

**MINUTES  
ROCKY POINT PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING  
March 15, 2004**

Meeting called to order at 7:35 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 opened the meeting to questions or comments from the community:**

- Mr. Michael Hayden had questions with regard to transportation and busing schedules. Specifically he asked why there were two different bus runs for middle school and high school students when they were going to the same location.
- Mr. Gerardi explained that it would cost more to have one bus run since there are approximately 1000 – 1100 students in each building and a single bus run would require twice the number of buses because we are required to provide a seat for each child that is entitled to receive transportation.
- Mr. Hayden asked if anyone monitored the number of students riding buses to and from the high school. He said that from his observations, the buses appear to be half empty and wondered if the number of buses could be reduced.
- Mr. Gerardi responded that the buses to the Carasiti, Edgar, and middle school are jam-packed. He added that the only buses that run light (three-quarter capacity) are buses to the high school because seniors drive to school. However, the district is still obligated to provide a seat for each child that is entitled to transportation even if some of them have other rides to school. He also mentioned that if some buses appear to be half empty, they may be in the middle of their runs and may not have finished picking students up from their bus stops.
- Mr. Hayden thanked Mr. Gerardi and the Board for their time and consideration.

**PRESENTATION OF THE PROPOSED 2004 – 2005 SCHOOL CALENDAR BY MR. GERARDI:**

Mr. Gerardi announced that the proposed calendar would not make anyone happy, including the members of the Board of Education and his office staff. He explained that students and faculty will return to school for the 2004-2005 school year before Labor Day for several reasons, including the following:

- Some of the road conditions in old Rocky Point make it necessary for our district to include three snow days in it's calendar.
- Easter and Passover are weeks apart.

Mrs. Thalen asked if there were any questions or comments with regard to the calendar:

- Mrs. DeVito said that as a teacher in another district, she thinks it is a fabulous idea.

**ADOPTION OF THE 2004 – 2005 SCHOOL CALENDAR**

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 adopt the 2004 – 2005 School Calendar as presented. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

**PERSONNEL**

Upon a motion made by Joseph Sanseverino and seconded by Howard Gimple, 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.

**BUDGET REVIEW**

Mrs. Thalen invited Mr. Stephen Bilyk to make a final presentation of the budget summary, and she announced that copies of the summary were available at the back of the auditorium.

Mr. Bilyk reviewed the proposed 2004 – 2005 budget and explained what expenses were included in each category:

- Board of Education – District Clerk's salary and expenses for Annual Meeting (Budget Vote and Election)
- Chief School Administrator's Office – Superintendent's Office
- Finance – Business Administrator's Office
- Legal Services – Attorney's Fees
- Personnel Office – Director of Personnel's Office
- Operation of Plant – Custodial services and utility expenses
- Maintenance of Plant – Service contracts and costs associated with special projects
- Central Printing & Mailing – Copiers, outside printing and postage
- Central Data Processing – BOCES student management system, finance management system, and network

- Special Items – District insurance, dues, BOCES administrative charges
- Curriculum Development & Supervision – Instructional Office expenses
- Supervision/Administration – Building administrators and costs associated with their offices. (Mrs. Thalen added that this category includes the cost for all staff as well as school administrators.)
- Curriculum Work – Self explanatory
- In-Service Training – Special conferences
- Teaching – This category, with the largest increase includes regular school programs, special education, occupational education, summer school and community education.
- Instructional Media – Library, audio visual and computer expenses
- Pupil Services – Attendance, guidance, health services, psychological services, school social worker, co-curricular and interscholastic activities
- District Transportation – Administrative costs for transportation program.
- Contract Transportation – Transportation for students to and from school, special education transportation, private school transportation, and athletic buses.
  - Mrs. Thalen inquired about the percentage of increase. Mr. Bilyk explained that the current contract will end at the end of this year, and in anticipation of a double-digit increase, they have budgeted for a 15% increase.
  - Mr. Sanseverino asked if there was any discussion with regard to combining with another district.
  - Mr. Bilyk explained that the district is putting together a proposal to join Shoreham-Wading River in hopes that the number of combined buses would bring a lower price. He added that the proposal would be going out next month.
- BOCES Transportation – Summer transportation for Special Ed
- Community Services – Surveys and census
- Employee Benefits – Retirement, social security, workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, life, dental and health insurance
- Debt Service – Principal and interest on all bonds
- Transfer to Special Aid Fund – District's portion of costs associated with special education, summer school and special education summer school transportation

