**SOUTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**MINUTES**

**SPECIAL TOWN HALL MEETING**

**February 12, 2025**

- **6:30 p.m. - Town Hall Public Meeting - School #2 All-Purpose Room**

**SOUTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION, SOUTHAMPTON, NJ 08088**
**"Building a Tradition of Excellence"**

## Our Vision

**We aspire to be a district which fosters a safe and supportive environment where all individuals feel valued, grow in knowledge, and confidence with commitment to enrich society.**

## Our Mission

**The Mission of Southampton Township School District, in partnership with the community, is to educate, empower and inspire students to be successful global citizens. Driven by passion for education and rooted in a tradition of excellence, we are committed to providing an inclusive and engaging environment that fosters a future forward mindset.**

**CALL TO ORDER 6:30PM**

**ROLL CALL: BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS**

| Board of Education Member | Present | Absent |
|---|---|---|
| Leon Carelli, *Vice President* | **X** | |
| Irving Bodine, III | **X** | |
| Joseph Allen | **X** | |
| Janine Hoey | **X** | |
| Sharon Roseboro | **X** | |
| Russell Hann | | **Excused** |
| Brett Hart | **X** | |
| Betty Wright | **X** | |
| Jeffrey Hicks, *President* | **X** | |

*Others Present*: Megan Geibel, Mary Conroy, Regan Young, Architect, Sherry Tracy, Bond Council
The Southampton School Admin Team

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**PUBLIC NOTICE OF MEETING:** This meeting is held in compliance with N. J. S. A. 10:4-6. A schedule of meetings was posted in all schools, the township municipal building, posted on the district website and the Southampton Township School District Facebook page. Notice of this meeting was transmitted to the Burlington County Times, Courier Post and Township Clerk on January 31, 2025. Action may be taken by the Board of Education at this meeting.

**Notice that Special Town Hall Meeting is being audio and video recorded**
Please note that the **Special Town Hall Meeting** is being audio and video recorded.

**Notice that Special Town Hall Meeting is being live streamed**
The **Special Town Hall Meeting** is being live streamed due to inclement weather pursuant to policies 0164 and 0168, with the exception to P0164 to allow public comment during the live stream.

*MOTION*: ____***J.A***_____ *SECOND*: ___***J. Hoey***_____ *to approve the exception to P0164 to allow public comment during the live stream of the special town hall meeting. ROLL CALL VOTE* ***8:0 MOTION CARRIES***

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *L. Carelli, Vice President* ***Y*** | *J. Hoey* ***Y*** | *B. Hart* ***Y*** |
| *I. Bodine* ***Y*** | *S. Roseboro* ***Y*** | *B. Wright* ***Y*** |
| *J. Allen* ***Y*** | *R. Hann* ***Absent*** | *J. Hicks, President* ***Y*** |

**STATEMENT TO THE PUBLIC**

Please be advised that often it may appear to members of our audience that the Board of Education takes action with very little comment and in many cases a unanimous vote. Before a matter is placed on the agenda at a public meeting, the administration has thoroughly reviewed the matter with the Superintendent of Schools. If the Superintendent of Schools is satisfied that the matter is ready to be presented to the Board of Education, it is then referred to the appropriate Board committee. The members of the Board committee work with the administration and the Superintendent to assure that the members fully understand the matter. When the committee is satisfied that the matter has been thoroughly researched, it is presented to the Board of Education for discussion prior to any final action being

taken. Only then, is it placed on the agenda for action at a public meeting. Please be aware this meeting may be recorded in accordance with District Policy #0168.

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

*MOTION BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO ACCEPT THE AGENDA AS PUBLISHED*

*MOTION: ___**L.C.**_____ SECOND: __**B.W.**_____ to accept the agenda as published*
*VOICE VOTE **8:0 MOTION CARRIES***

**COMMUNITY TOPIC**

- **Secure Our Schools Into the Future, Bond Referendum**

**Mrs. Megan Geibel gave the presentation of the referendum projects.**

**STATEMENT TO THE PUBLIC**

Board Members are legally and ethically required to uphold and enforce the laws and rules of the State Board of Education. This obligation applies to mandated curricula. Administrators are under a similar obligation. Therefore, the District is not in a position to countermand the law and rules.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS**

As a friendly reminder, public participation in Board of Education meetings is governed by District Policy 0167. During designated public comment periods, members of the public shall direct all statements, questions, or inquiries to the presiding officer (i.e. Board President) and any questions or inquiries directed by a participant to another Board member will be redirected to the presiding officer. The presiding officer may interrupt, warn, and/or terminate a participant's statement, question, or inquiry when it is too lengthy; is abusive, obscene, or may be defamatory; and may request any person to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum.

**GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Members of the public are invited to submit general comments on agenda action items during this public comment portion of the meeting. The Board, pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, will not publicly discuss personnel matters and may

choose not to respond to comments made by members of the public during this portion of the meeting; however, the Board will give all comments appropriate consideration and will refer all individual complaints to the Superintendent of Schools or Administration for resolution. Each citizen will be allotted up to three (3) minutes to speak, in order to allow everyone an opportunity to express their opinions or concerns. Please be sure to preface your comment with: **1) Name; 2) Municipality of Residence; 3) Subject Matter**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** As per policies 0164 and 0167, members of the public are invited to submit general comments during this public comment portion of the meeting.

