

**ROCKY POINT PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
September 27, 2004**

**Meeting called to Order at 7:35 PM**

Pledge of Allegiance

Present: Geraldine Thalen, President  
Howard Gimple, Vice-President  
Jane Bonner, Trustee  
Michael Matera, Trustee  
Joseph Sanseverino, Trustee  
Carla D'Ambrosio, Acting Superintendent of Schools  
Steven Bilyk, Interim School Business Official  
Irene Pedota, District Clerk

Absent: James J. Gerardi, Superintendent of Schools

**Mrs. Thalen opened the meeting to questions or comments from the community:**

- Mrs. Johannesen wanted to discuss a disturbing newspaper article regarding the Joseph A. Edgar School being named by the state as a school in need of improvement as a result of ELA test scores and children with special needs. She wanted to know why our district did so badly compared to neighboring districts with similar children. She added that she is especially concerned because she has a child with special needs. She also said that she feels it is unacceptable to open *Newsday* and see that our children are not performing well. She asked what the school was doing to remedy the situation.
- Mrs. Thalen replied that the Board has asked to see specific numbers for comparable districts. It is her understanding that according to the test results, our special ed children have not made acceptable progress for two years in a row. The Board has asked for the information from other districts in an attempt to understand why our results were different.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio added that it is very disturbing to everyone to see JAE as a school in need of improvement. She explained that there were approximately fourteen to sixteen students who scored in level 1. We did a lot of data analysis to try and find out what is at the root of the problem. Fifty percent of the fourteen to sixteen students were not our students for two years in a row. They came to us from other districts. Four of the students who scored in level 1 were out of district placement in BOCES. These are children with significant special needs. We have no influence over their instruction at BOCES. Fifty-six children in 2004 were classified as special ed students; seventy-five percent of them scored at the top of level 1. Only one of these children was at the bottom of level 1; the others were at the top of level 1. The rest of the cohort did better than the previous year.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio also explained that Mrs. Tvelia traveled to Albany last Wednesday and ascertained that the district is entitled to approximately \$65,000. The district is planning to meet on October 1, 2004 to formulate a plan of action, which will include offering additional services after school. Parents are invited to discuss options for what can be done at home.
- Mrs. Johannesen asked how long the district has to improve.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio replied that the district would be monitored for a year. She reminded the community that seven of the students who did not score well only came to this district in the past year.
- Mrs. Johannesen replied that the same must be true for other districts, and suggested that programs should be reviewed.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio added that all of the children were in Academic Intervention Services and that the Wilson Reading Program and Literacy Collaborative are widely used.

- Mrs. Komorowski stated that while she agrees with everything Mrs. Johannesen said and that was explained, she had a question for the Director of Special Education with regard to information contained in an article in the *North Shore Sun*.
- Mrs. Thalen suggested that Mrs. Komorowski should contact the *North Shore Sun*.
- Mrs. Komorowski asked if the \$65,000 that was coming into the district would be used for additional staff development for teachers.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio replied that there is extensive training in the Literacy Collaborative, which features a strong staff development component.
- Mrs. Komorowski replied that her child is in a class with a teacher who has not been trained in the program, and she has received calls from parents who are concerned that teachers are not qualified.
- Mrs. Thalen asked Mrs. Komorowski if she ever invited the administrators to a SEPTA meeting to discuss these issues with them.
- Mrs. Komorowski said that parents are questioning actual qualifications.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio replied that parents should be directing those questions to the district.
- Mrs. Thalen asked Mrs. Komorowski to please invite the administrators to a SEPTA meeting to discuss these concerns.
- Mrs. Komorowski added that she wants more staff development for the teachers and she doesn't want to hear excuses.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio explained that she recently approved 20 conference requests for ELA training at JAE.
- Mrs. Bonner added that when she served as corresponding secretary for the PTA, it was her responsibility to invite administrators and board members to meetings, and she suggested that Mrs. Komorowski should do the same on behalf of SEPTA. Mrs. Bonner also suggested that since Mrs. Komorowski has a lot to say, she should run for the Board of Education.
- Ms. Ronnie O'Farrell asked how getting information from other districts was supposed to help our problem. There are still seven children in the district who are lacking.
- Mrs. Thalen explained that it wouldn't fix our problem, but help us to better understand the problem. This is a very complicated situation that most of us don't understand. Mrs. Thalen suggested that it might help everyone understand better if the information was presented at a future Board meeting. She believes that the special ed teachers and administrators are working hard to help our students.
- Mrs. O'Farrell added that even if our programs are similar to those in other districts, we are still missing something that caused these children not to perform well.
- Mrs. Thalen asked if it would be helpful if the Director of Special Education attended a SEPTA meeting.
- Mrs. O'Farrell agreed that it would.
- Mrs. Thalen added that the best solution would be to have the people who have the information talk about it.
- Mrs. Johannesen expressed that she believed there was a misunderstanding with regard to Mrs. Komorowski's initial concerns with the newspaper article. Mrs. Johannesen explained that believes Mrs. Komorowski was not pleased with information supplied by the Director of Special Education to the reporter for the *North Shore Sun* because it identified a specific child with special needs.
- Mrs. Thalen thanked her for explaining, but said that she would guess that only a handful of people knew whom the article referred to.
- Mrs. Johannesen said that it was very clear who the child was in the building.