Mr. Bilyk also explained that the total projected revenue was \$19,046,852 including income from the following sources: projected state aid estimated at 30.6%, debt service aid at 4.5%, interest income at 0.5% and other sources at 0.2%. He added that the district would be losing approximately \$175,000.00 in aid due to changes in how aid is calculated. The district has lost 14% or 6.8 million dollars in state aid over the past ten years.

Mrs. Thalen asked if there were any questions.

- An audience member asked for further clarification.
- Mrs. Thalen explained in laymen's terms that the budget is comprised of revenue from state aid and other sources and the balance of the budget is paid for by the residents of the community through property taxes.

Mr. Bilyk reported that the proposed 2004 – 05 budget is \$49,216,489, which is an increase of \$2,287,981 over this year's current budget. The estimated tax rate for the 2004-05 school year would be \$177.53 per hundred dollars of assessed valuation, which is a difference of \$10.96 equaling a 6.59% increase. For a homeowner with the average assessed value of \$3000, the increase would amount to \$328.80 per year.

- Mrs. Bonner asked how much of an increase per month that amounts to.
- Mr. Bilyk replied that for the average homeowner, the increase would be under \$30 (or \$27.40) per month.

Mr. Bilyk explained how the contingency budget would actually result in a higher increase.

- Mrs. Bonner asked for clarification.
- Mr. Bilyk explained that the contingency budget formula is set by the state and is only allowed to increase by a certain percentage based on increased enrollment.
- Mr. Gimple asked if the worse case scenario meant that if the proposed budget was defeated, the cost to taxpayers could actually increase based on the contingency budget.
- Mr. Bilyk explained that it could or the Board could decide to adopt the proposed budget since it would be lower than the contingency budget.

Mr. Bilyk asked if there were any other questions:

- Mr. John Taranto asked if there would be a budget vote this year and why information was not provided to the community with regard to board meetings and the budget vote. He added that many senior citizens are unaware and that the total number of people at this meeting was disgraceful.
- Mrs. Thalen explained that the district sends several mailings to every member of the community with regard to board meetings and the budget vote. She added that perhaps it is possible that some people throw them out without reading them because they are bulk mailings. She explained that the district attempts to make information available to the community in a variety of ways - a budget brochure is mailed out to the community, information is available on the website, and meetings and the budget vote are advertised on the marquees in front of school buildings.
- Mrs. Thalen explained that the Board of Education and district administration is working very hard to keep the increase to a minimum in spite of increased enrollment and decreased state aid. She reminded everyone that there would be another Board of Education meeting on March 29, 2004.
- Mrs. Wilson asked how a contingency budget is determined.
- Mrs. Bilyk explained that a contingency budget is based on last year's budget and the CPI percentage that the state allows and expenses that the district will incur next year based on enrollment numbers.
- Mr. Peter Ferchey inquired if anyone examines the proposed budget.
- Mrs. Thalen replied that many people are involved in the budget process and that there is a budget committee.
- Mr. Bilyk added that there is an outside auditor who examines the books.
- A member of the audience inquired if there would ever be a time when the budget decreases.
- Mrs. Thalen replied that the situation might happen if children stop coming to school. The district has experienced a large influx of students into the district over the past five years.

