

## **Board of Education Regular Meeting**

January 13, 2009, 7:00 PM

Middletown High School

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

**Board Members Present:** Sally Boske, Bill Boyd, Sheila Daniels, Corinne Gill, Renee Johnson-Thornton, Jay Keiser, Ryan Kennedy, Ted Raczka, and Judy Russo

**Others Present:** Superintendent of Schools Michael J. Frechette, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum/Instruction John Hennelly, Director of Pupil Services and Special Education Ann Perzan, Special Education Supervisors Laurie Slade and Mindy Otis, Middletown High School Principal Bob Fontaine, Woodrow Wilson Middle School Principal Gene Nocera, Director of Athletics/Student Activities Mike Pitruzzello, Farm Hill Principal Pat Girard, Director of Facilities Ken Jackson, Manager of Transportation Mike Milardo, Grants Coordinator Elizabeth Nocera, Board Extern Rick Marx, MFT Representative Ann Lohrand, Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Secretary Marcy Poppel, Middletown Press Reporter Sloan Brewster, and sixteen (16) visitors.

Chair Raczka called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

### **II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

### **III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**MOTION:** Move to adopt the Agenda, passed with a motion by Ms. Gill and a second by Ms. Daniels – unanimous vote.

### **IV. PUBLIC SESSION**

Chair Raczka explained the rules of Public Session.

Lee B. Smith, urged Board members to find ways to lower the 2009-2010 budget.

Donna Gagnon-Smith, spoke regarding the 2009-2010 budget and cutting costs.

Arlene Rich, Westfield Residents Association Chair, asked the Board for assistance regarding the overcrowding at Moody School.

Deborah Klekowski, an educator, made budget suggestions regarding a moratorium on spending, possible withdrawal from No Child Left Behind, additional grant opportunities, expanded school year, course integration, and exploration of a three-year high school.

Izzy Greenberg, Executive Director of North End Action Team, spoke of gains at Macdonough School over the past year and hoped the Board would not consider closing Macdonough School.

Matt Pugliese, Oddfellows Playhouse Director, asked for continued funding for the after-school arts enrichment programs at elementary schools.

Jen Alexander asked the Board to be creative when looking at transportation in the new budget.

### **V. ACTION ITEM**

V.A. Discussion and Possible Action on Superintendent's Recommended  
2009-2010 Budget

Dr. Frechette provided an overview of the Board's discussion last month regarding the 2009-2010 budget and said tonight's meeting is for the Board to give him direction on moving forward percentage-wise. He received questions from Chair Raczka and Mr.

Keiser. A spreadsheet of their questions and responses was distributed. Dr. Frechette indicated that a meeting would take place tomorrow with representatives from Middletown School Administrators Association, Middletown Federation of Teachers, and Middletown Federation of Paraprofessionals so they can be involved in the process and potential solutions.

Ms. Gill requested information from the administration on some items raised during Public Session relating to the district withdrawing from No Child Left Behind (NCLB), high school reform, three-year high school program, transportation and students walking.

There was a lengthy discussion in the areas of: Title I, the loss of funding connected with withdrawal from NCLB and effect on Special Education, grant impact, legislative requirements in switching to a three-year high school. Ms. Daniels asked about the: increase in Stipends, Professional Services funds for facilities engineering and architectural support, why the addition in Maintenance Supplies, funding in Replacement-Maintenance, the Feasibility Study, addressing the Moody School overcrowding, budget timelines, and State reimbursements and factoring them into the budget. Dr. Frechette will e-mail a time line after his meeting with the Mayor. He indicated that we should have a better sense of the Governor's budget mid-February. Mr. Boyd added that in meetings with State legislators it appeared the State's budget might not be done until the Fall. In response to a question regarding current efforts to conserve during this fiscal year, Dr. Frechette said the 10 – 15% reserves have not been released, all bills and orders are closely scrutinized and we are look for ways to conserve on an ongoing basis. Dr. Frechette referred the Board to his Shared Services document and cost savings document that was given to the Board during last year's budget development. Dr. Frechette will have these documents updated. Chair Raczka said looking forward, the financial picture and process are very uncertain and added that his goal is to preserve class size and the quality of education in every classroom in this district. Mr. Kennedy inquired about Board options for the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum/Instruction. Dr. Frechette is researching multiple options and will make them available to the Board of Education. In response to a question, Dr. Frechette indicated that early retirement packages will be discussed tomorrow (January 14<sup>th</sup>) with the unions.

**MOTION:** To adopt the budget was made by Mr. Boyd and a second by Ms. Russo.

Some Board members (Ms. Gill, Ms. Boske, and Mr. Keiser) indicated that they were not ready to vote this evening and provided their reasons. It was felt that a better idea is needed of what kind of funds are going to be available at the State and Federal levels before decisions could be made.

**MOTION:** Move to table voting on the budget was made by Ms. Boske with a second by Mr. Kennedy.

Chair Raczka asked Dr. Frechette what the impact would be if the Board did not vote this evening on the budget. Dr. Frechette said that important meetings have been scheduled with various stakeholders in the next week or so and there will be significant changes and the 2009-2010 budget would not be business as usual.

It was mutually agreed by consensus to withdraw both motions by the participants and to consider the budget on a future agenda.

Ms. Johnson-Thornton asked about the Board's goals and not losing sight of the vision for the district. She asked if the Board could come up with a plan of what they are trying to accomplish

for students. She felt the Board should leave the meeting with more guidance and not leave without a plan of how we are going to look at the budget numbers some more. Chair Raczka said the first step is for each Board member to communicate their goal to the Superintendent. He encouraged Board members to think about it over the next week or so and contact Dr. Frechette. Ms. Boske reminded Board members that the Board adopted a set of goals at the beginning of the year. One goal is class size and another is the safety of students. Ms. Gill said these goals are not prioritized. Dr. Frechette said it should be a decision of the entire Board, not individuals. It is not possible for him to move forward based on individual Board members' priorities. He agrees 100% with Ms. Johnson-Thornton and Ms Gill. The Board needs to come up with its top two or three priorities and recommends that the Board agrees on the top two or three areas to remain in the budget at all costs. Ms. Gill added that there are some things there is no choice in which must remain at the top of the list.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Vote to adjourn at 8:09 PM passed with a motion by Ms. Boske and a second by Mr. Boyd – unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

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Corinne E. Gill  
Secretary

CEG/mkp