

**FLEMINGTON-RARITAN REGIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
APRIL 1, 2010  
MINUTES**

The regular session of the Flemington-Raritan Regional Board of Education was called to order in conformance with the "Sunshine Law" by Ms. Bell at 7:00 p.m. in the Theatre of the J. P. Case Middle School.

**Members Present**

Michael Bonieski  
Janine Foreman\*  
Doris McGivney  
Joseph Zarish\*

Dennis Copeland  
Laurie Markowski  
Christopher Murdock  
Julie Bell

**Members Absent**

Patrick Larmore

\*Mr. Zarish arrived at 7:03 p.m.  
\*Ms. Foreman arrived at 7:04 p.m.

Mr. Carroll, Board Attorney, attended the meeting.

**CITIZENS ADDRESS THE BOARD**

No citizens addressed the Board.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. Nolan presented the 2010-2011 Budget Public Hearing as attached.

Ms. Bell thanked Mr. Nolan, Ms. Hope and the Business Office Staff for their work on the development of the budget.

No other comments or questions were given.

**CITIZENS ADDRESS THE BOARD**

Cynthia Bartlett, Raritan Township and teacher, spoke as a representative of the Reading-Fleming Intermediate School music staff. She mentioned that they have been fielding correspondence from parents. She also mentioned state views on music curriculum. She is concerned with the balance of teachers between grade levels. Reading-Fleming Intermediate School has the largest number of offerings and largest number of musical students. She does not want the board to cut these two music positions. It will significantly impact the programs at Reading-Fleming Intermediate School.

Aileen Marsh, teacher, said music cannot be tested and is, as a result, the first thing to be cut. She said that research shows that musicians benefit both academically and socially. Every child should have the benefit of participating in a music program. This community values music and what it does for students.

Jaclyn Kephart, student, said music builds character. Students work hard and it pays off. Band class is like being a part of a family. She feels that music builds determination and connections to memories.

Daniel Butt, Raritan Township, said music has been an important influence in his life and the life of his children.

Scott Totten, teacher, complimented Ms. Kephart on her comments. He remarked that our goal is to provide a well-rounded education for our students and the only way to do this is through music and the arts. He asked that the decision regarding part time music teachers be made quickly so that staff can make the necessary decisions for their own lives. He believes that the reductions in music are detrimental to the program and community.

Deborah Luccaro, Raritan Township and teacher, said she feels it is a shame that the related arts teachers need to stand up and validate the importance of their jobs. She feels that part-time positions will negatively affect the program. She asked what Curriculum Supervisor position is being eliminated and what will the restructuring look like. Mr. Nolan responded that the Science and Social Studies Supervisor position is being eliminated and the district should know by the end of the year

how that work will be reassigned. Ms. Luccaro also asked the board to read the Library Clerk's job description. She feels their loss will cause a big void in the library program.

Diana Kelly, Raritan Township, expressed appreciation for the district music program but she agrees with the music reductions. She believes the music program has become inflated over the years. If parents want more music instruction for their children, they can pay for outside instruction. Ms. Kelly asked if Mr. Nolan has reduction percentage information for all areas. Mr. Nolan said he will have that available for the next meeting. Ms. Kelly feels it is very important that the teachers not influence the children regarding these matters. She also asked if there is an evening meeting for meeting the new Board of Education candidates. Ms. Bell responded that the PTO's are organizing that.

Joanne Elacqua, Raritan Township, requested the dollar amount of revenue from charging 1.5% of salary for health benefits and could we save teachers at 2%. Mr. Nolan responded that the revenue comes to \$422,000.00 at 1.5 % and 2% is not possible within this legislation. Ms. Elacqua asked for a review of the organizational chart and job descriptions for the entire district.

Linda Pizzico, Raritan Township and PTO, said that the PTO has been watching developments in state and local issues regarding the budget and she is concerned that she does not know how the teachers feel about the salary freeze issue. She said other districts, including Hunterdon Central, have agreed to a freeze. Ms. Pizzico feels that negotiations should be occurring now and would like to know how many dollars would be saved if the teachers agreed to a 0% increase. After discussion with the board lawyer, Ms. Hope responded that a 1% salary increase is equal to \$281,000.00. Ms. Pizzico asked if the teachers agreed to a salary freeze now, can it save positions. Mr. Nolan stated that all areas would be looked at by the board if more money became available. Ms. Pizzico commented that she feels it is not right for some teachers to get a 4% increase in salary and for some to lose their jobs. She feels that children will suffer in the end.

Anthony Benedetti, teacher, said he feels the Board of Education has violated the negotiation ground rules. The Board made a proposal and the FREA countered with their own proposal and then the Board of Education declined. The FREA is willing to meet with the Board. He said, "Just give him a call." Ms. Foreman responded that this proposal of a salary freeze came from the Governor and was not part of the regular negotiations. Mr. Benedetti said it was an offer made at negotiations.

Gary Marconi, Raritan Township, asked if the Board can still ask for a 0% salary freeze at negotiations. David Carroll, from Parker McKay, responded that he knows this is frustrating but the Board is unable to comment on negotiations. Mr. Marconi asked again if it is possible to ask for 0%. Ms. Bell responded that anything is possible. Mr. Marconi expressed his frustration with the closed door policy of negotiations. He feels people want to know what the options are. He also feels that if money is saved by negotiating lower salaries, he would be shocked if it did not result in saving teacher jobs.

Julie Mooney, Raritan Township, thanked the Board for providing her child with great teachers but she feels that teachers should not be bullied into taking a pay freeze.

