

Rockaway Borough Board of Education

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Thomas Jefferson School Gymnasium
95 East Main Street, Rockaway, NJ 07866
Tuesday, September 10, 2019, 7:00 PM

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1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m., by Mrs. Christa Smith, Board President, by reading the following announcement to those present:

"In accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act, The Rockaway Borough Board of Education has provided adequate notice of this special meeting to the public by having the time, date and place thereof advertised in the Daily Record and The Citizen newspapers, posted our website, and posted in other public places. No action will be taken."

2. Board Member Roll Call

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Four (4): Mrs. Karen Walter, Mrs. Alexis Piombino, Mr. Jeff Tobias, VP and Mrs. Christa Smith, Board President.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: One (1): Mrs. Linda McGovern

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Mrs. Phyllis Alpaugh, Superintendent of Schools, & Mr. William Stepka, Business Admin./Secretary of the Board

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Gregory Somjen, Principal Partner of Parette Somjen Architects, Rockaway, NJ, Mrs. Lisa Gorab, Bond Counsel of Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer, Woodbridge, NJ and Mrs. Angelina Carione, Vice President of NW Financial Group, Hoboken, NJ plus approximately 55 Members of the Admin., Staff & Public.

The Pledge of Allegiance was then held . . .

3. Referendum II Public Forum: Information and Question & Answer Session

(A 24-minute video, which showed the dilapidated condition of the schools, played on the screen on the stage behind the Board for the entire time.)

The Board President made an opening statement in which she stated the focus of the referendum: enhance security (main entrance vestibules) and safety (new fire escape & updated fire/security alarms) and update old building machinery (new boilers, unit ventilators, roofs and electrical main panels). Then, the following facts and flyer was distributed and discussed: Net cost to the average home assessment of \$301,000 = \$250 per year, \$21/month, .68 Cents per day (or \$83 for every \$100,000 of your home's assessed tax valuation.) State aid will save \$81 per year. **Without** State Aid, the cost would have been \$331 per year, \$28/month, .91 cents per day. Are you a senior citizen? Do you know about the "NJ Senior Tax Freeze" Program? See if you qualify at:

www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/questions/senior-freeze.shtml or Google "[nj senior tax freeze program](#)"

The following residents, and others, asked various questions to the Board, Administration and professional advisors present: Al Morena, Danielle Wheelock, Mark Mckinney, Tony Gebbia and Brian Riveccio, among others. Some of the questions asked were: Why now? Can the bonds be issued all at once? Why did previous Boards kick the can down the road? What is the process to issue bonds? How long are the bonds paid? Why is steam heat bad? Why do we have to use prevailing wages when I can get my house fixed for much less? Why does the Lincoln fire escape need replacement? Can't we just keep the state aid without a referendum vote? If it passes, how long will it be to complete all the projects? How competitive are contractors in submitting realistic bids? How do the tariffs effect the project costs? Can't we just put the projects in the annual budget?

Is there any other avenues of revenue we can use except bonding? How much interest rate will the district pay on the bonds? Why can't we just ask the state or federal government for a free grant of money? How long did we have the trailers? How will the traffic flow be affected at Lincoln? Why do the lavatories need to be updated? Why do the electrical panels need replacement? How old is the roofs on the schools?

There were lively and sincere discussions throughout the evening. The Board president then thanked the people present, the professional advisors and the administration for such straightforward and knowledgeable information.

4. Motion to Adjourn: 8:28 pm

There being no further comments before the Board, the meeting was hereby adjourned.

Moved by: Mrs. Walter Seconded by: Mrs. Piombino Voice Vote: All Ayes

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. William Stepka, RSBA
Secretary of the Board of Education/
School District Business Administrator