

**MINUTES
ROCKY POINT SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING & BUDGET WORKSHOP
February 2, 2004**

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

Present: Geraldine Thalen, President
Michael Matera, Vice-President
Jane Bonner, Trustee
Howard Gimple, Trustee
Joseph Sanseverino, Trustee
James J. Gerardi, Superintendent of Schools
Carla D'Ambrosio, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
Stephen Bilyk, Interim School Business Official
Irene Pedota, District Clerk

Absent: None

Mrs. Thalen explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed budget. However, the board would consider the following personnel resolution prior to beginning the budget discussion:

PERSONNEL

Upon a motion made by Michael Matera and seconded by Joseph Sanseverino, the following resolution was offered:

BE IT RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education accept the attached Personnel changes. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

PRESENTATION OF A FIRST DRAFT OF THE 04-05 SCHOOL BUDGET COVERING THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

- Draft handouts were distributed to the audience.
- Mr. Bilyk reminded everyone that this was a draft of the budget and subject to change without notice.

FRANK J. CARASITI:

- Mr. Bilyk explained that the total proposed budget represents an increase of \$3500.00 and that per pupil allocations have remained the same for the past three years and that any increase would be the result of increased enrollment.
- Mrs. Thalen asked what kind of conferences teachers would be attending.
- Mr. Read explained that conferences would be related to the Literacy Collaborative and Reading Recovery programs. He added that the conference expense was due to the fact that most of the conferences required travel to the New England area.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio added that instruction is the core of the learning program. Programs are designed to improve skills and to aid students at risk. Mrs. D'Ambrosio also explained how the full-day kindergarten program has significant benefits for students' socially as well as academically.
- Mrs. Thalen asked about the results of the Cohort Study and how long the Literacy Collaborative has been in place.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio explained that this is the third year that the Literacy Collaborative has been in place at the Frank J. Carasiti School. We should see results on fourth grade ELAs in 2006 when students who have had the benefit of these programs from the beginning take the exams.

JOSEPH A. EDGAR SCHOOL:

- Mr. Bilyk explained that the total proposed budget for the Joseph A. Edgar School represented a \$12,600 increase and that it included a significant increase to supply categories in order to restore the \$8,000.00 reduction to the JAE budget that occurred during the 2003-2004 school year.
- Mr. Matera asked why \$11,000 more was budgeted this year than last year.
- Mr. Bilyk explained that \$7,800 was cut from the budget last year and that unless the funds were restored, students would have to pay for these supplies. This would result in a conflict between buildings where students in one building would have to pay for supplies, while students in another would not.
- Mrs. Bonner inquired what kinds of supplies were being included.
- Mrs. Tvelia replied that these were basic supplies including glue, paper, chalk, scissors, etc. Last year, each teacher's budget was cut by 20% and that resulted in many out-of-pocket expenses for teachers.
- Mrs. Tvelia also explained that collaborative classes require specialized supplies including certain notebooks and poetry books that cost \$25.00 per child.
- Mrs. Thalen inquired if these were considered consumable supplies.
- Mrs. Tvelia replied that yes, they were and they must be special ordered because they cannot be purchased at a neighborhood drug store.
- Mr. Sanseverino inquired if the projected growth was estimated.
- Mr. Bilyk replied that it was.
- Mrs. Thalen mentioned that some parents were upset last year because the supplies they purchased were not acceptable by some teachers. Mrs. Thalen asked if teachers could be more flexible about supplies.
- Mrs. Bonner suggested that perhaps supply lists could go out earlier.
- Mrs. Tvelia said that she and Mr. Read would try to get them out as early as possible. They try to put them out with the district mailing in an effort to avoid the cost of double mailings.
- Mrs. Thalen asked if teachers could be more flexible about supplies.
- Mrs. Tvelia said that it would be addressed.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio explained that this was the first year for the Literacy Collaborative at the Joseph A. Edgar School. Training is being provided to ten to twelve teachers by a literacy coach. Several programs have been introduced this year including keyboarding for fourth and fifth grade students and the GATES Program for gifted and talented students. Academic intervention services are supplied for all students in need.

ROCKY POINT MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- Mr. Centamore explained that increases in the proposed budget for the middle school include funds to purchase ELA prep books that were not included in last year's budget.
- Mrs. Thalen inquired if these books would be used in the classroom or at home.
- Mr. Centamore replied that they would be used in the classroom as well as at home.
- Mr. Sanseverino asked if there are enough textbooks in the classrooms.
- Mr. Centamore replied that there are because the district has had a four or five year plan in place to replace textbooks as needed, and that for the most part they are now looking to beef up their supplies.
- Mrs. Thalen asked if there were any questions from the community about what was presented so far.
- Mrs. Karen Audette asked how many children currently participate in the GATE program at JAE.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio replied that there are 18 students.
- Mrs. Audette asked about calculators that were included as part of the middle school math supply budget.
- Mr. Centamore replied that calculators are purchased for every student in seventh and eighth grade. They must be turned in at the end of the year and students are responsible for them if they are lost.

