

**SHELTER ISLAND UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**SPECIAL MEETING**  
August 31, 2009

Members Present: Rebecca Mundy, Thomas Graffagnino, Kathleen Reilly, Mark Kanarvogel, Linda Eklund, Kenneth Lewis, Jr., Stephen Gessner

Members Absent:

Others Present: Superintendent, Sharon Clifford; Assistant Superintendent, Donna Guiffre; District Clerk, Deborah Vecchio; Sam Schneider, School District Business Leader; Jake Williams, Shelter Island Reporter; 26 community members and 17 staff/faculty/students were present

The meeting was called to order at 5:37 p.m. by President Mundy, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Call To Order

**Visitor's Comments –**

Visitor's  
Comments

A. Ms. Jeannette Payne, parent, read a letter in support of moving Jennifer Rylott, current 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, into the Middle School ELA position stating that Ms. Rylott is accountable, praises students, molds students, makes students feel at ease, never gives up, and is always available to give students extra help. Ms. Payne also commented that her child absorbs Ms. Rylott's lessons, had an increase in grade point average, passed for the year, and taught him how to use his imagination. Ms. Rylott has made a student out of her son and has changed his life. She is the best teacher a student can ever have.

B. Ms. Lisa Gilpin, parent and president of the PTSA, asked the Board who will be appointed for the next 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher position? She also commented that she is concerned about how students will fair regarding the state exams and who would help students prepare for these exams. She also compared Shelter Island's English and Math scores with those of Oysterponds school district.

C. Ms. Christine Gallagher, parent, commented that it would be sad not to have Ms. Rylott in the elementary school, but to have her for three years in the Middle School is worth waiting for. Ms. Gallagher is willing to take a chance on who the Board appoints for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

D. Ms. Gina Sherman, parent, stated that she would hate to see Ms. Rylott leave the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and Ms. Rachel Brigham leave Special Education. She is concerned who would replace Ms. Brigham in the area of Special Education. Ms. Sherman does not want either teacher moved.

E. Ms. Mary Boeklen, parent, commented that having Ms. Rylott for 3 years in the Middle School would be awesome.

Visitor's  
Comments  
(con't)

F. Ms. Kyle Karen, parent, also supports moving Ms. Rylott into the Middle School commenting that she is a wonderful teacher. She stated that all of the elementary teachers are talented.

**Correspondence –**

Correspondence

A. Ms. Rebecca Mundy stated that she has received letters from Elizabeth Surozenski, Sarah Sherwood and Chris Mulligan, Janine Mahoney, and Vicki Kotula.

A motion was made by Linda Eklund, seconded by Kenneth Lewis, Jr., BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Board of Education hereby approves the following:

Modification of  
D. Treharne  
tenure appt.

**WHEREAS**, on March 21, 2005, Devon Treharne was granted tenure as a teacher in the Shelter Island Union Free School District in the tenure area of English Grades 9-12, and

**WHEREAS**, English 9-12 is not a recognized tenure area in accordance with Part 30 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, and

**WHEREAS**, the Commissioner's Regulations require tenure to be granted in subject areas encompassing Grades 7-12,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Education hereby modifies the tenure appointment originally granted on March 21, 2005 and revises such tenure to be in the tenure area of English Grades 7-12, with such modification to be retroactive to the March 21, 2005 resolution, setting forth tenure effective September 1, 2005.

Motion carried unanimously

Ms. Rebecca Mundy stated that due to inconsistencies, it is the Board of Education's responsibility to correct such resolutions.

A motion was made by Kenneth Lewis, Jr., seconded by Kathleen Reilly, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, Jennifer Rylott is to be assigned to teach English Language Arts, Grades 5, 6 & 7, effective September 1, 2009.

Recommendation  
of J. Rylott as  
ELA teacher

Mrs. Sharon Clifford read a statement as to why she is recommending Ms. Jennifer Rylott to the position of MS ELA for grades 5, 6 & 7. She also stated that the Board of Education accepted the resignation of Christine Moran on August 17, 2009, the district posted and advertised the Middle School ELA position, and union members are allowed to apply, as well as any person from outside the school. The Board of Education can choose to accept or deny the recommendation of the Superintendent.

Recommendation  
of J. Rylott as  
ELA teacher  
(con't)

The Board voted on the above motion as follows: Rebecca Mundy – yes, Thomas Graffagnino, Mark Kanarvogel, Kathleen Reilly, Stephen Gessner, Linda Eklund, and Kenneth Lewis, Jr. – no

Motion not carried

Mr. Stephen Gessner explained his decision by stating that this would have created too much disruption in the school and was not fair to parents, students, and the staff. The proposal by Mrs. Clifford would have created a domino effect. He thought long and hard about this and his decision does not have to do with the merit of the teacher and is in the best interests of the school.