**Mrs. Thalen announced that at this time the Board would return to the regular portion of the meeting. Any additional questions or comments from the community would be taken before the Board moved to Executive Session.**

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

**William B. Caulfield, Principal – Rocky Point High School announced:**

- There will be a homecoming dance this Friday evening at 7:30 PM. This year, festivities will include a little parade on Saturday with four floats – one for each grade level – designed and built by the students. The parade will form at the Frank J. Carasiti School beginning at 11:45 AM and participants will parade from the FJC to the high school beginning at 12:30 PM. Following the parade, the varsity football team will host Islip at 2:00 PM; the boys' varsity soccer team will play Shoreham-Wading River at 6:00 PM; and the girls' varsity soccer team will play Miller Place at 8:00 PM.
- Open School Night will be on Thursday, September 30, 2004 at 7:30 PM. Prior to that, there will be an orientation for the parents of ninth grade students beginning at 6:45 PM in the auditorium, at which time the attendance policy, graduation requirements, the Code of Conduct, and clubs and activities will be discussed.
- There will be a college fair at Suffolk County Community College on October 7, 2004 for seniors. Representatives from 350 colleges will be available for students to speak to.
- The PSAT exam will be given on October 16, 2004 for juniors and tenth grade English and math honors students.

**Joseph T. Centamore, Principal – Rocky Point Middle School announced:**

- Dr. Centamore thanked parents, staff, and students for an outstanding opening at the middle school. The building and grounds look wonderful and he thanked the building and grounds staff for their efforts.
- He announced that the middle school experienced a tragedy recently with the passing of a member of their staff, Mrs. Nancy Vanek.
- Dr. Centamore congratulated Mr. Kies and the high school administration for putting together the homecoming parade. The middle school will be represented by the middle school cheerleaders.
- He congratulated the varsity football team on their recent win.
- Open School Night will be on Tuesday night and they are hoping for a large turnout. Music students will be performing and various community organizations, including representatives from SEPTA, the Friends of Music, PTA, and the North Shore Youth Council, will be in the lobby.
- Dr. Centamore thanked the Booster Club for their donation of a digital message board and the PTA who will be purchasing a marquis for the middle school.
- He reminded everyone to visit the middle school's website for the weekly flyer and newsletter. Parents may sign up for digital mailings and any emails will be replied to within 24 hours.

**Carl Tvelia, Principal – Joseph A. Edgar School announced:**

- The JAE also experienced a successful opening. Open School Night was held on three separate evenings earlier this month for each grade level.
- Students participated in various activities as part Spirit Week last week.
- School pictures were taken today and will be tomorrow as well.
- The PARP Program (Parents As Reading Partners) will begin next month.
- Students will be raising money to help residents in disadvantaged parts of the world to purchase livestock to improve their lifestyles.
- Students are also taking part in a "Hands Across the East Coast" fundraiser to help hurricane victims in Florida.
- As part of Anthony Lettieri's Eagle Scout project, a memorial garden will be planted in front of the JAE in memory of Mary Utting, a long-time food service worker at JAE who passed away recently.

**Paul Read, Principal – Frank J. Carasiti School announced:**

- The start of the school year went well.
- Kindergartners faced many challenges including the transition from riding in car seats to riding independently on the school bus.