- Mr. Matera asked how many ELA prep books were necessary.
- Mr. Centamore replied that roughly 300 were needed – one for each student.
- Mrs. Bonner asked about the software for General Music.
- Mr. Centamore replied that General Music is taught to all three grades and that the software would add a significant technological component to the course.
- Mrs. Audette had questions regarding the musical instruments that were included in the budget.
- Mr. Centamore explained that the amount included the purchase of larger instruments in an effort to bring the program up to par with other musical programs.
- Mr. Sanseverino had questions regarding the amount budgeted for microscopes and how many were required at the middle school.
- Mr. Centamore replied that 300 microscopes are required per grade level.
- Mrs. Audette inquired if the guest speakers and programs included in the Middle School -School Wide portion were for teachers or students.
- Mr. Centamore explained that the programs were for students and were brought into school during the day.
- Mr. Sanseverino mentioned that he heard that grants are available through the Girl Scouts for bully prevention workshops.
- Mr. Gimple had questions concerning a plyometric platform and Project Adventure included in the physical education category.
- Ms. Armet replied that a plyometric platform is used for fitness and conditioning training and that Project Adventure was an interactive program that helps to build trust between participants.
- Mrs. Bonner asked if the amount included for new entrant physicals was a flat fee regardless of how many students there were.
- Mr. Bilyk replied that physicals were paid for on a per pupil basis.
- Mrs. Bonner asked what the fee was per examination.
- Ms. Armet replied \$10.00.
- Mrs. Thalen asked if there has been an increase in the student population.
- Mr. Bilyk replied that there are seventeen additional students.
- Mrs. Thalen asked if budget line items without any amounts in them could be eliminated from the budget.
- Mr. Bilyk agreed that they could be removed and replaced if needed.

ROCKY POINT HIGH SCHOOL:

- Mr. Bilyk explained that the high school budget presents a \$41,000 increase to offset a \$36,000 reduction this year, which made it difficult to maintain supplies and textbooks.
- Mrs. Thalen asked about the projected increase in enrollment at the high school.
- Mr. Caulfield replied that they projected over 100 new students next year plus additional special education students.
- Mrs. Bonner asked if there was a way to print the district's mailings in house.
- Mr. Bilyk replied that it would be very expensive since a print shop would be necessary.
- Mr. Sanseverino mentioned that he was pleased to see new technology programs being offered to students.
- Mrs. Thalen asked if the high school participated in the WISE program at Stony Brook University.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio that students have started to participate in programs at Brookhaven National Laboratory, but have not yet participated in the WISE program.
- Mrs. Thalen suggested that perhaps Mr. Spielmann, the Science Coordinator could look into it
- Mrs. Yacko had a question with regard to the TI83 math calculators.
- Mr. Bilyk explained that the functions are compatible with what is being taught in the classroom.
- Mrs. Thalen asked if math teachers could recommend competing brands.

- Mrs. Conner added that these calculators are used so that each student in the classroom is working on the same piece of equipment.
- Mr. Sanseverino asked if they are purchased under a state or BOCES contract.
- Mr. Bilyk replied that they are.
- Mrs. Thalen asked what the retail cost is.
- Mr. Bilyk replied approximately \$100 per calculator.
- Mr. Ward mentioned that he was happy to see technology and science programs expanding. He asked if any thought was being given to mentoring partnerships with Stony Brook University or Brookhaven National Laboratory.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio replied that the district has started to participate at Brookhaven National Lab.
- Mrs. Thalen inquired how many more students are involved in music at the high school than last year, and if the program is expanding, will we have enough equipment and uniforms for students.
- Mr. Caulfield replied that he is attempting to come up with money this year to offset the purchases.
- Mrs. Bonner asked about the status of expanding the sex education portion of the curriculum.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio replied that the first meeting is scheduled for tomorrow night.
- Mrs. Thalen asked if any students were involved in the meeting.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio replied that none were included in the first meeting.
- Mrs. Thalen asked if teachers would be there.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio replied yes and that students could be included in the Health Advisory Committee as well.
- Mrs. Thalen had questions regarding the amount budgeted for graduation expenses.
- Mr. Bilyk explained that the amount budgeted for this year is misleading since the actual cost will be \$19,000. Therefore, \$20,000 has been budgeted for next year.
- Mrs. Thalen asked if students are required to pay for cap and gown rental.
- Mr. Gerardi replied that the district pays for them and that they are already committed to paying for them this year.
- Mrs. Audette asked why an amount was budgeted for field trips under the school wide appropriation when each department had their own field trip budget.
- Mr. Caulfield replied it is so he can have a little more control over field trips and can accommodate additional trips if someone comes up with a great idea.
- Mrs. Thalen commented that she is happy to see more college materials included in the budget and asked what kind of materials would be obtained.
- Mr. Caulfield replied that they would be college guides and library materials.
- Mr. Gimple asked if there would be general guides for all colleges.
- Mr. Caulfield replied yes.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio explained that the Regents requires academic intervention services for all four academic areas and that the percentage of students receiving regents diplomas has increased. ACT and regents exams scores have also increased.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

