



Borough of Swedesboro Council Meeting
Swedesboro, NJ 08085

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES of May 11, 2010
Approved on June 7, 2010

A special meeting was held at the Governor Stratton School on Tuesday, May 11, 2010 with the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Swedesboro, Committee of the Township of Woolwich and the Swedesboro/Woolwich School Board called to order at 7:00 pm.

Mayor Chila stated this meeting has been given the required notice to the newspapers, boards, council and committee, as well as being posted on the bulletin boards in the municipalities.

Flag Salute

Roll Call-all members of Woolwich Committee were present

Roll Call-all members of the Swedesboro Council were present other than Mr. Ayers.

Roll Call S/W Board All, but one member present

OPENING COMMENTS

Mayor Chila- Commented that the school budget failed and that due to lack of state aid at approximately 1.7 million significant cuts must be made. Mayor Chila has been in contact with all four mayors of the sending district and the Board of Education and will do whatever it takes to get the message to the governor. Mayor Chila stated that everyone is here tonight to listen to the residents.

Mayor Fromm-Welcomed everyone here tonight and stated that this is a lousy situation, but the tax increase to the Swedesboro residents is unacceptable. Everyone is here to listen to the residents, but some tough decisions have to be made.

Mr. Fisher had a power point presentation to display, however, elected to go directly to public questions and answers.

Mayor Fromm indicated that 1.2 million was cut from the Kingsway budget.

PUBLIC PORTION

Bruce Kerr-100 Heritage Drive, Woolwich-Wanted to know if shared services between the schools was looked into i.e. superintendent, boards, etc., these cuts could be substantial. He feels that the district should not be relying on State money. Mayor Chila replied that the \$2 million deficit in the budget must be filled and that discussions were held on consolidation within the school district.

Mayor Fromm commented that nobody is begging for money, but something needs to be done.



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Mr. Fisher did respond that the board is open-minded to more of a consolidation concept.

Michelle Bansky - 7 Maple Hill Drive-Woolwich - wanted clarification on the rumors that she heard about the cuts to the kindergarten program.

Mr. Fisher displayed a slide of the worst case scenario and what cuts would have to be made. It is a possibility that the kindergarten would be cut to a ½ day program. Mr. Fisher did indicate that Kindergarten is not a state mandated program.

Phil Cinquina-President of AARP Four Seasons , Woolwich-pleading on behalf of the seniors as an increase in taxes would hurt them along with the loss of the state freeze, holds on increases, etc. are making some move back in with their children.

Terry Wallace-124 Delaware Crossing-Woolwich Commented working class people are not getting increases in their pay and are taking cuts and asked if the teachers/administration are taking salary cuts, wage freezes.

Mr. Fisher stated that the administration was taking cuts, but the wage freezes from the teachers were not accepted.

Lori Boschetto-Gentry Drive- Feels that the teachers/administration should take cuts not put the burden on the township and tax payers. She does not feel that teachers should get the raises, benefits and pension.

Daria Roat-Willow pond court, Woolwich-She is concerned about the overall picture with the area growing rapidly concerned about the education of the children and that the increase would be hard, but it is for the investment of the future.

A Woolwich resident commented that it is unfair that the teachers are getting beaten up on as they did not fail us the government did. It was stated that the teacher's will be paying into their benefits and wanted to know other that the teacher's salary freeze where else would the money be coming from. Mr. Fisher was asked what his retirement package would be. Mr. Fisher stated that his retirement package would be about \$15,000.00 including sick days, etc.

Mayor Chila was asked why are we getting less money than the neighboring towns?



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Mayor Chila commented that we are growing and due to that over the years we got extraordinary aide, but we will not be getting that this year and this is going to hurt significantly.

Mayor Chila also commented that we are lucky to have Mr. Fisher and the board workers as they do work very hard for our school district.

