before entering into a business arrangement, it would benefit the district to know where the leaser is coming from.

Mr. Hornberger also inquired about Mr. Castiglia's e-mail that if the budget should fail it was because it was tied to the lease. Mr. Castiglia stated he never implied that anything was tied to the budget.

G. New Business

Ms. Napolitano addressed comments made by candidates seeking election to the Board regarding redoing the reconfiguration should the budget fail and they were elected. Ms. Napolitano inquired if the reconfiguration plan could be undone. The Superintendent of Schools responded, yes and stated a new Board has a right to do what they like for the educational program.

Ms. Napolitano presented a scenario if a new board were elected (Hampton would close and Willis would be PreK-1, Jackson and Meadow house grades 2-5, and the Middle and High Schools would remain as they are now) as expressed by Ms. Levitan at Meet the Candidates Night. Mr. McGrath interjected that Ms. Levitan stated the Board would consider that plan. The Superintendent of Schools stated that the 1st Bond made Willis a PreK-1 and it was defeated. President Hale invited Ms. Levitan, who was in attendance, if she would like to respond.

Mr. McGrath commented that the budget vote is a referendum on the reconfiguration. Ms. Levitan stated she would like to see if the community was willing, if the budget failed. Ms. Napolitano commented that she would like to hear Ms. Levitan's plan, and discussed the probable passing of a 2% tax cap. Mr. McGrath stated he has heard the tax cap has no chance of passing. The Superintendent of Schools stated if the budget fails, programs won't be lost, but fitting students into Hampton and Meadow will be a problem. He further stated that hiring back 15 teachers would impact the budget and future budgets and explained why.

Mr. McGrath stated there was no cap now. The Superintendent of Schools responded that the Senate has already passed their version of the cap.

Ms. Napolitano inquired about the tax levy if everything changed. Mr. Waters estimated 6.5% to 7% for the 2012-13 school year.

A resident inquired how much of that would be in hiring back teachers and the number being hired back. The Superintendent of Schools explained the process in excessing personnel when closing a building. He further stated 12 teachers if the 5th and 8th grade remain at their current schools, which would result in adding 1.2 million dollars back into the budget for the 2011-12 school year and the following year all contractual increases would impact the budget. The Superintendent of Schools responded that next year an additional building will close, Willis, and the gains from that will put the district at a 2.5% tax levy. The resident commented that there is much debate regarding the 2% tax cap and felt the district would have more leverage with a tax cap regarding negotiations with personnel. The Superintendent of Schools responded that the purpose of the cap is to cap contracts to equal the tax cap; and all contracts will be up effective June 30, 2011. The Superintendent of Schools stated that because the district is closing schools concessions from the unions are not currently needed. The resident commented that the district should be looking for concessions. The Superintendent explained why it wasn't easy to get concessions from the unions (Taylor Law).

A resident reminded the Board of the recommendations of the Triple C Committee.

A resident inquired about contractual health benefits. The Superintendent of Schools stated it is on the negotiating table. The resident inquired about pension costs. The Superintendent of Schools responded that he was asked to speak on that topic at a Senate Hearing and explained the problem. Mr. McGrath interjected there is a guaranteed rate of return. The resident inquired if an individual had to be retired to be guaranteed the rate of return. The Superintendent of Schools responded, still working, it depends on what Tier they are on. The resident felt the budget was tied to the reconfiguration. The resident commented about the Math enrichment program and wants equity between schools.

A resident inquired if the budget passed and a new Board hired back the excessed teachers could the budget cover their salaries. The Superintendent of Schools responded that the building projects would not be done in order to cover the salaries.

A resident inquired if the money could be taken from the undesignated fund balance instead. The Superintendent of Schools responded the money would have to be transferred. The resident inquired if it would result in a higher tax levy in the following year. The Superintendent of Schools responded yes. The resident inquired if this was legal. The Superintendent of Schools responded yes.

A resident inquired if salaries were the biggest savings in closing schools and asked what a 3% increase in salaries would mean. Mr. Waters responded \$1.4 million increase. The resident encouraged the district to offer a zero increase to the unions. The Superintendent of Schools stated both sides have to agree. The resident inquired what happens if they can't agree. The Superintendent of Schools responded there would be fact finding arbitration, because both sides must agree, and the Board wishes to take a hard line. Mr. Napolitano stated that it is a matter of what you want and can offer.

The Superintendent of Schools stated that there are plenty of teachers empathetic to the district, but they are members of a bargaining unit.

A resident inquired as to the cost of the reconfiguration process from the time it started until the present. The Superintendent of Schools responded approximately \$375,000.

Mr. Hornberger inquired if the budget fails, and a new Board is elected, and the teachers are hired back, what happens to the conversion of Willis. The Superintendent of Schools stated the number changes because \$1.2 million is needed to convert Willis.

Mr. Hornberger commented that for the last 3 years the teachers were asked to give back 1% as a good will gesture and the response was always no. Mr. Hornberger encouraged all to vote as to what is best for the community.

H. Consensus Agenda

I. Superintendent's Reports

J. Executive Session

At 9:06 p.m. a motion was made for the Board of Education to go into executive session to discuss the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person or corporation.

Motion: Mr. Hornberger

Second: Mr. McGrath

Yes: Irene Parrino
William Hornberger
Christine Napolitano
Terence Hale

No: John McGrath

Passed: Yes

At 10:45 p.m. the Board returned to open session.

K. Adjournment

At 10:45 p.m. a motion was made to adjourn this meeting of the Board of Education.

Motion: John McGrath

Second: William Hornberger

Yes: Irene Parrino
William Hornberger
John McGrath
Christine Napolitano
Terence Hale

No: None

Passed: Yes

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Martillo
District Clerk