

Board of Education
Nutley, New Jersey

March 1, 1999

The Special Meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Nutley, New Jersey was held in the Board Room, 375 Bloomfield Avenue, on Monday, March 1, 1999 at 7:30 p.m. with Mr. Joseph C. Pelaia, President, presiding.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF MEETING:

Mr. Pelaia read the following:

"According to the provisions of the 'Open Public Meetings Act' (Chapter 231, P.L. 1975), proper notice of this Special Meeting was provided on February 25, 1999. Said Notice was:

1. Posted at the entrance of the Board Office.
2. Mailed to The Nutley Sun, the Star Ledger, the North Jersey Herald & News and the Nutley Journal.
3. Mailed to the Nutley Township Clerk.

"The purpose of the meeting will be for the Board to consider the tentative school budget for 1999-2000.

"Formal action may be taken."

ROLL CALL:

The other members present at roll call were: Mrs. Michele Fleitell, Mr. Vincent Moscaritola, Mr. Steven P. Picciano, Mr. Alfred R. Restaino, Jr., Mrs. Agnes Roncaglio, Mrs. Maria Russo and Dr. Joseph Scarpelli. Late: Dr. Philip T. Casale (7:35 p.m.). Three citizens were present.

HEARING OF CITIZENS (Agenda Items Only):

Mrs. Barbara Bochese, 50 Cedar Street, wanted to know what kind of internal communication system existed in the elementary schools.

Dr. Casale entered

CONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONAL STATE AID:

Mr. Sincaglia explained developments that occurred on Friday with respect to the budget. As a result of actions by the Department of Education the district was advised that it would receive more than \$91,000 in state aid above and beyond what had been originally approved.

Mr. Sincaglia noted that the Board had basically two approaches to handle this money, the first being to keep the tax points as had been agreed on Thursday evening and add items back to the budget that had been eliminated or keep the budget in place as it was and use the additional money plus a small amount of additional surplus to lower the tax rate by one additional point.

Dr. Casale moved that the Board dedicate the additional money plus the amount of surplus mentioned towards tax relief, seconded by Dr. Scarpelli.

Mr. Picciano stated he wanted to put items back in the budget with this additional state funding. He noted he was still concerned about the possible State Health Benefits problem and the Board should put back the last items we had cut out for the good of the school system.

Mr. Pelaia called for a vote on Dr. Casale's motion. Dr. Casale's motion was adopted by a vote of 7-2 with Mr. Picciano and Mrs. Russo voting nay.

Mr. Sincaglia then passed out a resolution reflecting the position just approved by the Board.

ADOPTION OF 1999/2000 TENTATIVE BUDGET:

Dr. Casale presented and moved the adoption of the following resolution, seconded by Mrs. Fleitell.

BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board of Education hereby adopts a tentative budget for the 1999/2000 school year in the amount of:

General Fund	\$34,398,207
Special Revenue Fund	837,112
Debt Service	<u>172,546</u>
Total Budget	\$35,407,865 of which

the following amount shall be raised by local tax levy:

General Fund	\$28,597,839
Debt Service	<u>160,014</u>
Total	\$28,757,853

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Secretary be authorized to submit this budget to the County Superintendent for approval, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board also requests approval of the statutory Growth Limitation Adjustment for changes in enrollment in the amount of \$45,682 and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That upon receiving the approval of the County Superintendent, the Secretary be authorized to publish the 1999/2000 budget in The Nutley Sun.

Mrs. Russo asked a question relating to the joint efforts by the Board and the town at DeMuro Park, to which Mr. Sincaglia responded.

Mr. Restaino apologized for not being able to be at last Thursday's meeting and wanted to know if there was any possibility of having the budget come in at a zero tax increase. Dr. Casale noted that the Budget Committee had tried to see if that was possible but this was the best that could be done. Dr. Casale also thanked Mr. Sincaglia for all his efforts in coordinating the entire process.

Mr. Restaino made comments concerning how the Board might find additional savings in other areas. Mr. Sincaglia noted that this is done on a regular basis and pointed to such things as bidding for natural gas, the new initiative on electricity and the new cooperative purchasing venture for school supplies among other things that are done as a matter of routine. Mr. Restaino said he wanted to make sure we continued to be as diligent as we have been.

Mrs. Russo read the following prepared statement:

"I would like to give a brief history to a budgetary item totaling now over \$200,000. This expenditure is for partial payment of our school crossing guards. Let me be very clear in the fact that my request for eliminating this expense from the school budget in no way means that I want to eliminate crossing guards. I simply want to put the expense back into the township budget where it belongs.

"No other district that I checked with incurs this expense in their school budget.

