

1 **OFFICIAL MINUTES**

2
3 of the **WORKSHOP MEETING** of the Greenwich Township Board of Education held
4 **Thursday, February 23, 2012** in the Nehaunsey Middle School Library.

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6 The meeting was called to order by President Jason Murschell a 6:30 p.m.

7
8 **Roll Call:**

- 9
10 Jason Murschell
11 James Worrell
12 Alan Boultinghouse
13 Louis Fabiani
14 Roseanne Lombardo
15 Lisa Morina
16 Susan Vernacchio

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18 Also present were Mr. Vincent Tarantino, Interim Superintendent/Principal and Mr. Scott
19 A. Campbell, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary.

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21 As required under the guidelines of the Open Public Meeting Law, notice of this meeting
22 was sent to the ***The Gloucester County Times, The Courier Post*** and the ***Township***
23 ***Clerk***. It was also posted in the Greenwich Township School Buildings. (Optional:
24 Videotaping Regulations – “The proceedings of this meeting are being videotaped and
25 anyone wishing to discuss an individual child should so note.”)

26
27 **OPENING PROCEDURES**

28
29 **1. PUBLIC – AGENDA/NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

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31 This is the time when anyone from the public who wishes to speak to the Board
32 may do so. Please state your name, address and phone number. The Board
33 will hear your concerns. The Board may or may not take action this evening.
34 You will be notified either at this meeting by letter or telephone of any action the
35 Board does take.

36
37 ***Duane Sarmiento, 142 Center Street, Gibbstown said he realizes it is a tough***
38 ***budget year and the board is working very hard but he wanted to know if we***
39 ***would have saved any money by moving the election to November? Jason***
40 ***Murschell said there could have been potential savings but any such savings***
41 ***could not be determined at that time. Mr. Murschell asked Scott Campbell what***
42 ***the maximum amount we are looking at for the election and Mr. Campbell***
43 ***responded that last year, our costs were \$5,600.00. He spoke with someone at***
44 ***the county and because there are only five districts that have not moved their***
45 ***election, they are projecting it to be \$30,000.00 that will be split between the five***

1 districts. So we are looking at an additional \$6,000.00 on top of the \$5,600.00.
2 **Mr. Sarmiento** then said he understands that Spanish, Library and after school
3 activities were “hacked”. He wants to know if the district recognized any savings
4 by cutting those activities? **Mr. Murschell** said they cut only the library position;
5 not the educational program itself. **Vincent Tarantino** said he didn’t have those
6 savings figures at the moment but he could get them to him. **Mr. Sarmiento** then
7 said to Mr. Tarantino that in his first interim contract last year, he was paid
8 \$525.00 per day which if you multiply that by 180 school days, it comes out to
9 about \$95,000.00 which is ample salary for an administrator. In good times, he
10 doesn’t think anybody here cares as long as you get the quality. After that first
11 year, you signed a contract with the Board of Education and your salary was
12 bumped up to \$135,000.00, including 14 vacation days, 12 sick days and three
13 personal days. **Mr. Sarmiento** went on to say that if he did his math correctly, if
14 the board kept you as an interim at \$525.00 per day, it would only cost
15 \$120,000.00 for a full year. Where he works, he is in charge of a budget so he
16 knows what the board is going through but when you say that we have to make
17 cuts, you have to start cutting from the top. He then said to Mr. Tarantino that he
18 can only work as an interim for two years to which **Mr. Tarantino** replied he can
19 work for two years as an interim in this district but work an additional two years
20 through an agency such as E.I.R.C. or Camden County Special Services School
21 District. **Mr. Sarmiento** went on to say that in Mr. Tarantino’s contract, it says
22 “effective July 1, 2012”, when the contract is up, “the interim shall not be paid
23 less than the salary he was paid the previous year”. He wants to know if that is
24 true? Even if they wanted to cut your salary, it isn’t allowed because it is in your
25 contract. **Mr. Sarmiento** said he negotiated police union contracts and he would
26 love to have that in the police contract. He doesn’t know who negotiated this
27 contract for the taxpayers. **Mr. Tarantino** said the State of New Jersey does not
28 allow a Superintendent of Schools, with a population of this school district’s size,
29 to exceed \$135,000.00. That is “as a Superintendent”. His role is
30 “Superintendent/Principal”. **Mr. Sarmiento** said the question he had about the
31 contract is if you get hired by E.I.R.C., it states in his contract now that his new
32 salary cannot be less than what he was making the previous year so he can’t get
33 a pay cut even if the board decides that times are tough and we are going to cut
34 your salary by 1/10—you can’t make less than what you are making because it is
35 in your contract. **Mr. Tarantino** said the board can negotiate his salary and if
36 they cut his salary by 1/10, he will be making less than what a teacher would be
37 making in a dual capacity as a Superintendent and a Principal. **Mr. Sarmiento**
38 wanted to know then if the school board can reduce his salary? **Jim Worrell**
39 responded, “yes”.