- Mr. Gerardi added that enrollment has increased by at least 500 students, probably more, since 1999.
- An audience member asked how many of these 500 or more students have special needs.
- Mr. Gerardi cited current kindergarten registrants as an example – Of the approximate 300 new kindergarten registrants, 34 already have IEPs identifying special needs.
- Mr. Johan asked how the budget is determined.
- Mr. Gerardi explained that it is worked out from the bottom up, from individual departments to building principals and then to district office. He explained that they rarely get everything they ask for.
- Mr. Johan asked for the explanation of the difference between contract transportation and district transportation.
- Mr. Bilyk explained that the district doesn't have any of its own buses, but there are administrative costs for overseeing transportation.
- Mr. Johan asked if the cost of transportation for field trips was included in the budget.
- Mr. Bilyk replied that it was.
- A member of the audience asked if Mr. Bilyk was saying that the average homeowner pays \$3,000 a year in taxes.
- Mr. Bilyk explained that \$3,000 was the averaged assessed value, not the average tax bill.
- Mr. Lagnena had a question about increased enrollment.
- Mr. Gerardi replied kindergarten enrollment was projected at 300 students for the 2004-05 school year, while the senior graduating class for June 2004 has approximately 200 students.
- A member of the audience asked why there was such a huge increase in the Central Data Processing category.
- Mr. Bilyk explained that the category was under-budgeted for the current school year, so it had to be increased for next year. Central Data Processing includes student management and finance management programs.
- Mr. Joseph Schneider asked where all the tax money from new construction was going and asked how much was spent on educating each student.
- Mr. Gerardi replied that the district spends approximately \$12,000 per student.
- Mr. Gerardi explained that a lot of homes in Rocky Point, especially in old Rocky Point that used to be summer homes, have been renovated and are now being inhabited by year-round residents with children who attend school instead of by senior citizens or summer residents.
- Mr. Gerardi explained that according to the Town of Brookhaven Assessor's Office, evaluation is not increasing.
- Mr. Ferchey asked why the tax rolls haven't benefited from Kohl's Department Store and Michael's moving in to an existing shopping center in the area.
- Mr. Bilyk replied that the owners of the shopping center have paid taxes for the shopping center even while those stores were empty, so that there hasn't been an impact to the tax rolls. The property taxes are based on the value of the property.
- Mrs. Thalen also explained that the Town of Brookhaven, at the community's urging, recently purchased an area golf course. As a result, the golf course is no longer part of the tax rolls. The community decided that it didn't want the property to be developed.
- Mrs. Bonner added that the development would have included 70 new homes with additional children attending school.
- A member of the audience asked if there was ever time that there was a surplus of money.
- Mr. Matera explained that there have been times in the past when the state provided more aid, and the Board was very careful to give the money back to the community, or to decrease taxes.
- Mrs. Patricia Sparks had a question with regard to curriculum development and mentoring for teacher certification.
- Mr. Gerardi explained that although mandated by the state, it is not funded by the state.
- Mrs. Johansen asked if there was any chance for anyone who is interested to look at budgets from previous years to do so.
- Mrs. Thalen suggested that she contact Mr. Bilyk's office to arrange an appointment.
- Mrs. Sparks expressed her appreciation to the Board and the administration for getting the word out to the community to attend meetings. She asked what plans were for getting specific information with regard to the proposed budget out to the community.
- Mr. Gerardi replied that a budget brochure would go out to the community in plenty of time before the budget vote.
- Mrs. Sparks said that she would like to see the brochure include how much of the budget is a result of state mandates.