"Back in 1987 the Nutley school budget was defeated and when it went to the township for review as is standard procedure the Board was asked for 'a truly realistic and honest figure' by which the school budget could be reduced without seriously jeopardizing academic programs and after much consideration a figure of \$150,000 was presented -- Mayor Chenoweth announced that the Commissioners decided that \$300,000 would be more appropriate (quoted from Nutley Sun 4/30/87).

"During debate between the School Board and the township the School Board went along with abolishing teaching positions, behind the wheel and summer school programs. We also assumed the expense for school crossing guards which up until then had always been part of the Town Commission budget. The Commission said they cut the school budget by \$125,000 with the provision the Board agreed to accept the responsibility of paying \$100,000 in salaries for crossing guards. Board President at the time Frank Hermo tried to persuade the Board of Commissioners not to make this cut in school appropriations -- I quote the Nutley Sun

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"Your job by law is not specifically to cut our budget, but just to review it. If you feel we've done a good job with the budget, you don't have to cut it at all' Hermo pleaded.

"The Board accepted the \$225,000 budget cut by a vote of 6-1, the 1 No vote by Dr. Anthony Baratta who said he voted no 'because we prepared a budget for an educational system and now we have been compromised into accepting an additional expense (school crossing guards) from a different governmental body (the Town Commission).'

"I agree with Dr. Baratta the Board of Education should be preparing a budget for an educational system and not continue to pay this Public Safety expense which is the Town Commission's responsibility. This should have been a one time expense not an accepted practice of misappropriation of funds for over 12 years!! We have spent almost 2 million dollars which could have otherwise been spent on education.

"Having never been appointed to serve on the Budget Committee but as a member of the full Board I have brought this concern to the Budget Committee and the full Board for the past three years. Last Monday, I sat in on a Budget Committee meeting because of an absent member. I left that evening being told by the Committee Chair after he phoned all other members of the Board that we had a consensus of the Board that this expense should be taken out of the budget.

"So what happened between Monday evening and Thursday evening when we met? The expense of over \$200,000 for school crossing guards is back in our budget while we continue to cut academic needs of this district. I have observed delays or cut backs in replacement of windows, fire doors, roofs, academic, technological and athletic programs, academic supplies to include software and textbooks, nursing and professional staff.

"Our job as Board members is to prepare an educationally sound and fiscally responsible budget. We cannot allow the township the ability to shirk its responsibility to the taxpayer -- what's next, will our school budget pay for street maintenance, park maintenance or sanitation?

"Are we proud of the Nutley School System? Could we have done more over the last twelve years if almost 2 million dollars was spent on our children's educational needs???

"Would all our schools have been on line already?
 Would we have better playgrounds?
 Would our lunch facilities be better?
 Would we have more computerized writing, language and math labs?
 Would our music department have more computers?
 Would we have had the addition of long awaited sports programs sooner?
 Would we have had the additional coaches we are trying for this year?
 Would we have had one nurse in each elementary school sooner?
 Would we still have a Director of Guidance?
 Would we have a full time Athletic Director?

"It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that this expense does not belong in our school budget and should never have been allowed to be put there and remain there for 12 years. I ask you to tell me why it is back in our school budget and why each of you is accepting it and allowing it to stay in our budget while academic needs are being cut. Ladies and gentlemen, let me remind you that politics has no place in education."

Dr. Casale said that he felt the Board should work on this matter of the crossing guard expenditure in the next year's budget. He felt that this \$210,000 item was simply a swap from one agency to another and had no tax implications whatsoever.

Mr. Picciano commended Mr. Sincaglia, Dr. Serafino, Mr. Walker and the Budget Committee for a very thorough job in formulating the budget. He noted that we should not be jeopardizing children's safety in any way but crossing guards are not part of an education budget. He also noted that the money that is being spent here could have been used for many other worthwhile items.

Mrs. Russo again commented that she felt the crossing guard expenditure was not appropriate. Dr. Casale said that the only person responsible for this matter is the Commissioner of Public Safety and again said that we should push to see that changed in the 2000/2001 budget.


Mr. Restaino said that he felt we should approach the Public Safety Commissioner but also indicated that he was not sure that the present practice was an unfair arrangement.

Mr. Pelaia called for a vote to adopt the budget.


On a roll call vote the budget was adopted with Mr. Picciano and Mrs. Russo voting nay.

ADJOURNMENT:

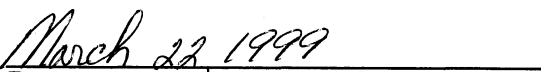
There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion made by Mrs. Fleitell, seconded by Mr. Restaino the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.



President



Secretary



Date

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