

## MINUTES (revised)

REGULAR (TOWN HALL) MEETING  
 November 19, 2008 – 1:40 p.m.  
 Middle School/High School Auditorium

<b>Call To Order</b>	President Legnini called meeting to order at 1:45 p.m.
<b>Tobacco Policy Statement</b>	- read
<b>Pledge of Allegiance</b>	- led
<b>Board Members Present</b>	Trustees Ralph Legnini (President), Maxanne Resnick, Donna Flayhan and Ann McGillicuddy
<b>Board Members Absent</b>	Due to conflicting work schedules: Michelle Friedel, Laurie Osmond (Vice President), Richard Wolff
<b>Administration Present</b>	Superintendent of Schools Leslie G. Ford, Assistant Superintendent for Business Victoria McLaren, HS Principal Lance Edelman, HS Assistant Principal Jennifer O'Connor, Bennett Principal Buono, District Clerk Laurel Herdman
<b>Others Present</b>	Mr. Ianotti, Mr. DiGiovanni, Student Board Representative, William Melvin, Photographer and approximately 170 students
<b>Welcome &amp; Overview of BOE &amp; Introduction</b>	President Legnini welcomed everyone. Mr. Ianotti provided an overview of the Board of Education process. President Legnini continued with process explanation and introductions. Trustees introduced themselves, provided their backgrounds and offered reasons for their involvement. Dr. Ford introduced herself, Ms. McLaren and Ms. Herdman and explained each Administrator's role.
<b>OCS BOE</b>	<p><b>When and Where Meetings Are Held</b> – President Legnini explained the meeting schedule and how the meeting start time was made earlier. Inviting students to attend (even if only for a short while), he also informed them that there is a specific “Student Be Heard” section of the meeting.</p> <p><b>Procedures In Effect During Meetings</b> – President Legnini explained that while BOE meetings are public, Personnel topics may not be discussed. In addition, specific names of personnel cannot be expressed during comments sessions. Ralph further explained the procedures of developing and posting meeting agendas, meeting order, motions, discussion, resolutions, votes, enactment, etc.</p>
<b>Purview of BOE Policy</b>	<p><b>Types of Issues</b> – Trustee Flayhan explained that there are two (2) types of issues--those that are addressed during: 1) Regular meetings; and 2) Executive Sessions. Nearly all issues have to be addressed in a public setting. Meetings have to be announced 72 hours in advance (check the District website). At meetings, the public is listened to and policies are reviewed and set (“to represent the best interest of education and the public”), resolutions are passed, and requests are made of the Superintendent, with the help of her organization, to carry out policy.</p> <p>Using the following analogy, Donna explained that the Board is the “legislative” branch, while Administration is the “executive” branch. “One of the biggest jobs of a Board of Education is to work with their Superintendent to make sure the best needs of the school district are being met.” A separation of powers (also part of the U.S. Constitution) keeps everything functioning well. The Board is the “ears” to the</p>

community and the “eyes” to the District, while Administration is the “hands” to carry out policy (following through with public requests addressed by the policies set by the BOE). Together with the Superintendent, the Board develops the “larger vision for the education and the district,” and “making sure the vision is carried out through actual means.”

Trustee Flayhan explained that Executive Sessions are conducted to discuss issues that may not be discussed in public and to vote on them democratically. To do so, a motion is made during a public meeting to go into Executive Session--it is then seconded. Other than the topic indicated during the public meeting, no other topic may be discussed in Executive Session.

Examples of topics to be discussed only in Executive Session are: contract negotiations (until finalized), personnel and staff reviews, grievances from personnel, staff and/or students, matters affecting public safety, law suits, legal investigations, employee medical/financial issues or employment history, student grades, proposed acquisition/sale/lease of real estate, etc.

Trustee Flayhan encouraged the audience to “watch” the national and local governments and this school board, to make sure the separation of powers is working, and “working to your interests.”

