

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL AND
THE MENDHAM BOROUGH BOARD OF EDUCATION**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Henry called the April 4, 2016 special joint meeting of the Mayor and Council and the Mendham Borough Board of Education to order at 7:00PM in the Garabrant Center, 4 Wilson Street, Mendham, New Jersey.

INVOCATION AND FLAG SALUTE

Mayor Henry led a moment of silent meditation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

OPENING STATEMENT

Notice of this meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Mendham was published in the *Observer-Tribune* and the *Daily Record* and was posted on the Phoenix House bulletin board in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Mayor Neil Henry
Councilman John Andrews
Councilman Brad Badal
Councilwoman Veronica Daly
Councilman David Sharkey
Councilman Stanley Witczak
Council President John Andrus

Also present: Fred Semrau, Borough Attorney
Richard Merkt, Borough Administrator
Margot Kaye, Borough Clerk

Mayor Henry welcomed the Members of the Board of Education (BOE) and asked that Ms. Cocuzza, BOE President, call her meeting to order.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Steven Andrew
William Corbett
Stephen Dolan
Paul Fechhelm
Anne Marie Hornyak
John Jennings
John Vitale, Vice-President
Beth Cocuzza, President

Also Present: James Rollo, Board Secretary

Mayor Henry welcomed members of the public and set forth the parameters for public comment. He advised that this meeting was a first step in the partnership between the Council and the BOE and that there would be a subsequent meeting within 60 days during which the public will have another opportunity to be heard.

DISCUSSION:

Restructuring Feasibility Study - West Morris Regional High School District

Mayor Henry explained the history behind the Feasibility Study and stated that collaboration between the Borough and the BOE may propel them to a leadership role among the communities within the region and allow them to have a significant impact on what is ultimately decided. He summarized the options presented by the consultant:

1. Restructure a stand-alone 9-12 high school for the Mendhams and Chesters
2. Consolidate K-12 into one district for the Mendhams and Chesters
3. Continue with current structure

Mayor Henry took a moment to recognize Diana Orban Brown, Mendham Township Deputy Mayor, and thanked her for her attendance. He then introduced Beth Cocuzza, BOE President.

Ms. Cocuzza reiterated that the purpose of the meeting was to provide a forum for the public to ask questions and supply feedback for the Council and BOE's consideration.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Henry opened the floor to comments/questions from the public.

George Connelly, Borough resident, opined that option 1 makes the most financial sense and requested comment on the study's assertion that there will be no effect on K-8. Mr. Corbett confirmed that under option 1, the K-8 structure remains unchanged. Ms. Cocuzza added that further study would be required in order to quantify the effects on K-8 under option 2.

Hank Schramm, Borough resident, discussed de-regionalization utilizing an equalization methodology. Mayor Henry offered that there is also a hybrid option.

Roger Conover, Borough resident, inquired about the affects of restructuring on teacher negotiations and expressed concern that if all teachers were moved to the same salary guide, they will demand higher salaries which will increase costs.

Carol Brady, Borough resident, added that teachers with seniority are able to select the school where they teach.

Tom Brooks, Borough resident, expressed concern over additional costs associated with restructuring, e.g., healthcare, contracts, administrative costs, legal fees, etc. and questioned who would pay them. He added that while the Haber report is a good one, feasibility studies don't always have the desired outcome or are skewed depending upon who funds the study.

Bob Richter, Borough resident, expressed concern over the costs of higher seniority teachers opting for employment in the Borough and how education might be impacted.

A Mendham Township resident stated that the Mendhams have been subsidizing Washington Township for decades and sees restructuring as the obvious choice.

Kari Skuraton, Borough resident, pointed out that even if the Borough opted for restructuring, the Township and the Chesters would still need to get on board. Mr. Corbett explained that in order to petition the County for placement on the ballot, three (3) municipalities must be in favor and 50% of voters from all five (5) communities must vote approval on referendum.

Bob Marino, Borough resident, thanked the BOE and the Council for seriously looking into the issue but wondered if savings may be lost due to salary negotiations and the costs associated with teachers moving between school districts.

Mr. Corbett clarified that the Council and BOE are voting on the issue in order to give constituents a voice in whether to participate, not to select option 1 or 2. Mayor Henry clarified that the Council and BOE only decide whether to move forward with the process while the decision will be made by the voters.

Christine Serrano Glassner, Borough resident, opined that any figures related to additional costs must be made available to the public. She further inquired whether decreasing population figures were taken into account. Mayor Henry confirmed that the consultant did consider demographics in his findings. Ms. Cocuzza added that this proposal is not a simple issue and that many factors are unknown at this point.

Chloe Cavanaugh, Borough resident, expressed her support for option 1 and stated that not restructuring would negatively impact future students who will not have the resources, and subsequent advantages, that Mendham High School has traditionally offered.

Hearing no additional comments, Mayor Henry closed the public portion of the meeting.

Mayor Henry thanked the public and encouraged participation in the future.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business scheduled for the consideration of the Mayor and Council at this time, on a motion duly made, seconded and unanimously carried by a voice vote, the special joint meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:58PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Margot G. Kaye

Margot G. Kaye, RMC
Borough Clerk