40
41 **Brian Bass-Riley**, 612 Betty Rose Avenue, Gibbstown said his biggest shock
42 this evening is knowing the teachers are making \$110,000.00 a year. He is
43 asking the board of education, respectfully, to do the “right thing” in the upcoming
44 school budget and raise our school taxes. Doing the right thing is sometimes
45 difficult and “politically risky” and he recognizes that some of the board members

1 are elected by a constituency who is adamantly opposed to increased taxes. He
2 went on to say that as a father of two children in the school and as a homeowner
3 of Gibbstown and a citizen who is not only concerned about his future and his
4 children's future, but the town's future, he is asking for the board to do the right
5 thing. He went on to explain why raising taxes is a good thing. The first is that
6 there is a "moral argument". We are in the situation we are in because of a
7 failure to plan for the reality that we find ourselves in and he is not saying that to
8 blame anybody; we all bear the responsibility. Our children shouldn't bear the
9 majority of the consequences because their parents' or grandparents' "failure to
10 plan". There is also a "social contract argument" for raising taxes. Our society
11 works only when we recognize we are responsible for one another and not only
12 for our own interests. That is the way social contracts work. Someone may say,
13 "I don't have children in public schools; why should I pay for them?" He suspects
14 that anyone who says that depends upon people in their lives who are the
15 beneficiaries of a good public school education. We put our lives and livelihoods
16 in the hands of doctors, lawyers, airline pilots, etc. every day. Quality public
17 education benefits everyone. He said there is a "public safety argument". We
18 have seen over and over again in that children who do not have avenues where
19 they can "constructively engage" their artistic, musical and athletic abilities and
20 interests are far more likely to engage in criminal activity and risky behaviors than
21 children who live in communities that provide them with such outlets. He said
22 that ending after-school activities that engage students' interests will be
23 detrimental not only to them and their future, but to our community as a whole
24 because it has the potential to result in increased substance abuse, increased
25 juvenile crime and increased teen pregnancy. He concluded by saying that if
26 none of these arguments are persuasive he wanted to appeal to "your self-
27 interest". If we try to cut our way out of this ratable crisis that we face in our
28 community, our school is going to suffer. Families are going to leave Gibbstown
29 and new families are not going to be attracted when we have a "sub-par" school
30 system. When our school fails, our community fails. When our community fails,
31 our homes lose their values. We understand as parents that some cuts have to
32 be made. We don't like it but we understand. We are just asking you, the board,
33 to ask us to pay our fair share and ask the community to pay its fair share.
34 Please don't make our children pay the entire price.

35
36 **Lee Lucas**, 361 Democrat Road, Gibbstown said that families fund education
37 and if you raise taxes, these families will have less money to spend. He doesn't
38 feel it is the school's responsibility to raise the children; it is the parent's
39 responsibility. He then asked Mr. Tarantino if he holds two jobs in the district as
40 Superintendent and Principal to which **Mr. Tarantino** confirmed. **Mr. Lucas** then
41 said Mr. Tarantino is saving this district a lot of money by holding two jobs. He
42 concluded by saying that he is passionate about politics but something has his
43 "blood pressure up". A couple people in this town want to do away with voting on
44 school budgets. It was voted down and he doesn't have a problem with that
45 because public union does not control the school boards. Now they want to have

1 the municipal government step in to intervene. It is not their business. **Mr. Lucas**
2 said he wants to vote on the budget.

3
4 **Jackie DiLiberis**, 468 Allen Avenue, Gibbstown said that her boys would like to
5 say something but before they speak, she wants everyone to know that every
6 single aide in both schools is “imperative” to these kids’ success. Her son,
7 Joshua, has Autism and Andrew, had ADHD. They rely on these aides because
8 these aides are trained in what they are doing. They know when a “meltdown” is
9 going to occur and how to stop it before it happens. She said her boys enjoy
10 going to school and both have made the honor roll. That is because of these
11 aides and the teachers in this district; they are wonderful and have so much love
12 for these kids. She is proud of this community because everyone comes
13 together and supports one another. She doesn’t want to lose that so she is
14 begging the board to not out-source the aides.

15
16 **Joshua DiLiberis**, student, said “Ms. Jen needs me so stay away from Ms. Jen.”

