

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL ESTIMATE
PUBLIC MEETING
 HELD THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 2010 AT 7:00 P.M.
 ATRIUM OF THE GEORGE INNESS ANNEX
 141 PARK STREET, MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY

I. The meeting was opened at 7:06 p.m. and the following statement was read:

Let the minutes reflect that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in the following manner:

1. On Tuesday, February 23, 2010 notice of this meeting was faxed to the Montclair Times, the Herald and News and the Star-Ledger. The time, date and location of this meeting were accurately set forth therein.
2. On this same date a copy of said notice was filed with the Township Clerk and was posted at the public bulletin board in the first floor main hall of the Board of Education building, 22 Valley Road.
3. Copies have also been mailed to all persons who have requested same at no cost.

II. The Pledge of Allegiance occurred at 7:07 p.m.

III. ROLL CALL OF THE BOARD

	PRESENT	ABSENT
Jerry Fried	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Renee Baskerville	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Rich Murnick	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Shirley Grill	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Shelly Lombard	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Staff Members	<u> 12 </u>	
Members of the Public	<u> 24 </u>	
Members of the Press	<u> 2 </u>	

IV. DISCUSSION BY BOSE MEMBERS REGARDING 2010-2011 BUDGET

Dr. Alvarez stated that this had been a difficult year. Initially the Board had set a goal of a 1% budget increase and back in February this goal was reached. However, the news had been received that the district would lose state aid for the current year and would have to use reserve funds to supplant state aid in the current year. He added that those excess funds could not be used to offset taxes for the following year. Then they learned about the 60% reduction in state aid. These things really hurt the ability to create the kind of budget and to provide the kinds of services that everyone is proud of and would like to continue. He hopes things will turn around at some point so that valued programs could be brought back into the district.

Dr. Alvarez stated that the schools that are losing world language teachers will have some type of alternative world language instruction in those buildings either through videos, technology, and volunteers. This will be explored with the principals over the next couple weeks and principals will be presenting their plans at their school review meetings within a month or so.

Dr. Alvarez indicated that they talked about having some flexibility with librarians across the district and in some schools where librarians are being retained because they are essential to the program, they may not be needed on a full-time basis. There are some creative ways of managing the librarians where a couple of schools are going to use reading specialists to help continue the library instruction and to have an actual structure possible. There are also possibilities of sharing staff across schools. He added that there are models such as Edgemont and Hillside that have full functioning libraries without the support of a librarian.

Dr. Alvarez made clear that there is a special education department with a director and three supervisors. He stated that the Board discussed eliminating one of those positions. Currently the person that is in the Developmental Learning Center (DLC) position is very qualified to perform the job and is respected highly. He added that they will certainly try to find another position for her. She is someone who has had tenure with the district. However, as services provided for students across the district are reviewed, there will be some restructuring of the department so that it could operate more efficiently. The DLC is an important program and the district doesn't want to lose support for students. He indicated that the DLC will not be unsupervised and there will be some leadership there to support students and staff.

Dr. Alvarez indicated that Edgemont fought to have aides for many years, but in a different economy and budget the Board might be able to continue that support but cannot any longer. However, maybe in the future this may be reviewed again. He stated that he doesn't think the Montessori program is going to suffer. Montessori is a philosophy and a way that teachers manage classroom instruction and while those individuals may be essential, there are other ways to continue to provide those services for the students.

Dr. Alvarez spoke about the Health and Wellness program. He believes that there is an infrastructure that will continue to work. He stated that there are things that Health and Wellness has done for the district that is still in place. The district is also supporting the Health and Wellness' process of looking into other sources of funding.

Dr. Alvarez stated that there are things in this budget that they are not happy about cutting. It is hoped that some of this can be rebuilt in the future. He feels that they did the best they could with the budget. As it stands, the budget now includes total cuts of \$7.1 million and next years operating budget will be \$2.4 million lower than the current operating budget. At this point there is no room to add anything and the County Superintendent would like for more to be cut.

Dr. Alvarez thanked Dana Sullivan for a job well done on the budget. He thanked Senior Staff members and Board of Education members who have worked really hard on the budget. He thanked the Board of School Estimate members for consistently being present at all the meetings and came to the table very well informed.