**Mrs. Thalen asked if there were any other questions or comments before the meeting was adjourned:**

- Ms. Leisha Murray asked if supply lists that students need at the beginning of the year could be sent home with schedules so that parents have more time to pick up supplies. She applauded the practice at the middle school where students send in a check for their supplies and a packet is sent home.
- Mr. Centamore explained that the supplies were organized by the PTA.
- Mrs. Thalen said that she heard from some people that the supplies on the list were not the supplies that the children needed.
- Mr. Read explained that it is difficult to come up with a uniform supply list for K-2 due to the different activities from grade to grade.
- Mrs. DeVito said that her district sends home a list of supplies with the last report card.
- Mr. Read said that schedules are worked on over the summer so it is not possible to send an accurate list home at the end of the previous year.
- Mrs. Thalen suggested that it might be possible to post supply lists on the web.
- Mrs. Sparks took the opportunity to congratulate the Music Department for the wonderful production of *Damn Yankees* and Mr. Texeira for a great job. She thanked him for his contributions to the district, which has made it possible for the music program at Rocky Point to soar and said that his retirement would leave the district with a very difficult void to fill.
- Mrs. Bonner also thanked Mr. Texeira for teaching her daughter to play three different instruments and for his work with her son.
- Mrs. Thalen took an opportunity to address the concerns that were expressed by Mr. Johann with regard to fundraising at the last meeting. She explained that administrators got together to come up with a policy whereby all future fundraising will be facilitated through student council and must be approved by the Athletic Director and building principals.
- Mr. Johann mentioned that he appreciated the phone call he received from Diane Armet in response to his questions.

- Ms. Armet explained how students who are in need are helped by the nurses and Mr. Bonomi's BANN club through the Kids In Need Fund.
- Mr. Johann had a question with regard to items that are supplied through the district in the budget and items that are purchased through fundraising.
- Mr. Gerardi explained that the district provides all equipment necessary to participate in a sport with the exception of shoes or cleats and personal items, such as personalized jackets. Most of the fundraising is for personalized items and has nothing to do with what the school supplies. The district does not supply any equipment that is not necessary for children to enter the playing field.
- Ms. Armet added that the district follows Section XI's rules and regulations as far as supplying equipment. If athletes prefer to wear something different; i.e. special undergarments, they are on their own to purchase them.
- Mr. Johann asked how fundraising would be decided.
- Ms. Armet explained that the administrators would sit with Mr. Lagnena and consider each situation individually.
- Mr. Johann thanked everyone for their timely responses.
- Mrs. Sparks asked if the policy would apply to the Booster Club and the Friends of Music.
- Mr. Gerardi replied that it would not.
- Mrs. Thalen informed the audience that she was contacted by parents regarding photos taken during the spring musical production by one of our teachers, and that they had concerns that the teacher was making a profit from the students.
- Mr. Texeira explained that beginning about seven years ago, he had an idea that it would be nice to have candid shots taken of students during the productions and to have them displayed in the building. At that time, a parent who was a photographer on the side agreed to take photos for the school and would also make copies available to students' families at a nominal charge to cover his expenses for processing the photos. When his child graduated, they decided to get a second person to take photos. Those photos were nice, but not exactly what they were looking for. They then went to a third person who has a side job as a professional photographer and agreed to take photos and make them available to students and their families. The service was only meant to make photos available to families and never meant to be a moneymaking activity.
- Mrs. Thalen commented that it was more work for Mr. Texeira and commended him for trying to make it better. She added, however, that some parents felt they were being discouraged from taking their own pictures.
- Mr. Texeira explained that they decided the best opportunity for the photos to be taken was during the final dress rehearsal/senior citizen performance and that no one was discouraged from taking their own photos.
- Mr. Texeira also explained that the practice of making photos available as keepsakes has been going on for some time and that Ms. Donovan puts together a memory book every year for students that can be purchased for \$10.00 which is only to cover the cost of producing it.
- Mrs. Thalen said there was also a concern with having students' photos appear on the internet.
- Mrs. Thalen thanked Mr. Texeira for his explanation and added that everyone knows that he always has the best interests of the students in mind.
- Mrs. Thalen reminded everyone that the next Board of Education meeting would take place on March 29, 2004.

There were no further questions or comments.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:50 PM a motion was made by Howard Gimple and seconded by Jane Bonner for the Board of Education to adjourn the meeting. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Irene Pedota  
District Clerk