17
18 **Andrew DiLiberis**, student, pointing to Christine Eiserman said, “This is my
19 teacher. Her name is Miss Chrissy and every day in school she helps me during
20 social studies and math. Mrs. Sarmiento helps me during Miss Chrissy’s lunch
21 period. Without Miss Chrissy, everything would be hard for me, and that’s it.”

22
23 **Carol Lang**, 33 North School Street, Gibbstown asked Vincent Tarantino that
24 after working in this district two years, he can then continue to work here through
25 E.I.R.C. for an additional two years? **Mr. Tarantino** said it depended on what the
26 board wants. **Ms. Lang** asked if it was Mr. Tarantino’s decision to hire E.I.R.C.?
27 **Mr. Tarantino** said E.I.R.C. was hired for the “strategic planning”. She then
28 asked if it was a conflict of interest since Mr. Tarantino’s wife works for a
29 department of E.I.R.C.? **Mr. Tarantino** said his wife works part-time for Rowan
30 University/E.I.R.C. but he doesn’t do the hiring; the Board of Education does.
31 She told him that he gives the recommendations to the board. **Mr. Tarantino**
32 said the E.I.R.C. made a presentation to the committee and the committee
33 agreed to hire E.I.R.C. with his recommendation. **Ms. Lang** then asked if it went
34 out for public bid? **Mr. Tarantino** responded that it didn’t have to but **Ms. Lang**
35 thought it should have gone out for bid since there was a conflict of interest. **Mr.**
36 **Tarantino** said he didn’t vote on it. **Ms. Lang** then said that Mr. Tarantino was
37 the one who “recommended” Source 4 Teachers to which **Mr. Tarantino** agreed.
38 **Ms. Lang** asked if it were true that Source 4 Teachers is already failing to
39 provide substitutes especially to our special needs classes? **Mr. Tarantino** said,
40 “no”. It is just about the same as when we didn’t have Source 4 Teachers.

41
42 **Mark Pandolfo**, 251 Marshall Avenue, Gibbstown asked the board that to reach
43 a 0% tax burden for the taxpayers, how much do we have to cut from the budget
44 based on the numbers we have right now? **Jason Murschell** replied that we
45 have to cut \$1.5 million from the budget. **Mr. Pandolfo** asked what the total

1 budget is? **Mr. Murschell** answered, "\$12 million". **Mr. Pandolfo** said that once
2 we start cutting programs to "tighten our belts", if the economy gets better, we
3 can only raise our budget by 2% which means we would never get these
4 programs back because we will "always be chasing inflation". There is the
5 increase in medical insurance and other insurance that will eat up the 2%
6 increase. So if we stay at a 0% increase for the people, we are actually losing
7 something that we will never get back. This is what concerns him. **Mr. Pandolfo**
8 said he is a product of this school system and he had programs like "shop" and
9 he was also in the band. We can't get those programs back now because the
10 cost would be too much. He welcomed any comments from the board. **Mr.**
11 **Murschell** told Mr. Pandolfo that "he cannot see into the future".
12

13 **Mike Myers**, 163 Tomlin Station Road, Gibbstown followed up on what Mr.
14 Pandolfo said by saying that not only can you not get those programs back but
15 what will happen next year and the year after that. He was a sitting board
16 member three years ago and they also had to deal with making cuts and a lot of
17 this has to do with trying to get our school districts to merge with Paulsboro. He
18 said it didn't happen then because Paulsboro is not large enough to do it. He
19 wants to know what it going to happen year after year? Are we going to "cancel"
20 Gibbstown School or are we going to be forced to merge with a larger district
21 because we won't have anybody else to teach our kids? He wanted to know
22 when will we be smart enough, as a district, to combine ourselves with a larger
23 district, and then we don't lose those programs?
24

25 **Martin Ware**, 706 Locke Avenue, Gibbstown said we keep talking about making
26 cuts to save money but no one is talking about how we can make money for this
27 district. The board voted to keep the election in April when a majority of the
28 districts moved their elections to November. Now it is going to cost us thousands
29 of dollars more to hold the election in April. **Mr. Ware** said that school choice is
30 another way to bring money into the district but he was told it would cost too
31 much for transportation. He said it doesn't cost for transportation. The district
32 could bring in five or six kids and make approximately \$6,000.00 to \$7,000.00 per
33 kid but the board decided not to do that. He then said for a district this size, if
34 you want field trips, you have to raise the funds or pay for them yourselves. **Mr.**
35 **Ware** said in the district where he works, everyone pays for their field trips.
36 There are some clubs that you need, like the NJHS but as far as chorus, it should
37 be worked into the music teacher's schedule during the school day. **Mr. Ware**
38 concluded by saying that Mr. Tarantino said \$110,000.00 is less than what a
39 teacher makes in this district.....He is looking at the guide and a top-scale
40 Doctorate degree with 17 years of service makes \$85,000.00. **Mr. Tarantino**
41 asked if Mr. Ware calculated the benefits? **Mr. Ware** said that Mr. Tarantino gets
42 benefits from the state to which **Mr. Tarantino** said he does not get benefits from
43 the state; he pays for his medical. **Mr. Ware** said that Mr. Tarantino is a retired
44 administrator and he fell into that retirement plan to get benefits from the state
45 and it was his decision. **Mr. Tarantino** said that for 45 years, he paid into that