Mrs. Lombard stated that this process has been painful. It is recognized that the district is losing programs and teachers and taxes are still increasing. The County Superintendent made it clear that he wants the district to cut more. This is the new normal but forces the district to look at things differently such as the delivery of world language instruction. This is an opportunity to do things differently. She added that volunteerism is strong in Montclair. The fact that aides are critical at Edgemont but the Board cannot afford to keep them gives the parents and the PTA will step up and fill the void. She stated that the Montclair community will have to pull together to do more with less and rely on volunteerism from parents and look at different ways of doing things. She concluded that there is no choice for the district. This is the new normal.

Ms. Grill stated that it has been a hard year. She spoke about areas that need to keep an eye on such as the loss in support given to kids at risk. She indicated that if the district failed those kids, the impact would be very great and not one single child can afford to be lost in this district.

Ms. Grill stated that she hopes to see tremendous building leadership from principals since they will be making decisions on how to do more with less. She added that parents support is very essential in each school. As we move through a difficult year more will be asked of the principals in terms of leadership that make systems work without tools that were had previously. She stated that there has been a lot of work in brining the high school to the level this school system deserves and respects. There is good leadership in Montclair.

Mr. Murnick stated that all programs are needed in town. He added the district has dynamite leaders in the schools. He stated that he agrees that the PTA's and parents have to step up to help out more. This also provides a time to look back and reflect that the district was able to get through difficult times and still provide for the children of Montclair. He concluded that all schools didn't start out equal but they are all unique in their own ways now and that the district is capable of maintaining class size and the magnet programs.

Dr. Baskerville stated that after reflecting on everything that she had heard at the meetings, she came to the conclusion that although this may appear to be the end of the budget season, this is actually the beginning. While the Board of Education and Superintendent and others have been working diligently to get to this point, the hard work is still yet to come. She added that after going through this budget process it is realized that there is hope and more options and that everyone must come together collectively as a township and do all the things necessary to make an impact on the decisions of funding from the state. She prepared a statement and shared it with the Board of School Estimate members and the public.

Mayor Fried stated that this has been a very frustrating and frightening year. The challenges to the schools that have been created by Trenton's insistence on slashing the district's funding while preserving tax cuts for the wealthiest are really an insult to anyone who believes in this thorough and efficient education that is part of state mandate. There is a lot of reason for concern and fear as well as gratitude and faith as well. He stated that he is very grateful to the parents for expressing their concerns and support. He thanked the administration for rising to this impossible challenge of trying to do what they can with very little resources and coming up with a plan. He stated that this allowed for opportunities for the Principals to take their leadership and find ways to use volunteers and people in the community. He thanked the members of the Montclair Education Association for stepping up by accepting a freeze when they were contractually promised. He concluded that his main source of gratitude is for the students who showed in their own strength of character and their own leadership and ability to articulate this problem. The Governor's visit to Montclair was a real eye opener for many people and to see those students of the Civics and Government Institute give the Governor the types of tough questions that he hasn't had to answer before was an inspiration and gives the district some reason for hope. He stated that he has faith in the schools and there is reason for hope and faith in Montclair. He employed all to band together to tell the state that thorough and efficient education has a very specific meaning and what they are providing for schools in Montclair and other schools in the state does not constitute a thorough and efficient education.

V. RESOLUTION RE: ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF CERTIFICATE FROM THE MONTCLAIR BOARD OF EDUCATION TO THE MONTCLAIR BOARD OF SCHOOL ESTIMATE RELATING TO THE 2010-2011 OPERATING BUDGET.

Mayor Fried moved to approve the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Montclair Board of Education forwarded the attached Certificate to the Board of School Estimate relating to the School District Budget for the 2010-2011 school year,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Montclair Board of School Estimate acknowledges receipt of the Certificate (attached).

Seconded by *Dr. Baskerville* and approved by a roll call vote:

	AYE	NAY
Jerry Fried	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Renee Baskerville	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Rich Murnick	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Shirley Grill	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Shelly Lombard	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>

VI. ACTION ON PROPOSED BOARD OF SCHOOL ESTIMATE
RESOLUTION RE: ADOPTION OF 2010-2011 BUDGET

Mayor Fried moved to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. Title 18A:22-14 requires that the Board of School Estimate fix and determine by official action the amount of money necessary to be appropriated for the use of the public schools in the district for ensuing year and,

WHEREAS, NJAC 6:19-5.2 requires that if the amount of money appropriated by the board of school estimate is less than the amount proposed by the board of education, the board of school estimate shall present to the board of education, the governing body and the county superintendent a statement of the specific line-item reductions made by the board of school estimate, along with a certification that the board of school estimate has reviewed the budget proposed by the board of education and deems the revised budget sufficient for provision of a thorough and efficient system of education and that the reductions will not adversely affect the stability of the district given the need for long term planning and budgeting,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Montclair Board of School Estimate, after careful study and due deliberation, does hereby approve a FY 2010-2011 school district tax levy in the amount of One Hundred One Million, One Hundred Three Thousand, Eight Hundred Forty-Four Dollars (\$101,103,844), and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of School Estimate does hereby certify said amount to the governing body of the Township of Montclair pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:22-19, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Secretary is hereby instructed to prepare two certificates of this action, one to be sent to the Board of Education of the Township of Montclair, and the other to the Council of the Township of Montclair.