President Legnini added that if an Executive Session issue needs to be voted upon, the Board comes back before the public to do so—“it’s not a secret.” Since the Clerk and the newspapers notate these actions, everyone knows how the Board votes. Ralph stated that this is important because “we represent the community...we don’t govern the school from a back room somewhere. It’s done in front of everybody and anyone is welcome to come.”

## Discussion

**Lockers (Replacement Concerns & Suggestions)** – President Legnini introduced this topic brought forth by students in general, and specifically by the Student Council the previous evening during the Regular Board Meeting. Ralph first explained how a discussion is conducted: a) each member gets the attention of the President; b) he acknowledges their turn to speak by saying their name; and c) to avoid monopolizing the conversation, each member is allowed to have his/her say before allowing someone who has already spoken to speak again.

To give people the opportunity for a “good argument” in order to convince others of their point of view and to vote the same way, Ralph encourages “a lively discussion between everybody.” He explained, however, that he tries to keep people from repeating themselves or taking up too much time. The discussion between Board members was then opened.

Referring to last night’s report, Trustee McGillicuddy indicated that a majority of the students surveyed what something changed about the locker situation. She would first like to obtain more and a broader view of information on available options. In accordance with the District’s new Sustainability Policy, it is her desire to try to use recycled materials where possible. She would also like to learn how to utilize the blocks that are currently set in the walls, possibly looking at getting new, wider doors.

President Legnini mentioned that he had learned of different companies that make various styles of lockers. One style is two (2) wider lockers, not as long, stacked on top of each other. Decisions are features that need to be made are size, the number needed for the current school population (how many are currently active or not), and

the type. The cost will also have to be considered.

Trustee Flayhan complimented the scope of the survey, saying it was an excellent sample size (200+ out of 650 responded) and an “overwhelming quantitative study,” indicating that the students find their lockers to be: a) not wide enough for today’s needs; b) broken; and c) easy to break into. Donna stated that the survey findings indicate the action that the Board needs to take. The photos (qualitative) revealed the “depressing” conditions of the lockers (some with homophobic and racist comments etched into them) that need to be addressed.

In Trustee Flayhan’s opinion, the neglect of something like lockers (“when you see this everyday”) causes people (whether an employee or a student) to also feel neglected. The qualitative and the quantitative findings “also reveal that you’re frustrated.” While attempting to include survey comments about water quality during her discussion, President Legnini interrupted to indicate that this topic would be straying from the topic of discussion. Ralph explained to the students that given the short amount of time allowed for discussion, he, as Chair, is charged with keeping the discussion focused, and this was one such example.

In the interest of time, Trustee Resnick, who indicated she would normally have much to say on the topic, deferred to Public Be Heard.

President Legnini stated that one thing everyone is conscious of is, “How much is it going to cost? If you want to buy new tires for your car, maybe you can’t go out to lunch” for that month. It would not be wise for the Board to pass a resolution without knowing how much money a project would cost, or without specifying where the funds would come from, or if we even have the money for it. These decisions are then weighed against where else the money could go.

Dr. Ford offered the reminder that we, as the media news would indicate and as families are probably experiencing, “are in a difficult budget time.” Although we currently “don’t have a mid-year budget-cutting issue in front of us—it’s been removed,” it may come back in January. Therefore, we are looking very carefully at all of our funding. Lockers are one issue to be looked at, “not only for the students, but for the entire budget (in order) to make it through the year, because that’s all the money we have to work with.” Recognizing this difficult decision, and wanting “to give the larger picture,” Dr. Ford expressed empathy for the Board, who are “torn by what they’d like to do, and circumstances that are given to us...I know this is a very high priority to them.”

Dr. Ford indicated that during the future budget-building process, to which she invited everyone, “we have even more difficult decisions to make.”

**Summary Statement** – In the interest of time, William Melvin, Student Board Representative, also deferred his time to the Public Be Heard portion of the meeting.

**Student Be Heard**

Outlining the format, President Legnini asked students to a) introduce themselves for public record; b) state their topic; c) keep comments brief--under two (2) minutes in length; and d) not mention any individual names or titles (though he invited anyone to approach any Board member with such comments after the meeting adjourns).