1 plan and he deserves it. **Mr. Ware** was not disputing the fact that he doesn't
2 deserve it but we can go out and negotiate for a new Superintendent who would
3 take a lower salary and he guarantees that.
4

5 **Terry DiSanto**, Co-President of the GTEA said that our message is certainly
6 clear; "Our School is not for Sale. Keep the Profiteers Out". That is our message
7 and that is our mission. **Mrs. DiSanto** said that at the last board meeting, Mr.
8 Tarantino talked about the potential out-sourcing of the maintenance and
9 custodians and he used the word, "consortium" to possibly use as an agency.
10 She wants to know if he is referring to the Pittsgrove Consortium to which **Mr.**
11 **Tarantino** replied, "yes". She then asked if the Board of Education has
12 consulted with Edvocate for over-seeing this process about out-sourcing and
13 again **Mr. Tarantino** replied, "yes". Her next question was if any members of the
14 Board of Education or the Superintendent have any personal connection with
15 Edvocate or the Pittsgrove Consortium? She was told they weren't. **Mrs.**
16 **DiSanto** then said that she and her colleagues have done some research on the
17 Pittsgrove Consortium with some staff members that work there and we have
18 heard there are some problems and that the quality of service is poor, there is a
19 high turn-over rate with the workers where they were only coming in for a short
20 amount of time and some of these staff members questioned whether these
21 workers had background checks and if they were fingerprinted. She has
22 concerns and she hopes the board will consider those concerns when you look
23 further into the out-sourcing of the maintenance and custodians particularly with
24 the Pittsgrove Consortium.
25

26 **Haley Sarmiento, Marissa Miller, Julie Calce**, Students and NJHS members
27 said they have been with Ms. Jenn Spera since third grade and during all that
28 time, even though she was not their aide, she helped them with anything that
29 they need. We think Ms. Jenn has earned her job just like all the other aides in
30 the district. We don't think their jobs should be taken away.
31

32 **2. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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34 Pursuant to certain requirements of the *Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-*
35 *6, et. seq.*, which provides that an Executive Session, not open to the public, may
36 be held for certain specified purposes when authorized by Resolution.
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38 The Board of Education for Greenwich Township, assembled in public session on
39 **February 23, 2012** hereby resolves that an Executive Session, closed to the
40 public shall be held on **February 23, 2012**, at **7:10** p.m. in the Nehaunsey Middle
41 School library, Room 48, located at 415 Swedesboro Road, Gibbstown, New
42 Jersey, for discussion of certain matters which relate to items authorized by
43 *Open Public Meetings Act, (N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b)* to be discussed in closed
44 session.
45

- Matters Required by Law to be Confidential
- Matters Involving Individual Privacy
- Matters Relating to the Employment Relationship
- Matters Relating to Litigation, Negotiations and Attorney-Client Privilege.

It is anticipated that such matter may be disclosed to the public upon the determination of the Board that applicable exception no longer applies and the public interest will no longer be served by such confidentiality.

Motion: (Worrell/Boultinghouse) to enter into Executive Session at 7:10 p.m. to discuss the following:

- Personnel
- Legal

Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Motion: (Worrell/Boultinghouse) to return to the Workshop Meeting at 9:03 p.m.

Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Jason Murschell said that the board met and made a lot of progress in regards to all of the concerns from the public. He said the budget that is proposed is going to maintain the best education possible for our children and be responsible to the taxpayers. The Board has taken all of the ideas and it is now going back into the hands of the administrators and they will put together another proposal for us. The Budget & Finance Committee will be meeting with the teacher's association on Monday, February 27 to come up with any more potential ideas. It will then go back in to the administration's hands and they will have a completed document back to us on March 5, 2012 where we will have another workshop meeting to make the appropriate changes and approvals. It will then be sent to the County Superintendent for approval. After approval from the County Superintendent, it will come back to us where we will have a public hearing on the budget on March 29, 2012. That is the timetable we are looking at. We appreciate everyone's support and input; your voices have been heard.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: (Worrell/Boultinghouse) to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

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Respectfully Submitted,

Scott A. Campbell, Board Secretary