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****** UNOFFICIAL ******
BERNARDS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
BASKING RIDGE, NEW JERSEY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES INDEX
MARCH 24, 2010
EXECUTIVE SESSION 6:02 P.M.
REGULAR SESSION 7:05 P.M.
OAK STREET SCHOOL

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

I. Salute to Flag

II. Roll Call

PRESENT: Mr. Byrne, Mr. Carlucci, Ms. Cwerner, Mr. Koch, Ms. McGowan,
Ms. McKeon, Ms. Sherwyn, Mr. Wilke

ABSENT: Ms. Carlsson

III. Executive Session – 6:02 p.m. – Oak Street Conference Room

BE IT RESOLVED that the Bernards Township Board of Education met in closed session to discuss: professional service provider; negotiations; and further

BE IT RESOLVED that the matters discussed in closed session will be disclosed to the public as soon as and to the extent that such disclosure can be made without adversely affecting the public interest or without violation of the confidentiality of personnel.

On motion by Ms. Cwerner, seconded by Ms. Sherwyn, and approve by all present, the Board recessed into closed executive session at 6:02 p.m.

On motion by Ms. Cwerner, seconded by Ms. McGowan, and approved by all present, the Board returned to public session at 7:00 p.m.

The Board reconvened the regular meeting in the Oak Street School Auditorium at 7:05 p.m.

IV. Regular Session – Call to Order – 7:05 p.m. – Oak Street School Auditorium

V. **Statement of Public Notice**

This was a regular meeting of the Board of Education of Bernards Township. Notice of the time and place of this meeting was provided and copies of that resolution were forwarded to the official newspapers as designated by the Board of Education and to the Township Clerk and a copy of the notice was posted on the bulletin board of the Board of Education Offices in accordance with P.L. 1975 Chapter 231A.

We very much welcome input from the public. There are two times during regular meetings that the public is invited to speak. One time is early in the meeting before the Board votes, and you may speak about any item that is listed on tonight's agenda. Towards the end of the meeting, there is another public forum to address any topic whatsoever.

When you approach the microphone, please state your name and address. We do not have a specific time limit, but we ask that you keep your comments brief. Please understand that our public forums are not structured as question and answer sessions, but rather they are offered as opportunities to share your thoughts with the Board. In instances where the Board feels that there is a misunderstanding or inaccuracy, a member of the Board or Administration will address it in the Board Response portion of the agenda.

There are times when a member of the public makes a comment or asks a question about an employee. New Jersey statute does not permit us to discuss personnel issues in public. Also as a matter of law, a Board of Education may only vote for or against the hiring of an employee upon the recommendation of the superintendent. If the superintendent does not recommend a person, that person's name is not listed on the agenda and there is no vote on that action. If it is necessary for the Board to go into executive session at the end of the meeting, we will provide an estimated length of time for the session and whether any action is anticipated to be taken upon returning to public session.

VI. **Student Representative**

Ridge High School student Arber Mavraj updated the Board and public on activities at Ridge High School including the "Mr. Ridge" pageant, World Language month activities, final items selected by each class for the time capsule, Ridge Peer Organization's ping pong tournament to benefit Haiti and the success of the Drama Club production of Curtains.

VII. **Business Administrator's Report**

Business Administrator Nick Markarian discussed the loss of \$4M in state aid which was

addressed in the following Board presentation.

VIII. Committee Reports

Finance Committee

Chairperson Lou Carlucci will address finance matters during the budget presentation.

Personnel Committee

No report.

Curriculum Committee

No report.

Community Relations Committee

Comments were made regarding the most recent meeting with the PTO Advisory Board and the lack of information, at that time, from the state.

Policy Committee

No report.

Liaison Reports

Ms. Sherwyn spoke on the Municipal Alliance's plans to develop an educating plan on alcohol, tobacco and drug use and getting this information out to the public. The Twilight Run (the Alliance's major fundraiser of the year) will be held on June 6 with an anti-smoking theme this year.