Ms. Rebecca Mundy stated that she is disappointed in the Board of Education's decision not to appoint Ms. Jennifer Rylott. She should be looked at as a candidate and not a domino effect.

Mr. Kenneth Lewis, Jr. stated that this process began on July 23 with a scenario presented by the Superintendent. The Board was polled with this proposal and stated to the Superintendent that she should come up with another plan. Mr. Lewis stated that the Board, for 7 weeks, has been working on this quietly and diligently, but at this point, it is as if nothing has ever happened. He also stated that outside sources took comments and created a circus. It is in the best interests of the community and children to keep Ms. Rylott in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Mr. Thomas Graffagnino stated that he is not in support of a disruption, and that this proposal has many flaws. He also stated that the request of the Board of Education had been ignored, and that the Board had asked the Superintendent to re-evaluate her recommendation.

Mrs. Clifford stated that as per the teachers' contract Jennifer Rylott was interviewed, and she will continue to move the process along with the interview committee. Ms. Mundy stated for the record that Ms. Christine Moran's resignation letter was received in the district on July 28<sup>th</sup> and stamped August 4, 2009.

A motion was made by Kenneth Lewis, Jr. seconded by Thomas Graffagnino, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Board of Education hereby accepts and authorizes the Board President to execute the Agreement between the Board of Education of the Shelter Island Union Free School District and Kathleen Leahy, Consultant. The term of said agreement shall be effective from September 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010.

Acceptance of the Agreement between SIUFSD and Kathleen Leahy, Consultant

Motion carried unanimously

A motion was made by Linda Eklund, seconded by Mark Kanarvogel, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Board of Education of the Shelter Island Union Free School District authorizes the extension of the following transportation contracts for the 2009-2010 school year with Sunrise Busses, Inc. The term of said contract shall be for the period September 9, 2009 - June 25, 2010 (each contract represents a 0% CPI increase over the 2008-2009 cost) with costs estimated to be:

Authorization to extend transportation contracts

- A. Contract E261702 – On-Island Occupational Education – \$41,415.00
- B. Contract E260360 – Sports – \$75,920.00
- C. Contract E260361 – On-Island Route #1 Regular Education – \$43,104.71
- D. Contract E260362 – On-Island Route #2 Special Education – \$43,741.29
- E. Contract E260364 – Off-Island Route #2 Private Schools – \$36,766.34

And

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Board of Education authorizes the Board President and Superintendent to execute said transportation contract extensions for the 2009-2010 school year between the Board of Education of the Shelter Island Union Free School District and Sunrise Busses, Inc. The term of said contract shall be for the period September 9, 2009 - June 25, 2010.

Motion carried unanimously

**Items For Consideration –**

A. The Board, at the request of Mr. Rick Osmer, Athletic Director, is considering the addition of a combined Girls Field Hockey team. Mr. Osmer has stated that due to the lack of participants for Varsity Girls and Junior High Girls Cross Country, he is recommending a Girls Field Hockey team. The estimated cost for Field Hockey will be \$6,500, and Mr. Osmer is recommending that the funds from Cross Country be used for this program. Mr. Sam Schneider said that the monetary difference will still have to be

Items For Consideration

made up from another sport in the winter or spring, and said the district already has a bus for combined sports to Greenport so the district will incur no additional transportation costs. The Board of Education asked how many Varsity and Junior High players are on the team. Ms. Guiffre stated that 3 Varsity players are on the team, and she was not sure about the number of Junior High players but indicated there was strong interest in junior high. Ms. Guiffre also stated that there was a coach in place.

Items For  
Consideration  
(con't)

A motion was made by Thomas Graffagnino, seconded by Linda Eklund, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Board of Education hereby approves the addition of a Field Hockey team at the Junior High and Varsity levels, as presented.

Approval to add a  
Field Hockey  
team

Motion carried unanimously

B. Mr. Sam Schneider asked the board to consider authorizing the current district architect, Mosaic Associates Architects, to file an objection to the variance asked for by the districts' previous architect for a fire rated wall to be built between the F.I.T. Center and the gymnasium. Mosaic Associates Architects interprets the code differently from the previous architect. On Friday, August 28, the state issued a variance for the F.I.T. Center. The district has 15 days from this date to file an objection to this variance. Mosaic Associates Architects will be present at the September 21st Board of Education meeting.

A motion was made by Stephen Gessner, seconded by Thomas Graffagnino, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Board of Education of the Shelter Island Union Free School District hereby authorizes the district architect, Mosaic Associates Architects, on behalf of the Board and the District, to file an objection to the variance, Number 2009-0211, granted by the Department of State.

