# MERCHANTVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES – MARCH 9, 2010

The Regular Meeting of the Merchantville School District Board of Education was held on Tuesday, March 9, 2010, at 7:30 p.m., in the Reading Center at Merchantville School.

The board president called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m., at which time the following statement was read:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to ensure the rights of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of the public bodies at which any business affecting their interest is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Merchantville Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time, and place thereof posted in The Retrospect, The Courier Post, Borough Hall, and The Community Library.

Members Present: Mr. Kabel, Mrs. Hartson–Stine, Mr. Morrone, Mr. Bohn, Ms. Engelke, Mrs. Perno and Mr. Loue (7:35 p.m.)

Members Absent: Mr. Doran and Mr. Barnett

Also Present: Mr. Christian Swanson, Chief School Administrator
Mr. William Thompson, Business Administrator
Ms. Loretta Mansolino, Recording Secretary

The board president let the group in the pledge to the flag.

## DISCUSSION ON THE 2010-2011 SCHOOL YEAR BUDGET

Mrs. Hartson-Stine, BOE President, shared the following information:

- All school districts will receive their 2010-2011 state aid numbers on March 18th. Districts have no final/guaranteed state or federal aid numbers.
- The reduction in state and federal aid is outlined in a letter posted on the district's website and a copy was sent home with all students.
- Administration is probing all phases of the budget looking for ways to decrease spending that will have the least impact on educational programs.
- All community members are encouraged to contact the elected officials to express their concerns regarding reduced school funding.
- The preliminary budget is due to the county on March 23rd.
- The Public Hearing is scheduled for Monday, March 29, 2010.

Several community members commented on the budget. Dialogue included:
Rate of the tax increase – tax increase carry over from prior year – district surplus – building repair and maintenance – decreased Pre K and K programs – contact time for all special area teachers – teacher retirements – classroom size, etc.

**PRESENTATION**

Ms. Mary Ann Friedman, NJSBA Representative, addressed the board to facilitate the Chief School Administrator's Evaluation Process. Paperwork and online requirements were shared and deadlines were established.

There are three (3) candidates for the three (3) open positions on the board of education.

**Edward Bohn**
**Mark Iannucci**
**Jennifer Perno**

The drawing of names for positions on the ballot will be held on Wednesday, March 10, 2010.

Moved by Mr. Loue, seconded by Mr. Morrone, that the board of education approve to set the following tentative times, dates, rates, etc., *pending the delivery of additional budget and election information from the State of New Jersey.*

Set Public Hearing Date

To approve to hold a Public Hearing on the Budget on **Monday, March 29, 2010**, at 7:30 *p.m.*

Set Reorg. Date

To set, **Tuesday, April 27, 2010, as** the date for The Reorganization of the Board of Education.
Approved by unanimous voice vote.

Approve State Aid Resolution

*Approve Restoration of Sate School Aid Cuts* – Moved by Mr. Morrone, and seconded by Mr. Bohn, that the board of education approve the Resolution to restore the 2009-2010 state school aid cuts as follows:

**RESOLUTION**
**Restoration of 2009-2010 State School Aid Cuts**

WHEREAS, the Merchantville Board of Education recognizes that sound financial management is necessary to support the school program; and

WHEREAS, the Merchantville School District bases its budget on academic goals, current needs and data collected through a long-range planning process; and

WHEREAS, the district's prudent expenditure practices have resulted in an excess surplus of $460,542.00 during the current fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, current state law requires districts to apply these excess funds toward the 2010-2011 school budget in order to control local property taxes;

WHEREAS, through its policy of sound fiscal management, the Merchantville Board of Education has placed in reserve for the current school year $460,542.00 to ensure that maintenance and facility repairs do not affect its financial stability; and

WHEREAS, under Executive Order 14, the Governor has frozen the Merchantville school district's current-year state aid in an amount equal to its excess surplus and 25 percent of its capital reserve and other reserve accounts; and

WHEREAS, the aid cut unfairly targets the Merchantville School District and others that accumulated additional surplus and/or put aside reserve funds as the result of sound financial practices; and

WHEREAS, by forcing the expenditure of these surplus funds in the current school year, the Merchantville district will not have them available to control next year's school property taxes; and

WHEREAS, replenishment of reserve accounts next year will divert limited resources from the classroom; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 14 will have a negative impact on property taxpayers and the education program in the Merchantville School District in 2010-2011. Therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Merchantville Board of Education urges the state Legislature and the Governor to pursue other means to resolve the state's current-year budget gap without jeopardizing school programs or penalizing property taxpayers in the future; and be it further

RESOLVED, that such an alternative should leave in place school districts' excess surplus, as well as their capital reserves; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution be sent to Governor Christopher Christie, Acting Commissioner of Education Bret Schundler, Senate President Stephen Sweeney, Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver, state Senator [name of school district's state senator] and Assembly Representatives [names of school district's Assembly representatives]; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Approved by unanimous voice vote.