The following six (6) students signed up to speak:

**Jolie Peters** – What is status of the manganese in our drinking water?

(President Legnini explained that typically, during Public Be Heard, the Board does not respond to the spokesperson, that this is not a conversation. However, Board members do take note of what is said and will respond in person, by phone, by email, etc.)

**Allie Chetkof** – Is it possible to reinstate the salad bar?

**Astrid Delgado** – Why hasn't the Spanish Club be approved yet?

(At this point, Ralph informed the students that they could expound on their questions, giving reasons why they feel a particular way about their topic, giving more input for the Board to work with.)

Though signed up, Jonathan Plonski and Katie Kanuche did not approach the podium.

**Tiffany Bloomer** – “Why are schools being painted all different colors when it's just making it look worse? Every other school is just their school colors. We have green lockers and yellow corners, and blue corners...our school is supposed to be red, white & black.”

President Legnini opened the floor to others not signed up:

**Kelsey** – Why hasn't the Senior Lounge been approved yet?

Dr. Ford reminded the audience that this was a public meeting, where “decorum” is called for. She complimented the “wonderful job” and “great speakers,” and offered, “sometimes you can appreciate the silence also.”

**Akira Shimizu** – He had heard that money was appropriated for lockers and was wondering if it was going to be used for procuring new lockers or improving the current lockers, as he did not believe that the lockers needed that much improvement.

**Natasha** – “There's been a rumor going around that there is a herpes outbreak in our school and I want to know if anything is going to be done to bring notice to the rest of the student body. The fact of the matter is that even if only a small group of people has it, we all date each other, so it's going to get around. I just want to know if there's going to be awareness brought to us.”

**Robin Richardson** – Could money be appropriate from the budget to replace items in the bathrooms, i.e., the dividers etched with racist graffiti, that have been in this condition for the past four (4) years. In addition, the bathrooms are “just dirty—filthy, actually.”

**Kaylo Lopino** – Why are art colleges not represented at College Fair day? Why are there no Portfolio classes nor a Portfolio Day?

**Enrique Rozato** – Expressed concern for the lack of Spanish Club. There is a “very active Spanish study body, and people that very involved with Spanish and love it very much, so I would like to have the (same) opportunity that French and German students have.” Having a club allows for participation “in what you love, outside of school.” She asked that her comments be taken into consideration when making a decision.

**Joel** – Why does the maintenance staff get very expensive equipment, but students can’t get money to get lockers, new textbooks (“we using old, ratty textbook”) and the auditorium seats “are all falling down and wobbly...Where’s OUR money?”

**Unidentified previous speaker** – Other schools that are “so much more dangerous than our school” let students go off campus. “We live in the tiniest community, and we can’t even walk across the street to get something to eat. I feel we should be allowed to have an open campus.”

**Mike Witina** – He is concerned with what happened to last year’s recycled products that were placed into the green bins during a school Green Movement project. To his knowledge, from multiple sources, the recycled products were instead thrown away with rest of the garbage. “Apparently we went for a Green thing and it didn’t happen, so I’d like to see some sort of improvement in the Green Movement that is going around here, and not just throwing stuff out.”

**Roslyn** – While education and helping the world is widely promoted, “if you’re serving us really bad food, we’re all going to be really unhealthy, so we’re not really going to (be able) help anyway.” Food additives are not helping us to be healthy people. “You have to have education, but on food.”

**Concluding  
Comments**

President Legnini stated that the Board wrote down all the questions and the Board Clerk has everyone’s comments on tape. As a Board, and with input from the Superintendent, he guaranteed responses to all the questions. The Board will next to figure out the best way to convey them. All students were invited to attend future meetings or to send letters to the Superintendent’s Office, requesting copies be distributed to the Board members, which they receive, read and respond to every week.

**Adjournment**

President Legnini entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion: Flayhan  
Second: Resnick  
Discussion: none  
Carried: 4-0

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Minutes Recorded by:

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Laurel Herdman  
District Clerk