

**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 June 20, 2016 special joint meeting of the Mayor and Council and the Mendham Borough Board of Education to order at 7:03PM in the Garabrant Center, 4 Wilson Street, Mendham, New Jersey.

**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 Witzak

Excused: Council President John Andrus

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

Mayor Henry welcomed the Members of the Board of Education (BOE) and members of the public and set forth the parameters for public comment. He advised that this meeting was a continuation of the April 4, 2016 special meeting to discuss the Haber de-regionalization report and to hear from members of the public.

**DISCUSSION:**

**Restructuring Feasibility Report - West Morris Regional High School District**

Mayor Henry explained the history behind the Haber report and stated that collaboration between the Council and the BOE will position the Borough as a leader among the communities within the region. He further 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 Mayor Janet Hoven, Chester Borough, and Mayor Frank Cioppettini, Mendham Township, and thanked them for attending. He added that they have been working together for four (4) years to develop a restructuring plan and stressed that the Governing Bodies and Boards of Education of at least three (3) of the municipalities in the region must petition the court for a referendum.

Mayor Henry stated that the Council will be voting on a resolution in support of option one and noted that the BOE has drafted a resolution as well.

Ms. Cocuzza, BOE President, called her meeting to order.

**ATTENDANCE**

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

Also Present: James Rollo, Board Secretary

Ms. Cocuzza stated that while option one is the only one that merits consideration, there are a number of outstanding issues. Specifically:

- Costs associated with de-regionalization have not been identified
- Estimated savings may be optimistic
- Impact on level of education is unknown

She further stated that the BOE resolution is intended to continue the de-regionalization process via referendum without specifically endorsing option one.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mayor Henry opened the floor to comments/questions from the public and asked that Borough residents be heard first.

Hank Schram, Melrose Lane, stated that a funding formula based on assessed value is unreasonable and suggested it be based on per pupil value. Mayor Henry explained that agreement among at least three (3) municipalities is required before the formula can be developed. He added that per pupil, assessed value or a hybrid of both may be considered.

Jim Pohlman, Cherry Lane, indicated support for an opportunity to reduce taxes but cautioned against the possibility of Washington Township winning a majority on the board and then funneling disproportionate funds to Central High School.

John Morel, East Main Street, thanked the Mayor and Council for their support of option one and sought clarification that the endorsement of same was specifically stated in both the Council and BOE resolutions. He confirmed the positives associated with option one and opined that no negatives exist.

Christina Zaybekian, Deerfield Road, inquired as to the disposition of any tax savings and opined that voters would want to know how those funds will be allocated. Mayor Henry confirmed that the issue would be discussed among the municipalities and stated that the options are to return the money to the taxpayers, use it to improve education services or a combination of both.

Pam Berg, Coventry Road, indicated her support for option one and stated that any tax savings would address gaps in the existing process.

Brian Cavanaugh, Cherry Lane, stated his support for per pupil funding and recommended that 50% of savings be returned to the taxpayers and 50% be allocated to education. He added that the return to the school system would eliminate tax increases for several years.

Bob Marino, Florie Farm Road, pointed out that since the Chesters have a joint school board, their support along with the two Mendham boards, is required to continue. He added that it may not result in de-regionalization but will give the public a voice. Mr. Marino questioned the BOE resolution language endorsing neither option one nor two and expressed concern that the language may halt progress. He further requested that the BOE remove it.

Mr. Cavanaugh stated his agreement with Mr. Marino and asked the BOE to endorse option one to ensure continuation of the process. Mr. Fechhelm opined that the current language in the BOE resolution meets the statutory requirement. Mr. Marino requested that the BOE strike the recital referencing the lack of endorsement in order to avoid conflict in the future. Ms. Sullivan confirmed that removal of the language will remove any potential conflict.

Kelly Caufield, Dean Road, indicated her support for option one and the referendum for public vote. She added that the end result may boost low school enrollment as young families may be precluded from buying in Mendham due to high taxes.

Sean Havey, Drake Road, expressed his support for option one.

Hearing no additional comments, Mayor Henry opened the floor to residents of other municipalities.

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

Mayor Henry polled the Council Members who unanimously supported option one.

Ms. Cocuzza polled the Board Members as to striking the following recital from the BOE resolution:

WHEREAS, while such evaluation process continues, the Board of Education does not endorse the ultimate merits of either Option One or Option Two to de-regionalizing the high school district; and

Mr. Andrew, Mr. Dolan, Mr. Fechhelm, Ms. Hornyak, Mr. Jennings, Ms. Raimondo and Mr. Vitale agreed to strike. Mr. Corbett abstained.

On a motion duly made, seconded and carried by a voice vote, the BOE amended their resolution to reflect the removal of the above recital.

**ACTIONS TAKEN**

Res. #98-16 Endorsement of Option One of the School Feasibility Report

Motion to approve: Councilwoman Daly

Second: Councilman Andrews

Discussion: None

In favor: Andrews, Badal, Daly, Sharkey, Witczak

Opposed: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Andrus

BOE Resolution: Endorsement of a Referendum on Option One of the School Feasibility Report

Motion to approve: Mr. Dolan

Second: Ms. Hornyak

Discussion: None

In favor: Andrew, Dolan, Fechhelm, Hornyak, Jennings, Raimondo, Vitale

Opposed: Corbett

Abstain: None

Absent: None

In his closing remarks, Mayor Henry thanked the BOE and the public for their input and added that the Chesters and Mendham Township are working toward the same goals.

**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 8:04PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Margot G. Kaye*

Margot G. Kaye, RMC  
Borough Clerk