- Teachers and staff were trained early in September for the Alpha Smart Computer Program.
- Last week on September 21, 22, and 23, 2004, Open School Nights were held on separate evenings for each grade level.
- During October, students will celebrate Long Island Harvest as a theme. Activities will include assemblies where children will learn about what is grown on Long Island and a Harvest Day Parade on October 28, 2004.
- School pictures will be taken on October 20, 21, and 22, 2004.

**Leonard Kies, Athletic Director announced:**

- The fall sports season is in full swing.
- The track has been resurfaced and will be re-opened for community use on October 6, 2004.
- The varsity football team had an exciting game against East Hampton last Thursday night, which resulted in a 12-0 game.
- All four high school soccer teams are performing well.
- Exciting homecoming activities on Saturday will begin with a 10:00 AM JV boys' soccer game against Shoreham-Wading River, followed by a 2:00 PM varsity football game against Islip, a 6:00 PM varsity boys' soccer game against Shoreham-Wading River and an 8:00 PM varsity girls' soccer game against Miller Place.
- Mr. Kies congratulated Caitlyn Naylor for all of her past athletic achievements, which include being named All State League Five Player and leading goal scorer, breaking Chelsea Fabian's record of 48 soccer goals. Caitlyn will be awarded a plaque at the end of the season.

**Mrs. Thalen made the following announcements:**

- The community should be aware that the Board has been meeting to prepare our superintendent's search. Mr. Gerardi's contract expires on June 30, 2004. The Board would like the community's input and a survey will be posted on the website to allow residents an opportunity to voice their opinions about what they would like to see in a new superintendent.
- Over the summer, the Board met with Peter Rodriguez, a representative of the district's external auditors (Coughlin, Foundotos, Cullen, & Danowski, LLP). They have arranged for Mr. Roden to attend a board meeting in October so that the community may ask any questions they might have.
- Also in October, the Board would like an opportunity for input by the community with regard to AP courses at the high school.

**MINUTES**

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

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Minutes of the following Board of Education Meeting be accepted as presented: **Regular Meeting, August 30, 2004**. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

**TREASURER'S REPORTS**

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

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education accept the Treasurer's Reports for the months of **June, July and August 2004** as presented. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

**EXTRA-CLASSROOM ACTIVITY ACCOUNT TREASURER REPORT**

Upon a motion made by Howard Gimple and seconded by Jane Bonner, the following resolution was offered:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education accept the Extra Classroom Activity Treasurer Report for the months of **June, July and August 2004** as presented. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

### **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

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

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education accept the Financial Reports for the months of **June, July and August 2004** as presented. Discussion ensued. Mrs. Thalen asked Mr. Bilyk to explain the resolution. Mr. Bilyk announced that the district closed out the year with a \$1.4 million surplus, which will be applied towards this year's tax levy. There was no further discussion. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

### **SCHOOL TAX LEVY**

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 tax levy of \$29,993,050 and the adjusted budget of \$49,989,902 for the 2004-05 school year be approved. Discussion ensued. Mr. Bilyk explained that the tax rate would be \$175.93, which is \$1.40 less than the tax rate of \$177.33 that was projected at the May budget vote. There was no further discussion. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

### **BOND ISSUE PROJECT CHANGE ORDERS**

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 and approve the attached change orders with reference to bond issue related projects. Discussion ensued. Mr. Bilyk explained that this contract included repairs to the high jump and pole vault. There was no further discussion. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

### **SURPLUS ITEMS**

Upon a motion made by Howard Gimple and seconded by Jane Bonner, the following resolution was offered:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve for surplus the following attached list. Discussion ensued. Mrs. Thalen asked Mr. Caulfield to explain. Mr. Caulfield clarified that these social studies textbooks, which are obsolete due to their age/curriculum changes have been replaced. There was no further discussion. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

### **PLACEMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT**

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

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the District's entering into an instructional contract with the East Moriches School District to provide educational services, including related services, to a special education student for the 2004-05 school year; that the East Moriches School District will pay tuition, estimated to be \$59,063.55 for such services in accordance with the formulas established by the Commissioner of Education; that the East Moriches School District will provide all transportation services for such student; that the student will begin attending the Rocky Point School District with an effective

start date of September 1, 2004 pending final approval of the instructional contract in accordance with Section 2042 of the Education Law and that the Board President is authorized to sign such contract. Discussion ensued. Mrs. Thalen explained that East Moriches doesn't have a program for this student. There was no further discussion. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