Rebecca Leon-214 Westbrook-Woolwich-it is unfair to the teachers and students and feels that long term solutions need to be looked at. Did not understand why we have four schools that come with significant costs, however, the damage of this is done and additional options need to be looked at.

Vicky Reese-Board of Education president gave the crowd a history of the schools and how the four schools became needed. Mrs. Reese also gave a little detail about the donation of the land from Summit Ventures. With the donation of land at the Stratton School additional buildings will be built onto that property consolidating into one campus.

Glenn Albert 11 Maple Drive-Woolwich Asking what happens if we don't get the money from the State. Mayor Chila stated that it is a lean budget, but cuts still have to be made.

Tony Gioia-Four Seasons concerned about the teacher's unwillingness to open their contract and take freezes. Jennifer Cavallaro, BOE member commented that the board has gone to the union recommending the salary freeze to save jobs. The Board as of yet has gone to the membership for vote.

Mr. Fisher commented that the proposed 2.5% cap on the Tax levy would be hard.

Joanna Papadaniill-Jules Drive, Woolwich-stated that it was sad to see what is going on in the district.

Robert Leone-214 Westbrook Drive-States that he lived in an area where the school district was large, with large class sizes and not a lot of extras. He feels that there is a lot of waste.

Russ Brown of 212 Colony Place feels that crossroads have to be faced and commented that political futures were on the line.

Mayor Chila commented on a similar situation approximately two years ago and noted that \$700,000 was cut from the district budget. Mayor Fromm commented that they were not the ones to blame, that the residents need to realize that the budget failed and that this situation was placed on them.



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David Dominick-207 Spruce Trail-Woolwich asked if the teacher's took the pay freezes if they were guaranteed that nobody would lose their jobs. Mayor Chila stated that is the goal. Mayor Fromm pointed out that the Governor's proposal to reinstitute aid to districts was partly based on salary freeze and would be about \$36,000 to the district.

Jennifer Cavallaro commented that it was proposed to the committee to have language in the agreement that it would save jobs.

Mr. Fisher stated that if the teacher's took a wage freeze, it would save some jobs.

Tom Ryan 124 Minute Man Drive wanted to know the amount that we were short to bring the budget to a 0% increase. Mayor Chila went over the numbers and stated the entire levy is \$2.1 million and that the stat aid cut is \$1.7 million.

Mr. Ryan continued to question the numbers and Mr. Griggel, School Business Administrator spoke a little more about the levy and fund balance.

John Luciani-BOE member felt that the voting against the budget was more against the State than the budget.

Julie Smith-124 Valley Forge Drive-Wanted to know if the budget could still be reinstated even though it was voted down. She was told that the budget could be sent to the state as-is. Deputy Mayor Lavender stated that 55% of the voters said no to the budget. It was an embarrassment that not everyone voted and that it only failed by about 10%. Mr. Lavender also commented that the district had the lowest cost per pupil funding in the state. He reiterated that this is a state funding problem in Trenton.

Ms. Smith also inquired about tuition payments to the schools.

Mr. Fisher did state that tuition payment is an option for kindergarten and enrichment programs.

Susan Hemdell-Woolwich Twp. did not like the fact that Kingsway and S/W districts were conducting their meetings on the same night and also wanted to know if the districts had a 5 or 10 year spending plan.

Mr. Fisher stated that he would love to have a spending plan however the State has a specific funding formula.



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Ms. Hemdell questioned the budget time line and wanted to know when the deadlines are and was told that a decision must be sent to the Commissioner of Education no later than 5/19/10. If the budget comes to an impasse it is sent to the state.

Mayor Chila commented that if additional aid was received it would go towards tax relief and that the towns were serious about consolidation and plans on meeting NJBOE representatives to begin discussions.

Carl Cueno-136 Summerfield Drive feels that revenue has to be increased to offset the deficits.

Mayor Chila stated that the 322 commercial project would generate approximately \$2 million to the S/W district and approximately 1.2 million to the KRHS district.

