

Formally adopted on May 25, 2010:

**MINUTES OF A CAUCUS MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS OF THE TOWNSHIP OF HADDON, IN THE
COUNTY OF CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY, HELD ON MAY 18, 2010,
IN THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING AT 7:00 PM.**

A caucus meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Haddon was convened in the Municipal Building, 135 Haddon Avenue, Westmont, NJ on Tuesday, May 18, 2010 at 7:11 PM.

Mayor Teague requested all stand for the flag salute

Mayor Teague announced that Chapter 231, Public Law 1975 requires adequate notice of this meeting be provided specifying time, place and agenda. This was done by placing Annual Notice in the Courier-Post and Retrospect Newspapers and by posting on two bulletin boards in the Municipal Building.

ROLL CALL:	Mayor Teague	Present
	Commissioner Foley	Present
	Commissioner Dougherty	Present

Stuart Platt, Esq., Gregory Fusco, Chief Cavallo, Jim Stevenson, Jennifer DellaValle, Lee Palo, Martin Blaskey, Kate Burns, Pat Thieringer and Denise P. Adams were also present.

Mayor Teague announced that this evening's caucus meeting would be dedicated to the review and discussion on the defeated 2010/2011 Haddon Township School District Budget and invited the members of the Haddon Township Board of Education and Administrators up to the front to address questions or concerns posed by the Governing Body or public. Present were Dr. Mark Raivetz, Superintendent, Dr. Lisa Palmer, Board Secretary/School Business Administrator, Mark Cavallo, Board President, Bonnie Richards, Board Vice President, Laura Chudd, Member, Charles Albino, Member, Robert Brown, Member, Elizabeth Menning, Supervisor of Teaching and Learning, Kevin Rooney, Principal, Eileen Smith, Principal, Gary O'Brien, High School Principal, and Patty Schwab, Vice Principal of Rohrer Middle School.

Mayor Teague explained the process established by the State for review of defeated school budgets and the responsibilities placed on the Mayor and Commissioners and School District Officials to certify a budget that is sufficient to provide a thorough and efficient education to the students of the district. He reported that after several meetings with Dr. Raivetz and Dr. Palmer, a number of items had been identified in the areas of audit fees, transportation expenses and further cuts in administration to provide a reduction of approximately \$205,000. He noted that proposals to share custodial services and investigate potential savings in gas and electric utility costs were discussed as well. He reported that he had received a number of e-mails from residents for placement in the record and read one authored by Mrs. Murray.

Commissioner Foley reported that he had met with Dr. Palmer to review the budget and explained that they had discussed a number of items including health insurance expenses and investigating ways to produce savings in this area.

Mayor Teague opened the floor for any questions or concerns to be brought before the Board.

Bob Schmidt, 228 Memorial Avenue, indicated that he voted against the budget and suggested people should stop blaming Governor Christie, noting that communities should not rely on State Aid to support their budgets. He expressed concern with this evening's forum having the School Administration seated at the front. Mayor Teague explained that he had invited the members up for the convenience of addressing questions.

Don Licorish from the 400 Block of Avondale Avenue requested clarification on how the proposed cuts affect the tax rate. He suggested that the Board of Education was not listening to their constituents and commended the Township on keeping taxes stable.

Angela DiTomasso, 83 Akron Avenue, expressed concern with the small window of opportunity being given members of the public to address the school budget issue, with one day remaining for a decision. She reported that she had voted no for a 4% increase in the budget and suggested salary freezes for all administrative personnel. She challenged the school board members to do a better job representing the taxpayers of Haddon Township.

Tom Cassel, 1017 Belmont Avenue, queried if there was a contractual increase provided in the Superintendent's contract. Dr. Raivetz reported that his contract does not provide for automatic increases and are negotiated annually. He reported that he, along with Dr. Palmer and Mrs. Menning had agreed to wage freezes. He explained that the other administrative personnel such as principals are under an organized contract. He noted that they have agreed to initiate the 1.5% contribution towards health care, although it would not have been required until their contract expired. Mr. Cassel queried how Commissioner Dougherty and Commissioner Foley felt about the proposed cuts. Commissioner Dougherty explained that there is a fine line when trying to balance the needs of the educational system with the wishes of the taxpayers. He reported that his children attend Haddon Township schools and he did not want to see classrooms affected. Commissioner Foley reported that he had posed numerous questions to Dr. Palmer at their meeting and noted that they were stuck between a rock and hard place. He indicated that he wants the best education for his children while doing what is best for the community. He noted that he looked to the educators and the board members to suggest where cuts could be made.

