

DRAFT MINUTES

These are the Draft Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Borough Council and Board of Education of North Plainfield, NJ on Wednesday ,25 January 2012. Every attempt has been made to make these as comprehensive and conclusive as possible.

However, as it is a draft document, it is not to be construed as a formal depiction of the official conduct of business and is subject to revision up to and following the Governing Body's actual approval of same. If changes are necessary, revised minutes will be posted to the website.

MINUTES of the Joint Meeting of the North Plainfield Borough Council and the North Plainfield Board of Education held on Wednesday, January 25, 2012 at 7:08 p.m. at the East End School All Purpose Room, 170 Oneida Avenue, North Plainfield, New Jersey.

PRESENT:

Council Members: Mary H. Forbes
Lawrence La Ronde
Everett Merrill
Keiona R. Miller
Frank Righetti
Douglas M. Singleterry (7:27 p.m.)
Frank Stabile, Council President

Also Present: Michael Giordano Jr., Mayor
David E. Hollod, Business Administrator
Richard K. Phoenix, RMC, Borough Clerk

BOARD OF EDUCATION

PRESENT: Thomas J. Allen
David Branan
Sandra J. Dodd
Kathleen Mullen
Nancy Szaroleta
Linda Bond Nelson, President

ABSENT: Thomas Kasper

Also Present: Dr. Marilyn Birnbaum, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Robert Rich, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Donald Sternberg, Administrator/Board Secretary

Board President Linda Bond-Nelson read the Call of the Meeting, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.

Ms. Bond-Nelson led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag:

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Alex Gardner, 110 Graybar Drive, North Plainfield, asked if there would be opportunity for the public to comment at the end of the meeting, and Ms. Bond-Nelson answered in the negative. The suggestion was made that this meeting should have been supported by more publicity, particularly a “phone blast” or telephone tree scheme.

Monique Womack, 278 Leonard Place, North Plainfield, inquired after plans for the vacant Kmart Plaza. The Council President replied that there is movement and that administration would comment further. Mayor Giordano interjected that there had been no application before the Planning Board as yet, but that the Borough is in negotiations with a firm, it shows great promise and is still in the talking stage. The speaker continued that the town was in need of a recreation center, and the Mayor replied that the topic had been explored by the School Board with the result that there would be a need for chaperones. Ms. Miller interjected that efforts were being made to recruit chaperones.

NEW BUSINESS:

a) **COMMUNICATION – CABLE CHANNEL** – Mrs. Forbes reminded that negotiations with Comcast in their most recent franchise renewal with the Borough had produced \$30,000.00 in seed money that could be used to purchase video cameras and equipment for cable telecasts. Mr. Hollod added that the Borough had recently received annual franchise fees from both Comcast and Verizon FIOS. The \$30,000 grant had come through from Comcast in February 2011. He suggested that when the schools were ready to originate programming, that they should bring the proposals to the Borough, which would then deal with Comcast who would be expected to provide an access channel for it. Ms. Bond-Nelson commented that it would be our responsibility while the Mayor remarked that the schools would need to provide the IT (information technology).

Dr. Birnbaum agreed that a purchase of equipment would certainly be required, and that the Board would look into what could be done with the \$30,000.00 grant. She added that the cablecasts would not necessarily have to be confined exclusively to board meetings, and that airtime could also be given over to arts-related programming, such as choral presentations. Ms. Miller asked about the need for paid staff to produce programming, and the Council President replied that the Council was interested in the programming proposal, although the major onus seemed to be on the town as opposed to cable, itself, to provide equipment and/or staff. Having students produce the programs would be a partial solution, although they could not be expected to produce summertime programming.

The Council President, replying to Dr. Birnbaum, observed that virtually no access programming seen on cable TV is actually live, and that it is consistently pre-recorded fare.

b) **SHARED SERVICES** – The range of shared services between the Borough and the Schools was explored. Ed Ostroff, Director of Operations of the Board of Education referenced the cost-saving agreements between the schools and town for fuel oil, motor fuel, sand and salt as well as cooperative purchasing agreements. He remarked on the history of the Borough and Schools sharing personnel

when a particular expertise was required. The Vermeule Community Center has also been used for classroom space. The Borough's Construction Official, Howard Klein has been most helpful in reviewing the schools' construction plans while the Office of Emergency Management has been of great assistance in helping the Board of Education get its FEMA reimbursement for storm damage during periods of heavy weather. The suggestion was made that the schools turn to Police Chief William Parenti for his expertise with IT networking. Mr. Ostroff suggested distilling such agreements to written form. Further, he commented very favorably on the positive working relationship the schools enjoy with Street Superintendent Angelo Costello.