Swedesboro Council present George Weeks stated that important decisions need to be made and that the budgets have previously failed and this is not a new process.

Thomas Penrose-11 Natalie Drive feels that the teachers are doing a good job and wanted to know if the solution could be through capital markets. Mr. Fisher stated that he would advise bond council to look into this.

John Juliano-Spring Hill Drive Woolwich-Asked what other areas would be cut to make up the deficit other than staffing.

Mr. Fisher stated that staffing would have to be cut and other things are being done to cut costs i.e. sharing services regarding busing, outsourcing food and cleaning, cutting back on utilities, etc.

Rachael Ogbin-S/W teacher feared the staff would be taking on a long term hardship if they accept the pay freeze.

Mr. Fisher said that the tax freeze is for this year and will be moving forward the following year.

Kim Thompson-Swedesboro, does not want to see jobs lost, but is worried about being able to afford to live here. Ms. Thompson wants to know if the public will be informed and where do we go from here.

Mayor Fromm stated that all parties would continue to meet to resolve the potential cuts and that a resolution needs to be passed by the 19th from the



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Governing Bodies. Mayor Chila reiterated that it is critical for the teacher's to take a salary freeze.

Melissa Mallazzi-Winding Way, Woolwich feels that more people should have voted and that everyone should have known moving here that taxes were going up and that she supports both the teachers and the officials, but would like two questions addressed

- .Dollar amount being considered to cut,
- .what can families do to assist in this issue

Mayor Chila advised residents to call and write the officials in Trenton regarding the funding formula and the dollar amount to be cut is \$1.7 million.

Don Weisenstein-36 Danbury Road, Woolwich-stated that not 100% of the vote was turned down and that 45% of the voters said yes and questioned whether such drastic cuts need to be made.

Mayor Fromm reminded everyone that the school budget represents over 60% of the overall tax rate. Mayor Fromm stated that Swedesboro/Woolwich municipalities did everything they could to reduce the taxes by shared services and stated that Swedesboro was actually reducing their local tax rate by 15 cents per 100. Mayor Chila commented that due to cuts in Woolwich's budget there would be a 0% increase in the local budget.

Jennifer Cavallaro invited the teaching staff to stay and discuss the situation with the board after the meeting as a large group waited to speak at the microphone.

Mia Randazzo 152 Maple Hill Drive, Woolwich stated that she was willing to pay the increase as it is a growing district with excellent schools and knows what it is like trying to teach over 30 kids in the classroom. Ms. Randazzo also asked if there was a cap on building as her realtor mentioned when she bought the property six years ago.

Mayor Chila did comment that the Woolwich Master Plan was reduced from potential building from 70,000 to 35,000.

A resident commented that he feels capital investment i.e. bonds, etc. as proposed earlier in the meeting was an option. Mr. Fisher did comment that as a school district there are no capital funds to invest, but added that they are looking into refinancing the bonds on the Harker School, which could potentially save \$600,000 on the amortization schedule.



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Rene Pollicino-Teacher wanted to know specifically if a pay freeze would save jobs.

Meg Westburg-Board member emphasized that nobody wants to see anybody lose jobs and would assure that if a freeze is accepted it is showing that everyone is trying to come together and would be taken under advisement.

Teacher Carolyn Sandy posed the same questions to the Mayors and Mayor Chila stated that he would certainly consider it and added that the teacher's willingness to take a freeze shows that everyone is trying to come together.

Mayor Fromm stated that he would not speak for all of Council, but the goal is not to lay off teachers and with an agreement on paper would be inclined to agree.

Kate Bennett-48 Lake Narraticon commended the teacher's for taking the agreement, but went on to question the cost of the phone blast system and other perhaps unnecessary expenses.

There were no other speakers from the audience.

Swedesboro Council member Russ Zappala motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Casella. All bodies were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tanya Goodwin, RMC
Clerk (swedesboro)