*Leo Wisniewski-Southampton Resident and Electrical Official for solar, plans, inspections. Had a handout on the solar array info was not all correct. Mrs. Geibel spoke and corrected his information and said we have been doing a deep dive into the cost benefits and if the district can maintain them after we own them in 2028. We are hoping to have better information and numbers in the weeks to come. We will do what is financially best for the district.
Mr. Hicks asked Mr. W. where he got his information and he said the internet
*Jamie Bodine-Southampton Resident wanted to make a statement that some people are opposed to the referendum but over the years many different BOE members have challenged and questioned many things but that they make careful decisions. This board all seems to be supporting this referendum. She knows test scores are an issue. The admin team and board have been working hard to improve this. Her son is a covid kindergarten student and his test scores have jumped up two grades due to the attention this administration and board has supported. She feels it is important for the community to support. We should support this referendum for the betterment of the community.
*ONLINE - How much do we get back from the solar? Mrs. Geibel answered we are awaiting data for answers. PSE&G will provide this.
*Donald Feely-He is upset about the referendum and why is he finding out on Feb 12th and vote is in March and where is the info on the solar panels. Where are the answers before you state you are removing them? This is clean energy we are talking about.

* Ms. Buday-Southampton Twp Was a wonderful presentation except for the line in the ballot to remove the solar array. Can we remove the line? The referendum question is different if we do not remove solar. How does the district not know the billing for the electric? Mrs. Geibel stated we are allowed to take action regarding solar and stated we are a new administration trying to dive into the solar savings/return/credits and this contract has changed hands three times and is trying to track down this information.
Ms. Buday wants to know if we are willing to change the verbiage in the question?
Mrs. Geibel stated we will come to a resolution for this.
Mr.. Hicks hears what she is saying.
Mr. Young checked with the state regarding the funds to remove solar.
Ms. Day understands but the actual ballot question on referendum is different
Mrs. Geibel stated we can use the funding in other ways.
Ms. Day stated why can't we change the ballot question?
Mr. Allen- It is too late people have voted already
Ms. Buday too bad because a lot will vote no because of verbiage and will vote no and she's sorry she can't vote yes in good conscience.
Ms. Scott Southampton Twp-presentation stated fields will have lighting when can the community use this?
Mrs Geibel stated you have 2 months in the summer we have lights and can use after hours there are always kids on the fields
Ms. Scott said the police chase away kids on bikes and skateboards
Mrs. Geibel stated she was never aware of kids being chased away
Mr. Hicks stated the board concerned of vandalism we don't want to chase people away
Ms. Scott asked about bathrooms?
Jenifer M. Baseball There is a port out there

*George Scott Southampton resident -concerned about the no tax increase to $3 a month increase. WHy can't we do things as they come up?
Mrs. Geibel-school funding does not carry a surplus. Therefore the projects would take 20 years to complete these projects and would not benefit academically.

Mr.Scott what happens when PreK funding goes away and all the little toilets are left.
Mrs. Geibel-2018 PEA funding came out it is state aid not a grant. Birth rate is stable. We have an opportunity to capture $1,000,000 for PreK
Mr. Scott when the funding goes away we are stuck with small toilets.
*Andrew Howarth Southampton Twp-Happy to have Pre K has a 2 ½ year old and 1 month old and is very excited. Shocked how old schools are and supports the referendum. Education is important and we need to support
*Kyla Tucker McCool Southampton- relief to see Pre K come to our district. Education is important and having a safe and secure environment and she supports this.
*Ms. Bodine spoke for Eric Doyle online. How is 40% coming back to us?
Mrs. G-Pre k bathrooms and bus annex fall under debt service
*Mrs. Bodine- Her kids are always at the school and fields.
*Roseann Thomas Southampton resident went to school here and worked with federal budgets and wanted to see how much each item is? As a taxpayer would like to see where the funding is going. Supports anything for the school for the students but not necessarily the fields to entice people to vote Yes
Mrs. G-we can put something together and let the residents know. We need to update the field since we have many sports playing out there and it is expensive to maintain the grass fields
*Amanda young online- How will students access the Annex Building during inclement weather
Mrs. G-Looking to have a canopy we will work and use our judgment to make students safe.
*Chris Donner Resident-Solar, performance is correct. The referendum numbers aren't correct and 40% are wrong. He stated the tax increase was wrong. Spoke about state tests and students not hitting marks. Remove solar removal from question.
*Kathy Resident Online -do you intend to charge outside sports groups to use the turf fields?
Mrs. G- we have explored the potential revenue with the turf field and lighting
*Amanda Young Online-who will cover maintenance of turf field and equipment?
Mrs. G.-Our grounds crew