Authorization to  
file an objection  
to a variance

Motion carried unanimously

**Old Business –**

Old Business

A. Ms. Rebecca Mundy stated at the last Board of Education meeting of August 17 that the transportation policy created in 1995 said the district was to transport students within 1.5 miles of the school. In 2004, the policy was revised to expand the limit to a 2 mile radius. This was done without a public referendum. Under state law, the only way to change the mile limitation would be with a public referendum. The Board of Education asked the District Clerk to research this topic in more depth. In 1981, there was a public referendum placed on the ballot to have the mileage changed from 2 miles to 1.5 miles. Ms. Mundy stated that at this time, the 1.5 miles will remain in policy. Calculations of routes will be re-done and correspondence will be sent out.

### Visitor's Comments –

### Visitor's Comments

A. Ms. Jennifer Rylott made a statement thanking everyone who came out to support her. To the Board of Education, she stated that she is devastated by their decision, not for herself but for the children of the district. She requested this transfer because she saw a need she could fulfill, a strong balanced literacy-trained ELA teacher. She is confident she should be the one for the job and can hold her head high knowing she did everything educationally and programmatically for the students in the district.

B. Ms. Christine Gallagher commented to the Board that she is extremely disappointed. Moving Jennifer Rylott was the best plan, and she can fulfill the position better than anyone else. She also asked the Board who they are going to put in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades.

C. Ms. Lisa Gilpin stated that this is a tragedy that came so quickly with little planning. She also said that it is upsetting the Board held back someone who is so talented. She also asked if Ms. Lynne Colligan can take over the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades.

D. Ms. Judy Card stated that she knows the position of the Board is a tough one, but once she heard that Jennifer Rylott asked for the transfer, she was looking forward to it; now, she feels Ms. Rylott is being punished for what she does. Ms. Card stated she hates to see such a gifted teacher held back. When someone needs to grow, give them the reward to do so. Ms. Card supports Ms. Rylott as a Middle School teacher.

E. Ms. Barbara Brigham stated she understands the Board's dilemma after being a Board member herself, but once the Board put it out there publicly, Ms. Rylott was not treated equally and more demands were put on her than on any other candidate. She also said that the Board of Education's no vote is saying she is not fit for the position; if she is qualified, she should have gotten it. Ms. Brigham does not understand the no vote.

F. Ms. Jeannette Payne stated that Mrs. Clifford did her job by recommending Jennifer Rylott for the position of MS ELA teacher. She also asked what the board is going to do now. The Board of Education has to think outside of the box, and they have made a bad decision.

G. Ms. Kyle Karen stated she has not always been on the same side as Mrs. Clifford, but Jennifer Rylott was the right person for the job and for the children. The Board of Education made a poor decision.

H. Mrs. Kilb stated she looks at this differently. She voted for every member currently on the Board and thought there was going to be transparency. She also felt that a political statement was made on the Board of Education's behalf, and the Board was adversarial with Mrs. Clifford.

Visitor's  
Comments  
(con't)

I. Mr. Kilb stated that the moment the Board of Education knew, they placed additional demands on Jennifer Rylott. Mr. Kilb stated that the Board discriminated against her and opened themselves up to a lawsuit. The Board was holding Jennifer Rylott responsible for the disruption in the school. Ms. Rylott has rapport with the school and bringing in someone new is outrageous. He also commented that it is outrageous the Board violated her rights; doing exactly what this Board accused the other Board of.

J. Ms. Mary Boeklen wanted to know if the Board is hearing the community. Ms. Boeklen feels the Board is making a big mistake and not giving the community a good enough reason as to why they did not hire her.

K. Ms. Sharon Gibbs, Middle School team member, supports 100% Ms. Rylott's move to the Middle School. She stated she is moved by her teaching and disappointed with the Board of Education.

L. Ms. Nell Lowell commented that she was so excited to hear that Ms. Rylott would be moving into the Middle School. She feels it would have been the perfect fit, and would help Ms. Rylott to grow. Ms. Lowell stated she has no shame in telling the Board they made a mistake; and it is not too late to change their mind.

M. Ms. Michelle Rice, teacher, stated that as an educator and parent, she believes it was an educational sound decision to put Jennifer Rylott in a place where she wrote the curriculum. Ms. Rice would like the Board to hear what the educators have been telling them and trust them. Having Ms. Rylott in the Middle School will be less of a distraction.

A motion was made by Stephen Gessner, seconded by Thomas Graffagnino, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Board of Education hereby approves to go into an executive session at 6:40 p.m. for the purpose of a specific legal matter and for a specific personnel matter.

Motion carried unanimously

Executive  
Session

A motion was made by Linda Eklund, seconded by Thomas Graffagnino, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Board of Education hereby adjourns executive session at 7:58 p.m. and returns to the special meeting.

Motion carried unanimously

Adjourns  
Executive  
Session

A motion was made by Mark Kanarvogel, seconded by Stephen Gessner, to adjourn the meeting. Adjournment

Motion carried unanimously

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

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Deborah Vecchio  
District Clerk

The next meeting of the Board of Education of the Shelter Island Union Free School District is Monday, September 21, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.