Diane Miller, 16 Hampton Road, reported that she voted yes for the budget because her daughter attends the schools and noted that she would not like to see one cent cut.

Tracy Festinger, 113 Geneva Avenue, indicated that her children's education is the most important thing and the reason she moved to Haddon Township. She credited the Township's property values with the quality of education.

Steve Murray, 107 E. Cuthbert Blvd., explained that a lot of voters are angry and believes that the anger is misplaced and should be directed to Federal and State Government. He suggested that the school budget suffered because voters do not have a voice on other spending plans.

Mary Pat Nastasi, 100 W. Cuthbert Blvd., suggested cutting as little as possible from the budget.

Bob Schmidt reported that the Haddonfield School district has instituted furloughs in the summer months for office staff and suggested a similar measure for Haddon Township.

Paula Timboro, Addison Avenue, reported that they were losing important people in the schools with teachers being cut before the budget was even presented for a vote. She suggested that Dr. Raivetz does not communicate well with the public.

Johanna Magner, Lake Shore Drive, suggested that administrative costs be measured to determine if they were in line with other districts and that opportunities to generate revenue be researched. Mayor Teague reviewed a letter from Ms. Nicolosi, the New Jersey Deputy Superintendent of Schools, which noted that the Township was average, if not below average on administrative costs per student when compared with the State's average.

Ms. DiTomasso suggested the Board of Education explore other avenues to cut expenses such as contracting out services. She recommended an independent study be explored to determine the administrative staffing needs of the school district.

Gerry Gartland, 616 Avondale Avenue, reported that there were a lot of kids on Avondale Avenue and expressed disappointment with the layoffs that occurred even with a 4% increase in the school budget. He indicated that he was willing to pay taxes for a great school system.

Carole Wright, 19 E. Ormond Avenue, read a statement she had prepared and urged no further cuts from the school budget.

Wendy Moser, 115 E. Oakland Avenue, reported that her son is very excited about going to school and learning and acknowledged that she will have to pay for her other child to attend Pre-K next year and noted that she understands everyone must make sacrifices.

Tom Miller expressed concern with the Governor's actions and the position he has taken attacking teachers and suggested that all taxpayers contact his office to make their feelings known.

Jill Noller, 209 Emerald Avenue, reported that budgets are growing beyond the point of what the taxpayers can sustain.

George Purkins, 506 Oneida Avenue, commended the hard work and dedication of the teachers and administrators of the Haddon Township School District.

Debbie Kendall, 120 Washington Avenue, acknowledged that the budget was defeated by a small percentage of votes and noted that the school surplus had been diminished.

There be no further discussion, Commissioner Foley moved that the Hearing be closed, seconded by Commissioner Dougherty all members voting in the affirmative.

Mayor Teague moved for a 15 minute recess to allow the Governing Body to gather their thoughts, said motion seconded by Commissioner Foley, all members voting in the affirmative.

At 8:47 PM, Mayor Teague called the meeting back to order and requested input and recommendations from his fellow Commissioners.

Commissioner Dougherty reviewed his conversation with Dr. Palmer regarding health care expenses and acknowledged the recent adoption of a new policy to shop for professional services and applauded the Board for taking this step. He noted that Dr. Palmer had addressed all of the questions he had posed relative to the budget and was confident that no classroom would be affected by the proposed cuts.

Commissioner Foley acknowledged the challenge and frustration members of the School Board and Administration were faced with after losing \$1.742M in State Aid to then put forth a budget proposing a 4.0% increase which did not receive sufficient support from the voters. He concurred that the \$205,000 reduction was reasonable and he supported it.

The following Resolution was approved, with a motion by Mayor Teague, seconded by Commissioner Foley, all members affirmatively concurring:

#2010-075 – Certification of the 2010/2011 Local School District Budget

There being no further business to discuss, Commissioner Foley moved, seconded by Commissioner Dougherty that the meeting be adjourned at 8:53 PM with all members voting in the affirmative.

May 18, 2010

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Denise P. Adams, Municipal Clerk

Randall W. Teague

John C. Foley

Paul Dougherty