*Andrea McGill Have any of our technology gone through e rate funding
Mrs. G-Yes

**CLOSE PUBLIC COMMENT**
***Sherry Tracy Phoenix Advisors- Bond Representative addressed the community she works with the district on their Bond Referendum-explained the projects and process. Great presentation and well communicated. The tax increase is an avg $29 increase. Can't change the wording on the ballot because the question is due to the county 60 days in advance.**
**Mr. Hicks questioned why the state has 40 % and it is not. Sherry agreed and said that is how the state wants it and schools have challenged it. State said no and they choose what they want to grant.**
**Mr. Hicks stated no tax increase in the beginning then we find out it is not full 40% which resulted in a tax increase.**
**Sherry stated it is due to the projects that are submitted to the state and when the letters are returned is when we find out exactly what is funded**
**Mr. Hicks stated we should wait for the letters to see the approvals.**
***Mr. Young-Architect since 1994 Do many referendums and this is a very responsible board. They have 30 year old carpets. Assured the community that this board was mindful of these projects.**

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**

- **Special Town Hall Meeting - Leisuretowne Presentation (Laurel Hall) - February 19, 2025, 7:00 p.m.**
- Mrs. Hicks-notified public this is Leisuretowne residents only
- **Referendum Voting Locations - Tuesday, March 11, 2025 (Polls open 2:00-8:00 p.m.)** (*mail-in ballot applications must be received to the Burlington County Clerk seven (7) days prior to the election/mail-in ballots must be postmarked by 5:00 p.m. by March 11, 2025)*
    - Vincentown Firehouse - 16 Race Street
    - Laurel Hall - Leisuretowne - 236 Huntingdon Drive

Mr. Hicks opened the floor to the board for their comments.

Mr.Carelli is proud of the community for coming to the board meeting and letting us know how they feel. Community seems to want to keep the solar array.
**Mr. Carelli would like to make a motion to keep the solar array until more information is presented

**Motion to keep solar array L.C Second: B.W**

**Mr. Hicks has concerns as he is a technical person. Thinks we are legally bound to referendum language. Been asking about the solar project for 12 years and is disheartened.**
**Mr. Allen thinks the new administration is doing a great job getting the information in a short period of time. Concerned about the legality of this. Are we legally bound to remove them?**
**Mr. Hicks would like to consult an attorney in executive.**
**Mrs. Wright said Mrs. Geibel gave us the information. We have the ability to change this and get the word out to the public.**
**Mr. Allen agrees and knows we will do the fiscally responsible thing. It is the legality of this.**
**Mrs. Geibel read the statement from the state regarding the use of the funds.**
**Mr. Allen understands but the referendum question may make us legally bound to do this.**
**Mr. Carelli stated the experts and the state concurring that we can move forward with the motion.**
**Mr. Allen should consult with attorney**
**Mrs. Wright Motioned to discussed in executive**

**Mr. Hicks entertain a Motion to go into Executive Session to discuss Attorney Client Privilege regarding the Referendum:**
**MOTION: B.W Second: L.C. 8:0 MOTION CARRIES**

**Mr. Hart thanked all the information that Mrs. Geibel and Mrs. Conroy had provided in a short period of time.**

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|---|---|---|
| *L. Carelli, Vice President* ***Y*** | *J. Hoey* ***Y*** | *B. Hart* ***Y*** |
| *I. Bodine* ***Y*** | *S. Roseboro* ***Y*** | *B. Wright* ***Y*** |
| *J. Allen* ***Y*** | *R. Hann* ***Absent*** | *J. Hicks, President* ***Y*** |

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**The board had a discussion regarding the referendum issues with the ballot question regarding removal of solar array and how we need to proceed. Need solicitors advice in writing in order to proceed with the decision.**
**Mr. Carelli would like to make a motion to maintain the solar array until the end of lease and the board will do what is fiscally responsible for the district as we gain more information on the solar project.**

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**MOTION TO CLOSE EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**MOTION: B.W. Second: I.B. TIME: 9:01**

Mr. Carelli mentioned the PTA still is broadcasting the meeting.

*Mr. Carelli would like to make a motion that pending solicitors confirmation of the boards duty to adhere to the ballot language regarding removal of the solar array the Board of Education will maintain the solar array for the duration of it's contract and this confirmation shall be shared with the public through all available means upon receipt

**MOTION: L.C SECOND: I.B. 8:0 MOTION CARRIES**

Mr. Allen wants to clarify that it will be confirmed by an attorney.

Mr. Hicks lesson learned that moving forward we should have all the information

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *L. Carelli, Vice President* ***Y*** | *J. Hoey* ***Y*** | *B. Hart* ***Y*** |
| *I. Bodine* ***Y*** | *S. Roseboro* ***Y*** | *B. Wright* ***Y*** |
| *J. Allen* ***Y*** | *R. Hann* ***Absent*** | *J. Hicks, President* ***Y*** |

Mr. Hicks thanked public for coming out

Next workshop 2/20 and Regular Meeting 2/27

Mr. Hicks explained the Committee of the Whole

Mr. Scott asked about the Budget Workshops

Mr. Hicks we will discuss in March

Public Hearing in April

Discussion of who can attend Leisuretowne Meetings

**ADJOURNMENT:**

*MOTION: B.W. SECOND: J.A. TO ADJOURN TIME:* ***9:11 PM***