



MINUTES
THOMASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Meeting
Thomaston Town Hall - Lena Morton Gallery
 Date: Monday, April 5, 2010
 7:00 p.m.

Members: Laurie Barrett, Chair; Beth Yaffe, Vice Chair; Lucy Santopietro, Secretary; Laura Rieley, Treasurer; Joanne Gilland, Holly Herbert, Roxy Fainer, George Counter and Steve Catania, Members

Present: Laurie Barrett, Beth Yaffe, Lucy Santopietro, Roxy Fainer, Holly Herbert, Joanne Gilland and Laura Rieley

Absent: Steve Catania and George Counter

Also Present: Superintendent, Lynda Mitchell; Business Manager, Sue Laone; Board Clerk, Patricia George; Pupil Services Director, Nancy Schnyer; High School Principal, John Perrucci; Center School Principal, Jim Diorio; Black Rock School Principal, Paul Johnson

I. Establishment of a quorum and call to order:
 Board Chair Laurie Barrett established a quorum and called to order the Special Meeting of the Board of Education at 7:00 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance:
 No flag present in meeting room

III. Approval of Agenda:
 On a motion made by Lucy Santopietro and seconded by Beth Yaffe to approve/accept the agenda with the following amendment:

- The Board Chair noted the correct numbering of the items

No further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

IV. Budget Reductions: Public Session

Superintendent Lynda Mitchell began the discussions with a Power Point presentation created by Business Manager Sue Laone. The presentation outlined the 2010/2011 proposed BoE operating budget with a regular education vs. special education breakdown, ARRA ECS - State Fiscal Stabilization Funds, and historical budget increases. Additionally, the Board of Education was asked by the Board of Finance to further reduce their initial budget of \$14,389,247 by \$348,000. The cuts to meet their request were also presented.

Reductions were made to transportation, administrator changes, travel, legal fees, tutors, supplies, contracted services, repair/replacement of equipment, athletics (coaches, transportation, referees, equipment), tuition regular education, high school math position, textbooks, overtime, non-instructional equipment, field trips/programs, and preschool tuition offset budget line items totaling \$160,735. Business Manager Sue Laone felt that these cuts were set in stone; however, further reductions in the amount of \$187,265, the balance

of the \$348,000, were being brought forward to the Board for discussions. These cuts included teachers' early retirement, and music and art instruction at Black Rock School and Center School. Other items in discussion were the realignment of social studies courses for students in grades 7 and 8 and the addition of a Business Teacher at the high school.

The center of public comment weighed heavily on the reductions encompassing art and music. Parents and students alike, voiced their concerns on the elimination of the programs and the affects it would have on students both in the primary grades to as far as college preparation and possible career explorations.

Anthony Durso of Old Northfield Road stated "the crisis in education is country wide; districts simply cannot afford the mandates placed on them by state and federal governments." He felt the government was destroying the schools, not the people in town.

Kim Foss of Blue Trail Drive, and an educator herself, suggested shortening the school year by eliminating school breaks to "keep what we have and loose nothing"; a budget tactic implemented as a cost savings measure in the district where she is employed.

Superintendent Lynda Mitchell explained that the process was a difficult one. The Board was given a directive by the Finance Board to make cuts and the Board of Education with the input of administrators, has to make those cuts.

Concluding the evening, Board Chair Laurie Barrett thanked the public for attending and sharing their comments and concerns. Ms. Barrett suggested that they attend the town meeting on Wednesday, April 7th to voice their concerns further.

V. Adjournment:

On a motion made by Beth Yaffe and seconded by Lucy Santopietro to adjourn the Special Meeting of the Board of Education at 9:05 p.m., no further discussion, motion carried unanimously.