Seconded by *Dr. Baskerville* and approved by a roll call vote:

	AYE	NAY
Jerry Fried	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Renee Baskerville	<u> </u>	<u> x </u>
Rich Murnick	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Shirley Grill	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Shelly Lombard	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>

VII. RESOLUTION RE: ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF CERTIFICATE FROM THE MONTCLAIR BOARD OF EDUCATION TO THE MONTCLAIR BOARD OF SCHOOL ESTIMATE RELATING TO 2010-2011 AUTHORIZATION OF SCHOOL BONDS FOR CAPITAL PURPOSES

Mayor Fried moved to approve the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Montclair Board of Education forwarded the attached Certificate to the Board of School Estimate relating to the Authorization of School Bonds for Capital Purposes for the 2010-2011 school year,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Montclair Board of School Estimate acknowledges receipt of the Certificate (attached).

Seconded by *Mrs. Lombard* and approved by a roll call vote:

	AYE	NAY
Jerry Fried	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Renee Baskerville	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Rich Murnick	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Shirley Grill	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Shelly Lombard	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>

VIII. ACTION ON PROPOSED BOARD OF SCHOOL ESTIMATE
RESOLUTION RE: AUTHORIZATION OF SCHOOL BONDS FOR CAPITAL PURPOSES

Mayor Fried moved to approve the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Montclair Board of Education has reviewed the Long Term Capital Needs Plan 2010-2011 through 2014-2015, and

WHEREAS, the Montclair Board of Education does hereby determine, after careful study and due deliberation, that it is necessary to raise funds for roofing replacement at various schools, energy conservation and environmental projects district-wide, site improvements district-wide, furniture and equipment in various schools, technology upgrade and district-wide building modifications, and

WHEREAS, the needs identified in the capital plan have also been identified in the District's Long Range Facility Plan, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the total amount estimated to be necessary for said projects for 2010-2011 is \$2,871,500 (attached), plus Section 20 costs of \$114,860 related to the issuance of bonds, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the School Business Administrator is hereby directed to forward a certified copy of this resolution to the Montclair Board of School Estimate forthwith.

Seconded by *Mrs. Lombard* and approved by a roll call vote:

	AYE	NAY
Jerry Fried	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Renee Baskerville	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Rich Murnick	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Shirley Grill	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Shelly Lombard	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>

IX. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

1. *Lois Whipple* of the Montclair Fund for Educational Excellence (MFEE) stated that there are no winners or losers but that everyone did what was necessary under currently unyielding constraints. She stated that their mission is to support the goals of the Montclair Board of Education. The MFEE will continue their emphasis on funding, sustaining district-wide student achievement initiatives, and to provide grants to teachers and staff at each school with curriculum innovation, professional development equitable access to resources and to foster student well-being.
2. *Bob Russo* former Mayor of Montclair commended the members of the Montclair Education Association on their great act of giving up their raises and complimented Dennis Murray on his leadership.
3. *Peter Vaughn* 36 Elson Road expressed his concerns about whether the Board would have a concrete plan for next years' budget.
4. *Kathleen Vanderhort* of 35 Watchung Avenue expressed her concerns about changes being made to the budget since the last meeting.
5. *Doug Bauer* of Inwood Road spoke about cuts and wonders if the right cuts were made.
6. *Nick Fiornacenti* 165 Elmwood Avenue expressed his concerns about everyone blaming the Governor for the cuts when he was just doing his job.
7. *June Raegner* of 317 N. Fullerton Avenue spoke about the article in the paper that the Town of Montclair received a \$500,000 grant from the federal government to increase energy use efficiency.
8. *Michael Byrne* of 142 Gordonhurst Avenue spoke about the fundamental problem of this budget is the taxes.

X. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:28 p.m. *Mayor Fried* moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by *Mrs. Lombard* and approved by a vote of 5-0.