#### **ADDITIONAL CHAIRPERSONS AND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST FOR COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL EDUCATION MEETINGS**

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 appoint Andrea Moscatiello as a Middle School Chairperson and Uta Mocniak-Field as a School Psychologist/Chairperson for Committee on Special Education Meetings. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

#### **ADDITIONAL IMPARTIAL HEARING OFFICERS**

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 Board of Education add the following to the State Approved Impartial Hearing Officer list: Peter Albert, Diane Cohen, Jonathan Heidelberger, Amy Itzla, Howard Jacob, Mary Margaret Keniry, Robin Kent, James McKeever, Gary Peters, Susan Richmond, Martin Schiff, Conrad Singer. Discussion ensued. Mrs. D'Ambrosio explained that these people serve as impartial hearing officers during superintendent's hearings and in cases where there are special education program discrepancies. There was no further discussion. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

#### **COMMITTEES ON SPECIAL EDUCATION/PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

Upon a motion made by Howard Gimple and seconded by Jane Bonner, the following resolution was offered:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education votes to arrange for appropriate services pursuant to the recommendations of Schedule 9-27-04-A and 9-27-04-B. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

#### **PERSONNEL**

Upon a motion made by Jane Bonner and seconded by Michael Matera, 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.

#### **Mrs. Thalen reopened the meeting to additional questions or comments from the community before the Board moved to Executive Session:**

- Mrs. Johannesen asked if the children who seem to need improvement will have an opportunity to re-take the test. Mrs. D'Ambrosio replied that they would not.
- Mrs. Johannesen asked how improvement could be evaluated since they wouldn't be re-taking the test.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio replied that the children would be monitored with parallel tests.
- Mrs. Johannesen asked how the tests were administered and if they were read to children.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio replied that they were not allowed to be read to them.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio added that ours is one of the districts with a high number of special ed students.
- Mrs. Tvelia added that the state has taken away all support, so children cannot have tests written for them or read to them.

- Mrs. Johannesen asked if the money that was received from Albany was earmarked to help children take these tests.
- Mrs. Tvelia replied that the money would be for the next group of children.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio added that the district already has services in place in JAE, including Academic Intervention Services for fifth grade students and now must look at fourth graders to see how they can benefit.
- Mrs. Tvelia added that all students must take the test regardless of what their IEP says.
- Mrs. Johannesen said that while she feels the district does a lot of good things, it is distressing to open a newspaper and find that one of our schools is in need of improvement. She would like to know why other districts seem to be more successful.
- Mrs. D'Ambrosio said that 2003 was the first time that we were able to compare the same children.
- Mrs. Thalen added that it appears that the district is working really hard to improve. Everything is being done at the elementary schools to improve the reading program.
- Mrs. Tvelia said that of the 292 students who were tested in fourth grade, only fourteen didn't make adequate progress.
- Mr. Sanseverino had a question with regard how students were grouped in the cohort and if it was possible that grouping might be a reason why other district's numbers looked better than ours.
- Mrs. Manitta replied that it was possible since according to the state's mandates, schools that have less than 40 students in a particular sub-group (special education, ESL, etc.) are looked at over a two-year basis. She added that she believes that because of this, it is likely that next year more schools will be in the same situation.
- Mrs. Johannesen asked how these results impacted students later when they are ready for college.
- Mrs. Thalen responded that colleges aren't interested in these results.
- Mr. Shultz reminded everyone that JAE was recognized as a "Blue Ribbons School" just two years ago.
- Mrs. LaCascia took the opportunity to inform the Board and members of the community that the North Shore Youth Council was involved in collecting supplies for a Marine unit stationed in Fallujah. She encouraged anyone who would like to donate any of the items to please drop them off at the North Shore Youth Council. Copies of the list of requested supplies would be available in the lobby after the meeting for anyone interested.)
- Mrs. Komorowski informed the Board members and administrators that she would be leaving SEPTA information for them and that they should consider themselves invited to the next meeting.

There were no further questions or comments.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 9:00 PM a motion was made by Michael Matera and seconded by Joseph Sanseverino for the Board of Education to go into executive session to discuss particular personnel matters. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Irene Pedota  
District Clerk

The Board returned to Open Session at 10:17 PM.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 10:18 PM a motion was made by Howard Gimple and seconded by Jane Bonner to adjourn the meeting. All in favor – Motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Carla D'Ambrosio  
Acting Superintendent