IX. Board Presentation

1) 2010-11 Budget Report

Prior to addressing the Board and public on the 2010-11 school budget, Finance Committee Chairperson Lou Carlucci stated this is a difficult time for public education and encouraged members of the public to express their opinions to the Board via e-mails. He highlighted the following areas of the 2010-11 school budget:

- State aid cut of \$3.9M in general education, receiving only \$848,000
- Continuance of Special Education extraordinary aid
- 4% tax cap
- Ability to increase cap to amount of aid lost
- Effect of 2010-11 budget on 2011-12 budget
- History of state aid, student enrollment 2000-01 – 2010-11
- Explanation of surplus & loss effect in future
- Expectation of a 5-15% loss of state aid compared to actual 82% loss
- Few options available to district (reviewed 3 options and the consequences of

- each)
- Increase tax cap – 0% rise in tax dollars \$293
 .72% (\$5K) rise in tax dollars \$316
 1.43% (\$1M) rise in tax dollars \$338
 2.00% (\$1.4M) rise in tax dollars \$356
 - Multi-year approach to program changes
 - Positives & negatives of 9-period vs. 8-period day
 - Positives & negatives of ½ day kindergarten vs. full day
 - Positives & negatives of middle school team model vs. jr. high model
 - Administration
 - Unknown impact of retirements, bargaining changes, unemployment costs
 - Tax levy history 1998-99 – 2010-11 (2010-11 4 –6%)
 - No budget funds for capital improvements

Mr. Carlucci closed by saying the district has worked very hard to keep costs down and now is faced with very difficult decisions as there are less places to cut costs.

X. **Public Comments on the Budget**

Comments were made regarding:

- Negative impact of 9-period vs. 8-period day
- Negative impact of ½ day kindergarten program
- Pay cuts for district employees
- Recent salary increases for administrators
- Explanation of ‘cliff’ effect in 2011-12 budget
- Let community decide if they would support an additional tax increase
- Effect of 2:1 autistic aides
- Effect of one elective option at high school
- Realization that ½ kindergarten is actually 2 hours & 15 minutes
- State government targeting suburban districts
- BTEA concessions
- What will happen in the future when all ‘large cuts’ have been made
- Township assistance
- Consequences to child & financial burden on parents of ½ Kindergarten program
- Number of elementary school cuts last year
- Open teachers’ contract for review
- The district’s long range plan
- Additional information of pros and cons of suggested cuts
- Value of keeping the high school as is (property value impact of cuts)
- Question of success of online courses

Mr. Markarian took a moment to clarify several comments made regarding a \$60 raise in

taxes. He stated that raising taxes over the 4% cap means an additional \$4-\$5 dollars per \$100,000 increase. To totally fund state aide cut would mean an additional 4.5% above the initial 4% raise in taxes.

- State refiguring high school elective graduation requirements
- Value of autistic cuts to the district when the district will continue to education the students
- Filing Chapter 9 bankruptcy utilized when not able to negotiate with unions
- Each year taxes go up and district loses programs
- Place additional explanations on website regarding school finances
- Statement by BTEA co-president
- Need to look beyond next year
- Raise deductible for benefits, hold raises flat
- Amount of monies received from ARAMARK
- Students of staff members attending district schools should pay tuition
- Explanation of pay-to-play

Board response to above comments:

- School money and township money may not mix
- Extended day kindergarten is not cost efficient as the teacher teaches one section; with ½ day they teach two
- May raise taxes beyond cap to amount of state aid cut
- Bernards Twp. is 5th lowest (out of 105 districts) in administrative per pupil cost
- Reduction in administrators taken last year 12-month to 10-month
- Looking at health care alternatives – 12% of total expenditure
- Pay to play is not only for sport teams but would cover all extracurricular activities
- A number of coaches are already parent paid
- Board currently negotiating with BTEA (current contact expires 6/30/10)
- Some of last year's cap increase was temporary not in tax base
- Budget voted down three times in last decade – it must then go to township for additional cuts to be made
- Realizing the outcome of a defeated budget (facing additional cuts) the Board must give serious consideration to amount of tax increase over cap
- District has no avenues to raise surplus would like to push \$1M into 2011-12 budget
- Inclusion of increased taxes being made part of base next year? County unable to speculate on that happening
- Projected energy decrease
- Increase to district of 1.5% of health benefit contribution

XI. Board Discussion of Budget

The Board does not want to make any cuts in programs or staff but it must meet the financial burden placed on it by the actions of the governor.

- 8-period vs. 9-period day (impact of 30 minute lunch, AP science labs and PE schedule)
- Negative impact of ½ day kindergarten program
- Review of ‘long list’ of program reduction considerations
- Student activity fees & impact on families unable to afford it
- Going to the community to raise tax cap
- Changing the team model at WAMS
- Burden needs to be shared at negotiation table to save jobs & programs
- Test score comparisons with other districts
- Prepare for difficult decisions and impossibility of absorbing a \$5.5M cut in a four-week period of time; the district would like to prepare a plan for the future but its plan is dependent on the decisions coming out of Trenton

XII. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Cwerner, seconded by Mr. Wilke, and approved by all present, the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nick Markarian
Board Secretary