Ms. Bond-Nelson noted the cost savings enjoyed from the schools' relationship with the Borough's Joint Insurance Fund; and, finally, Mayor Giordano assented particularly to the money saved from the town and schools' sharing of the cost of salt for snow clearance.

c) SCHOOL ELECTION LAW – Senate Bill S3148 and Assembly Bill A4394 - The Board President opened discussions on the new provision that would move school elections to the November General Election ballot. Reportedly, three Somerset County districts have decided to go with the November election. Unless the school budget cap were exceeded, it would effectively take the budget vote off the ballot and confine the ballot to school board candidates and referenda. Ms. Bond-Nelson advised that if the November school election were put into place by the Council or the Board of Education, it would continue as part of the General Election for four years.

It was suggested that the Council make the decision on a November school election, which the State is advising could be implemented by a simple one-time resolution by the governing body or school board. Either group of elected officials could choose to adopt the resolution. Mr. La Ronde favored the move to November, saying that having school board candidates appearing on the ballot would bring out a better voter turnout. However, he remained concerned about the school board budget not being put to a vote, concluding that the luxury of a budget vote should not be compromised. Mr. Singleterry favored the November move, saying that the Board members are specifically elected to prepare the school budget. Mrs. Forbes assured that it was a Board of Education matter, and the Council President agreed that he did not favor the measure, since it would be cumbersome for the Board of Elections and the Council should not force it on the School Board. Agreeing with Mr. La Ronde, Mr. Branan commented that a November election would increase the turnout for voting on the school board candidates. Ms. Bond-Nelson noted a history of successful people serving on the North Plainfield School Board. A November School Election would run the risk of adding politics to the mix. She said that the Board would take up the topic on their own.

d) FIELD USAGE – Board President Bond-Nelson said that this topic was separate from the recreation agreement. Actual authority for usage comes from Mr. Sternberg's office. Mr. Sternberg opined that it still goes through Recreation to make formal request of the Schools' athletic director. As a further example of sharing, the Krausche Field lighting was defrayed on an alternate year basis between the Borough and the School Board. Mr. Allen questioned who was paying for lighting at this time. He reported on numerous out-of-town adults using fields around the Borough on weekends. Do the police have the authority to remove them?

The Mayor advised that the police should be called if there is a problem. The users of the field(s) must have a permit. Replying to Mr. Merrill, Dr. Birnbaum explained that the responsibility

for the fields was split between the schools and the Borough. The Mayor retorted that field usage permission goes through Recreation. There is an agreement with the Board regarding traveling baseball. The Council President observed that the Mayor's Special Events Committee was concerned about additional publicity for events around town and the possible placement of banners.

Mr. Sternberg said that certain proposed banner locations were too fragile to accommodate them, although stable locations such as the press box or scoreboard held potential.

e) **BOROUGH WEB SITE** – Mr. Allen commented that the website looks good and offers a wealth of information. He suggested that the Board of Education portion of the municipal website be proofed to assure that all details were current, especially the current line-up of Board Members. Mr. Hollod assured that the webmaster, Mr. Bozack, works on a contracted basis, and would certainly address it if it were brought to his attention. Most updates on the website take place on the first of the year following action by the Governing Body. Mr. Sternberg suggested adding a link from the Borough website to the schools' website, and Mr. Hollod agreed that it would present no problem. It was also suggested that a linkage also be established from the School Boards' www.nplainfield.org to the Borough's www.northplainfield.org.

NON-AGENDA ITEMS:

Mr. Merrill requested a brief update on anti-bullying efforts in the schools. Dr. Birnbaum advised of a planned public presentation in March. The overall situation is improving, but it is accompanied by a lot of paper. A mid-year report will be prepared.

Mr. La Ronde questioned conflicting dates between Borough and School Board events. Specifically, he cited the June Street Fair (on the second Saturday) and Canuckapalooza being too close to one another. Canuckapalooza, he said, has often fallen on the night before the street fair. Both events, he assured, could benefit from some separation in scheduling. Dr. Birnbaum replied that she would work on it, and the possibility of scheduling the school event in the first week in June.

Mr. La Ronde requested that the Board make school calendars available to the Governing Body, and the Superintendent agreed, saying that they have plenty to spare and would distribute them through the Borough Clerk's Office.

Council President Stabile suggested scheduling the Borough Council/School Board joint meetings on a twice-yearly basis, possibly holding the next meeting in September or October. Board President Bond-Nelson found it an agreeable suggestion.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Branan moved to adjourn, seconded by Council President Stabile and on voice vote approved with all in favor.

The Joint Meeting was thereupon adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Borough Clerk

Council President