

**MINUTES OF BOARD RETREAT HELD  
December 21, 2016**

In accordance with the State’s Sunshine Law, adequate notice of this meeting was provided by mailing a notice of the time, date, location and, to the extent known, the agenda of this meeting to the PRINCETON PACKET, THE TIMES, THE HOME NEWS TRIBUNE, AND WEST WINDSOR and PLAINSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARIES. Copies of the notice have also been posted in the board office and filed with Plainsboro’s and West Windsor’s township clerks and in each of the district schools.

The Board Retreat of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by Board President Fleres at 6:04 p.m. in the multipurpose room at the District Administration Building. The following Board members were present:

Mr. Anthony Fleres	Ms. Michele Kaish	Mr. Scott Powell
Ms. Louisa Ho	Ms. Dana Krug	Mr. Yingchao “YZ” Zhang
		Mr. Yu “Taylor” Zhong

Board Member Cheng and Juliana were absent. Present also were: Dr. David Aderhold, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary; Mr. Martin Smith, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction; and, Mr. Gerard Dalton, Assistant Superintendent, Pupil Services/Planning. Newly elected Board Member Carol Herts attended as a guest.

**Welcome/Review Purpose and Outcomes**

The Superintendent welcomed everyone to the 2017-2018 budget build retreat. He gave a special thanks to Scott Powell for his years of service to the district; and, welcomed incoming Board of Education member Carol Herts.

Participants were asked to consider the skills our students will need to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. After a “turn and talk” discussion, the group compared skills covered in their conversations. Among those concepts mentioned were communication, people skills, seeing from others perspectives, well rounded, adaptable, learn how to learn, and knowing that no one can know it all.

To round out the conversation, the Superintendent reviewed the top ten skills as covered in the Future of Jobs Report. Martin Smith discussed an up-to-date version of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that deals with a series of components. These divide into six Foundational Literacies, four Competencies, and six Character Qualities.

Mr. Cheng arrived at 6:22 P.M.

The Superintendent discussed a variety of budget topics, including: what is a school budget; budget process timelines; a variety of big picture budget topics; as well as other cost factors. As usual state aid will not be known until late in the process. July 2017 prescription plan increases are an unknown, as is the January 2018 medical plan premium increase.

Larry Shanok discussed general fund trends. These highlight the often multiyear perspective taken within a specific budget year. Net health benefit costs to the district over the last four years have seen small percentage increases – not due to low premium costs, but due to increasing employee contributions toward health costs. Last year employees contributed almost \$4.7 million of total

premiums of nearly \$24 million. These contributions are fully phased in and the district will be responsible for about 80% of future increases. Despite the mildness of the growth in the last four years, 7 of the last 15 years have seen double digit moves in net cost to the district. Exclude the last four years as abnormal with the phase-in of employee contributions, and that is 7 of 11 years of double digit moves. Other general fund expenditure categories display similar variability.

If providing excellent educational experiences was a simple matter, there would be more excellent districts across the nation. The district has maintained and built upon excellence despite successful efforts to inhibit the general increase in spending. Taxes are high, but would be much higher if we matched other high performing districts move for move. Our per pupil spending has increased by nearly \$2,500 per pupil over the past dozen years, but it has increased by over \$6,000 per pupil in Princeton, Hopewell Valley and Montgomery school districts. Higher student:teacher and student:administrator ratios are among the consequences of the squeezing of costs.

Total per pupil spending is made up of a number of categories. If the district spent more like Princeton/Hopewell Valley on a per pupil basis, an additional \$1.6 million would be spent on administration; an additional \$6.5 million would be spent on facilities; and, another \$32 million would be spent on other categories. That would mean lower student:teacher ratios and more co-curricular activities.

Martin Smith and Gerard Dalton described potential staffing and program actions under consideration for the coming budget. Read 180 has gotten stellar results in improving the reading ability of less skilled students at Community Middle School. A change in federal "supplement, not supplant rules" for Title I could allow a cost effective expansion of such efforts at Grover. Professional development for math in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, a uniform approach to replacement and purchase of musical instruments in the district and budgets for the arts would benefit those areas. In addition, special education staffing in pre-school and autism would benefit students. Board Certified Behavioral Analyst, SAC guidance and specific growth in some grades all could benefit from additional staff. And that does not address the widespread desire in the district for full-time kindergarten.

The Superintendent discussed in some detail the coming residential developments in the two towns. The Princeton Theological Seminary construction is moving forward and could have 372 students in district by 2019. Toll Brothers, Ellsworth Center and Ellsworth II, Transit Village, and Forrestal Village all are building momentum. Two developments have recently emerged as hard realities: Lowes Center and the Thompson Property. Over the next five-years, these could add 1,200 students to the district – and this ignores the potential of the Howard Hughes property. Current school capacity is inadequate to deal with such an increase; this is true across all grades. Many of our school locations have little or no potential for additions. Capital reserve dollars give us some flexibility, but eventually the magnitude of the potential need requires a referendum. A referendum requires time, planning, consensus and widespread community support. All these could be difficult to muster in an effective and timely manner.

Many school districts are designating capital reserve for projects now and not waiting for the budget process. There was a discussion of statewide concerns about potential State of New Jersey actions on state aid this year and next year. Does one designate capital reserve at a Board of Education meeting? If so, do we focus on growth needs or on the \$40+ millions of individual projects?

The Board of Education will have to come to grips with capacity needs and the financial manner in which those needs are supported. More directly now, guidance is needed, given the outline of staffing and program challenges for the coming year, on what parameters should be studied by the

administration straightaway. Is full use of the cap rules acceptable? Is use of banked cap okay? In a pinch, the district has capacity to collect debt service tax levy, should we?

At 10:30 PM by a motion by Ms. Ho, seconded by Ms. Krug, and supported unanimously by all present, the Board of Education meeting was extended by one hour.

These areas are difficult to consider this early in the budget process and more will be known about staffing and programs in 4-6 weeks. For now, the Board of Education recognizes that the cap rules may need to be utilized in the 2017-2018 budget.

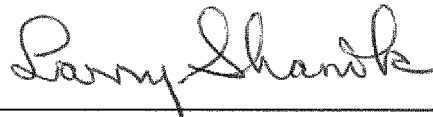
**Closing and Next Steps**

A lot of ground was covered tonight. The potential for growth looms strongly in our near future.

The Superintendent and Mr. Fleres thanked everyone for their participation.

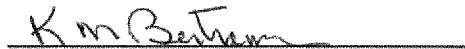
A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Powell, seconded by Ms. Ho. All Board members that were present voted in favor of adjourning the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:51 p.m.



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Larry Shanok, Board Secretary

Prepared by:



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Kathleen M. Bertram