*Approve the resolution to suspend the 2010 school budget elections* – Moved by Mr. Morrone, and seconded by Mr. Bohn, that the board of education approve the resolution to suspend the 2010 school budget elections as follows:

**RESOLUTION**
**Suspension of 2010 School Budget Elections**

APPROVE SUSPENSION OF ELECTIONS RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, on February 11, 2010, Governor Christopher Christie issued Executive Order 14, which froze current-year state aid payments in more than 500 local school districts, including Merchantville School District; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 14 sets out a process whereby affected school districts would use their excess surplus and portions of reserve accounts to make up for the loss of current-year aid, a strategy that will have an uncertain impact on next year's (2010-2011) school budgets; and

WHEREAS, local school districts have been advised of four possible scenarios concerning their 2010-2011 state aid allocations, adding to the uncertainty over future school finances; and

WHEREAS, the Governor's annual budget message, through which official state school aid amounts for 2010-2011 will be released, has been postponed until March 16; and

WHEREAS, local school boards must finalize proposed budgets for placement on the election ballot by April 3, a span of less than three weeks; and

WHEREAS, the lack of complete information about state school funding and the compressed budget timelines will pose a burden to local school districts in developing intelligent, responsible budgets; and

WHEREAS, the scheduling of the school budget referendums on April 20 precludes the allotment of additional time needed for budget development; and

WHEREAS, proposed school budgets are controlled by a tax-levy cap and undergo thorough review by the state's Executive County Superintendents, thereby ensuring efficient and responsible use of taxpayer funds; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Merchantville Board of Education urges Governor Christopher Christie and the state Legislature to take necessary action to suspend the 2010 school budget elections; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Merchantville Board of Education also urges state lawmakers to permit certification of school tax levies based on the budgets approved by local boards of education following the public hearings required pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 22-10 et seq.; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Merchantville Board of Education also urges state lawmakers to adjust the school budget calendar to extend timelines for the budget development, hearing and adoption process, thereby enabling school districts to develop responsible budgets necessary to meet state and local education goals; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution be sent to Governor Christopher Christie, Acting Commissioner of Education Bret Schundler, Senate President Stephen Sweeney, Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver, state Senator [name of school district's state senator] and Assembly Representatives [names of school district's Assembly representatives]; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the New Jersey School Boards Association.
Approved by unanimous voice vote.

Congratulations to the Merchantville Boys' Basketball Team and to Coach Ryan Fields for winning the Colonial Division for the first time in fifteen (15) years. The team experienced a five (5) point heartbreaking loss, to Stratford, for the Suburban Division Championship

**Unfinished Business**

*a.* CSA's Contract – Written approval never received from the county.

*b.* Shared Services – no update.

APPROVE TO ADD ONE DAY TO SCHOOL CALENDAR

**Committee Reports**

Education

*School Year Calendar* – Moved by Mr. Loue, and seconded by Mrs. Perno, that the board of education approve to add one (1) day to the end of the year calendar. moving the last day of school to Tuesday, June 22, 2010. Graduation is tentatively scheduled for Monday, June 21, 2010, assuming that date does not present any conflicts.
Approved by unanimous voice vote.

*Payments* – Moved by Mr. Loue, and seconded by Mr. Bohn, that the board of education approve the following payments*:*

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| P 42 | January 29th Payroll | $159,804.49 |
| P 43 | February 12th Payroll | $159,323.45 |
| P 44 | Deductions from state aid for tuition payments | $20,139.20 |
| P 45 | February Payments | $199,955.23 |

Approved by unanimous voice vote.

APPROVE PAYMENTS

No open public comment.

ADJOURN

No closed session.

Moved by Mr. Loue, and seconded by Mr. Bohn, that the board of education to approve to adjourn this meeting. (10:18 p.m.)
Approved by unanimous voice vote.

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Loretta Mansolino, Recording Secretary