
**Official Minutes of the
Holland Township Board of Education
Milford, NJ 08848**

Special February Board Meeting: February 16, 2011 7:00 P.M.
Budget Work Session

Time and Place

The Special Board Meeting was held on February 16, 2011 by the Board of Education of the Holland Township School District, Hunterdon County, in the Auditorium of the Holland Township Elementary School, 714 Milford-Warren Glen Road, Milford, New Jersey 08848

Sunshine Notice

In accordance with the provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231 Laws of 1975, adequate notice of this meeting was provided through the public notice on February 13, 2011 by:

- A. Faxing to the Express Times
- B. Posting on the District Website and the bulletin board in the main hallway of the school
- C. Filing with the Clerk of the Township of Holland

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by President Scheibener.

Roll Call

Board Members Present: McDowall, Moebus, Schneider, Scott (8:30 p.m.), Somers, Soucie (7:15 p.m.), Vandenburg, Geissler, Scheibener

Absent: None

School Personnel Present: Mr. Suarez, Superintendent, Mrs. Postma, SBA/Brd Sec.; Nancy Yard, Principal; Kathy Stannard, Supv. of Special Services

Public Present: 85 Visitors

Comments from the Board:

- o Thanked the public for attending

Superintendent Budget Presentation

Superintendent Suarez reviewed his budget work session presentation and identified efficiencies and reductions over the past 2010-11 budget year. He then reviewed budget development options for 2011-12 with the anticipation of flat state aid. He also reviewed the declining enrollment and options of reducing one elementary teachers, reassigning one enrichment teacher to ½ time enrichment/ ½ time academic support, as well as reducing another additional teacher and reduce a fifth grade class which will modify the delivery of instruction. Other options of reductions were also reviewed including the following: Courtesy busing, Eliminating sports and student activities, and contracting services for aides.

Mr. Suarez recommended the Board to review, first, the options of reducing one elementary teachers, reassigning one enrichment teacher to ½ time enrichment/ ½ time academic support, as well as reducing another additional teacher and reduce a fifth grade class which will modify the delivery of instruction.

President Scheibener announced that State Aid will be released next week and a final decision will be made at the March 1st Special BOE Meeting.

Mrs. Postma, SBA reviewed the current level of shared services and joint purchasing in the school district.

Board Member Vandenburg asked for clarification on the current enrichment program and the courtesy busing program related to a student's IEP.

Mr. Suarez reviewed the enrollment levels throughout the classes and anticipated enrollment with the change of instruction in the middle school.

Public Comment:

Chris Regan addressed the board and thanked the administration and BOE for holding the special meetings to develop the budget. She stated that the budget should address the student needs first. She also added that the outsourcing of the instructional aides would be detrimental to the students. She noted how our current aides have are highly qualified in their positions as they have received extensive educational training to work with our individual students needs. She added how the district has invested in the quality of training for our aides.

Alan Harney: Hill Hollow: Asked of the administration how the modification and delivery of instruction would impact the students. He also asked if the Preschool Program is mandated. Mr. Suarez reviewed the anticipated change in scheduling for the middle school and stated how the Preschool Program is a required special education program.

Maureen Sutton: Asked of the Board and administration how can school activities continue if they were reduced in the budget, what is academic support and also asked for clarification on the consideration of reducing the aides in the budget. She also added if courtesy busing is a viable option due to the hazards.

Mr. Suarez explained the student fee to subsidize the activities if they were to be reduced. He also explained the reason for the academic support program in school districts. Mrs. Postma added that the courtesy bus program would become a parent paid subscription bus program.

Michele Kochas: Reviewed with the BOE and administration that her child with special needs relies on the assistance of the current personal aide and if the aide were not to return to the district because of the budget reduction, her child will suffer and she will look for an outside program or school for her child.

Mr. Suarez stated how if the reduction in the budget includes outsourcing the aides to ESC , then the aides have a choice to go through the hiring process at ESC and may possibly return to HTSD as a first choice. He also added that all aides hired by HTSD will require training for the specific child's needs.

Sandy Morisy: Norwich Ct: Discussed with the BOE how outsourcing of aides may not be beneficial to the children. She also asked where the cuts are in administration?

Bobbie Beriont: Adamic Hill: Asked for clarification on the recommendation by the Superintendent and verified his recommendation to go to the 2% cap. She stated that the Superintendent's recommendation, based on years of educational leadership knowledge, will have the least impact on the education of our students. She added that due to the brutal cuts last year, this year should be to support the 2% cap. She also noted that our region has the highest efficiency in transportation and going to subscription busing is not fair and will devalue the home in the 2 mile radius of the school.

Drew Regan, Crestview Dr: Asked if outsourcing aides has been successful in other districts and recommended the administration and BOE review the success rates of outsourcing. He also asked about the review and hiring process of the aides hired from ESC. Mr. Suarez reviewed the process, if needed, and explained how our current aides could be re-hired through the ESC hiring process and noted that it would be a cooperative hiring process.

Vice President Geissler stated that he would not cut beyond the recommendations of Mr. Suarez due to the negative impacts of educational instruction and the potential of resurfacing past problems with special education needs. He supports option #2.

Board Member McDowall stated that he agreed with Mr. Geissler. He added that if the state funds come in far less, then we absorbed the other options of additional cuts if they are required. He thanked Mr. Suarez for his recommendations and stated how he trusted the Superintendent's judgment to have the least impact on the quality of education for our students. He supports option #2.

Board Member Soucie stated that last year's budget was catastrophic. He thanked the public for being present this evening as the BOE is working very diligently to assist the public in understanding the budget needs and revenue issues. He also added that it is very difficult to pass a budget and if it does not pass we will have additional tough decisions for the budget. He supports option #2.

Board Member Schneider stated his support with Mr. Geissler and Mr. Soucie. He added that the increase for 2% tax would have a minimal negative impact on education. He supports option #2.

Board Member Moebus stated he initially supports option #3 with no tax impact, but due to the excessive cuts the school district succumbed through in the 1990's, he would not want to go through that again. He added that he looks to Mr. Suarez for his experience and since we are still recovering from the 1990's cuts, he supports Mr. Suarez's recommendation of option #2 to benefit the school district.

Board Member Vandenburg stated her support for option #2 due to the least academic impact for the school district. She also thanked the public for the input they provided this evening.

Board Member Somers stated how our district is excellent in educational instruction for both special and regular education and how it was not an accident reaching that level of excellence. He added that although we all would like a flat tax with minimal impact on education, the reasonable choice is option #2.

Board Member Scott also added her support of option #2.

President Scheibener thanked the public for the input and the administration for their hard work in the budget development. She added that she supports option #2 and the BOE is unified to move forward with Mr. Suarez's recommendation for option #2.

Public Comment: NONE

Supplementary Matters:

MOTION by Mr. Moebus, seconded by Mr. McDowall to approve the following resolution:

RESOLVED that the Holland Township Board of Education approves the Special Board Meeting for the purpose of approving the tentative budget on March 1, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium.

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION by Mr. Moebus, seconded by Mr. McDowall to adjourn the meeting at 8:43pm

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully Submitted,

Abigail Postma, RSBA/Board Secretary