Jennifer Hill, Raritan Township, asked about the eight million dollar amount in the budget for benefits. Ms. Hope responded with a list of those items. Ms. Hill asked what the board will cut next after music and art. She feels we need to resolve the health benefit issue since this is such a big part of our increased costs.

Susan Vala, FREA President, thanked the Board for the budget transparency. She mentioned that the problems we are experiencing is caused by lack of funding from the state. She feels that reinstating the millionaire tax would go a long way toward fixing our school budget issues by offsetting the cuts to education funding. Ms. Vala feels that the teachers and the board have been doing a great job despite continuous underfunding by the state and no one is to blame but Chris Christy. She urges everyone to stick together and contact your state legislators.

Joanne Elacqua, Raritan Township, thanked the FREA president but said that we are the state. The money is still coming out of our pockets whether it is state or local taxes and the state cannot handle the financial burden.

Robert Farina, Raritan Township, said that he and his wife did not receive wage increases last year and asked if decreasing the coverage in our health benefit package has been looked at to decrease costs. He also asked about revenue options. Mr. Nolan and Ms. Hope shared several options for new revenue that are being looked into.

Carol Storr, Raritan Township, said she was offended by Ms. Hope's response last meeting to the question about why she needs an assistant. She also feels that the YMCA program should be run by the district and revenue from it should go back to the schools. She wants the district to take a salary freeze like they did at Hunterdon Central High School.

Liz Rugg, Raritan Township, asked why the Frances A. Desmares roof was put back in the budget when more money became available instead of saving teacher positions. She asked if the roof issues pose a danger to the children. Mr. Nolan said there is no danger but it needs to be done to ensure proper air quality for the children. Ms. Rugg reiterated that she still feels that the roof should not take priority over saving teachers.

Deborah Luccaro, Raritan Township and teacher, said that teachers are not aware of anything that goes on in negotiations. She said the teachers trust their negotiations team.

Linda Pizzico, Raritan Township, said parents have been asked to help fight for their child's teachers. She feels that the same parents are feeling alone in light of the teacher's refusal to accept a salary freeze. Mr. Nolan reiterated that the board cannot speak about negotiations. The offer made was state generated.

Ms. Bell asked the citizens to address the board, not each other. She noted that this is not an open forum for discussion. Cynthia Bartlett, Raritan Township and teacher, said she worked at Francis A. Desmares for ten years and the roof and ventilation system has always been a problem. She questioned that in light of the current unique financial issues, is this the proper time to solve this problem. Mr. Nolan responded that maintenance problems are more expensive to repair each year. This issue was discussed and the board decided to go forward with the project at this time.

Scott Totten, teacher, asked if the roof project is an all or nothing project. Mr. Nolan responded that the whole project should be done.

Carol Storr, Raritan Township, asked if there is mold in the roof that could hurt the children. Mr. Nolan responded that there is no mold.

Susan Vala, FREA President, said that the 1.5% of salary toward health benefits was instituted to save teacher positions. She asked why it is being used to repair a roof.

Ken Pizzico, Raritan Township, expressed frustration with the scheduled negotiations being so far in the future. He feels these are not normal times and moving up negotiations would go far toward helping fix the problems. He is concerned that position cuts will reduce property values and hurt the taxpayers as much as a tax increase would. David Carroll responded with a timeline for negotiations. Mr. Pizzico asked again if there is a chance to get both sides together sooner.

Anthony Benedetti, teacher, said that the FREA will make a conscientious effort to meet with the Board.

Liz Rugg, Raritan Township, said that she does not understand why we are fixing the roof when we could be saving teacher positions.

Diana Kelly, Raritan Township, said that on the state level, employees have agreed to take furlough days to prevent layoffs. She suggested that our employees do the same.

## **FINANCE**

On motion of Ms. Foreman, seconded by Dr. Bonieski, approval was given of the following resolution:

### **Resolution to adopt the 2010-2011 budget**

The Board of Education of Flemington-Raritan Regional Schools hereby adopts the following budget for the 2010-2011 school year:

The proposed budget includes sufficient funds to provide curriculum and instruction which will enable all students to achieve the Core Curriculum Content Standards, and is in compliance with N.J.S.A. 18A and N.J.A.C. Title 6 and 6A.

Expenditures

Revenue

Fund 10

General Current Expense	<u>50,059,511</u>	Budgeted Fund Balance	<u>1,416,560</u>
Capital Outlay	<u>308,543</u>	Local Tax Levy	<u>44,141,870</u>
Special Revenue Fund	<u>789,868</u>	Misc Revenue	<u>225,000</u>
Repayment of Debt	<u>4,240,463</u>	Tuition	<u>0</u>
		State Aid	<u>4,584,624</u>
		Fund 20	
		Est. Special Revenue	<u>789,868</u>
		Fund 40	
		Repayment of Debt	<u>\$ 4,240,463</u>
Total Expenditures	<u>\$55,398,385</u>	Total Revenue	<u>\$55,398,385</u>

As per N.J.A.C. 6A:23B-1.2(b), the supporting documentation of this budget also contains an itemization of certain expenditures required under administrative regulations.

Aye: Dr. Bonieski      Dr. Copeland      Nay: 0    Abstain: 0  
 Ms. Foreman      Ms. Markowski  
 Ms. McGivney      Dr. Murdock  
 Mr. Zarish      Ms. Bell

**CITIZENS ADDRESS THE BOARD**

No citizens addressed the Board.

**ADJOURN**

On motion of Ms. McGivney, seconded by Dr. Murdock, the meeting was adjourned, unanimously viva voce, at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Hope

Upcoming Board Meetings – J. P. Case Middle School  
 April 12 - Budget Work Session/Regular Meeting  
 April 20 - School Elections  
 April 26, 2010 – Reorganization/Regular Meeting