- Mr. Bilyk explained that increases are the result of increased enrollment of special education students and cost of services provided to students as well as increased enrollment in occupational education through BOCES.
- Mrs. Thalen commented that teachers today are required to work in a classroom with special ed students without any training. She asked what the district is doing to correct this.
- Mrs. Eileen Manitta replied that the district is training teachers to improve teaching techniques for all students.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio added that some of the programs in place – Math Your Way, Wilson Reading, Literacy Collaborative, traditional staff development days, etc. aim to reach students in all levels.

- Mrs. Thalen mentioned that some of the teachers who were trained a long time ago should be required to take in-service training. She asked if special ed teachers could provide in-service training.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio explained that teachers participate in MESTRACT which offers courses to teachers at a very reduced rate. The district also taps in to local resources such as Partners for Model Schools and in-house staff meetings which focus on student performance.
- Mr. Gimple commented that inclusion students have been shown to do better when they are in a regular classroom, but he wondered how regular education students perform.
- Mrs. Manitta replied that searching for different ways to reach all students is the ideal and all students benefit if a variety of strategies are used.
- Mrs. Manitta added that there is no choice in many areas due to federal and state laws.
- Mrs. Manitta explained that the national goal is for a maximum of 6% of the student population to be educated outside the district. Currently the district has 7% placed in alternative settings.
- Mrs. Bonner asked since so many kindergartners are coming in to the district with IEPs, is there a way to determine if they've had pre-school experience.
- Mr. Read replied that parents are asked as part of the registration process. At least 60 to 80 percent have had some pre-school experience.
- Mr. Centamore added that team meetings have been very successful at the middle school.
- Mr. Dan Vedder added that scheduling issues were resolved at the middle school to allow special ed and regular ed teachers to participate in team meetings. Inclusion is handled differently in every building and teachers and administrators need to continue to have discussion in an effort to make it work.
- Mrs. Johansen asked how inclusion works in the ninth grade – does the entire class move?
- Mrs. Manitta replied yes. Ms. Valerie Prudenti goes to the four academic areas with the students.
- Mrs. Johansen asked what the district's plans are since some outside programs are being closed.
- Mrs. Thalen replied that the children would move back to the district's buildings.

INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

- Mrs. Thalen asked how many teams were included and if any teams were being added.
- Mr. Bilyk replied there are currently 67 teams and no new teams were being added.
- Mrs. Thalen questioned the conference expense category.
- Mr. Bilyk explained that the category included fees for track meets, bowling, invitations, wrestling meets, etc.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & SUPERVISION

- Mrs. Thalen inquired about the increase in the testing and scoring category.
- Mr. Bilyk explained that this area was under budgeted by approximately \$75,000 and includes regular BOCES increases for next year. The category includes the salary for the Student Assistance Program counselor.
- Mr. Matera asked if the counselor is a BOCES employee.
- Mr. Bilyk replied that she is.
- Mrs. Audette asked if her salary was aidable.
- Mr. Bilyk replied that it is.

Mrs. Thalen asked if there were any additional questions or comments. She reminded everyone that the next budget meeting would be on March 1 when staffing and revenues will be discussed. She also announced that there have been 96 respondents so far to the on-line budget survey and 33% of those responding said that they would support a reasonable increase to expand programs. She asked everyone to please

take a moment to check out the survey. She added that 29% would like to see the music program expanded.

- Mrs. Bonner asked if some of the comments to the on-line survey would be answered by the board in a Superintendent's mailing that would be going out to the community anyway.
- Mrs. Thalen suggested that Mrs. Wilson could add a link to the website that would feature answers to questions or comments related to the survey. She added that the board can be contacted via email and that each board member receives a copy of any message sent to them.
- Mr. Matera suggested that the board wait until after March 1, which is the deadline for responding to the survey, to answer questions to avoid duplicate questions and answers.
- Mrs. Thalen added that the board's plan is to answer all questions.
- Mr. Kevin Ward asked since the Superintendent's contract has been extended for an additional year, if funds were included in the budget for a search for a new superintendent.
- Mrs. Thalen replied that they were not, but the Board might want to think about that.
- Mr. Ward expressed his concerns regarding the 11 to 12 % increase district taxpayer's would be facing as a result of the budget.
- Mr. Bilyk replied that the district would continue to make decisions and keep options open throughout the budget process.
- An audience participant commented that she would like to see additional discussion at the next board meeting with regard to special ed issues.
- Mrs. Thalen replied that there would be a special education presentation meeting in the future.

There were no further questions or comments.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:20 PM a motion was made by Howard Gimple and seconded by Michael Matera for the Board of Education to adjourn the meeting. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Irene Pedota
District Clerk