

1 **OFFICIAL MINUTES**

2
3 of the **SPECIAL MEETING** of the Greenwich Township Board of Education held
4 **Thursday, January 5, 2012** in the Nehaunsey Middle School library.

5
6 The meeting was called to order by President Jason Murschell at 7:00 p.m.

7
8 **Roll Call:**

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

17
18 Also present were Mr. Vincent Tarantino, Interim Superintendent and Mr. Scott A.
19 Campbell, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary.

20
21 As required under the guidelines of the Open Public Meeting Law, notice of this meeting
22 was sent to the ***Courier Post, Gloucester County Times*** and the ***Township Clerk***. It
23 was also posted in the Greenwich Township School Buildings. (Optional: Videotaping
24 Regulations – “The proceedings of this meeting are being videotaped and anyone
25 wishing to discuss an individual child should so note.”)

26
27 **OPENING PROCEDURES**

28
29 **1. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

- 30
31 A. Building Consolidation Project - Lou DeLosso, Design Collaborative
32 B. 2012-2013 Budget - Susan Vernacchio
33

34 ***Lou DeLosso gave a presentation about the building consolidation project and***
35 ***started out with a power-point presentation on ESIP, (Energy Savings***
36 ***Improvement Program). It is an alternative program that the board can***
37 ***consider. Mr. DeLosso said he is not looking for any decisions tonight; it is just***
38 ***something for the board to look over and maybe take advantage of. The ESIP***
39 ***information was taken from the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities. It is a “path”***
40 ***that can be taken by a public entity to utilize the savings you would have by doing***
41 ***an energy expense without increasing any debt to the taxpayers. Mr.***
42 ***DeLosso’s presentation went on to talk about installation costs and the amount***
43 ***the taxpayers will be saving. He stressed again not to make a hasty decision***
44 ***because it is a lot of information for the board to comprehend.***

1 **Lisa Morina** said that based on Mr. DeLosso's chart, the installation costs over
2 the payback period equates to \$291,000.00 and we are putting out \$291,000.00
3 to save \$47,000.00 "after" six years? **Mr. DeLosso** responded by saying, "every
4 year".
5

6 **Mr. DeLosso** then went on to say that they went to the state for the \$15.4 million
7 dollars for the debt service aid. He said, as the board will see in his letter and in
8 his report, he is strongly recommending that the board not go out for referendum
9 on the 24th of January because "we have not heard anything from the
10 Department of Education directly". He explained that the Design Collaborative
11 will not be getting an immediate decision to give you enough information so that
12 you can make an informed decision by January 24th. The next available date is
13 March 13, 2012.
14

15 **Vincent Tarantino** asked about the \$27,500.00 for the energy audit and how
16 that reflects back to the architects fee if we are taking a million dollars out of the
17 project; how does that reflect back? **Mr. DeLosso** answered that it comes out of
18 his fee. **Mr. Tarantino** asked if the energy audit fee has to be paid as soon as
19 the board approved it? **Mr. DeLosso** replied, "no". **Lisa Morina** asked why the
20 board would hire The Design Collaborative to do that when we can get one of the
21 six firms from the state that are pre-approved and essentially have it done for
22 nothing? **Mr. DeLosso** said that you will still have to pay the state up front just
23 as you would do for our firm but you would get it back once the project is done.
24 **Mrs. Morina** asked Mr. DeLosso how many of these audits his firm has done?
25 **Mr. DeLosso** wasn't sure but thinks maybe three or four. **Mrs. Morina** meant no
26 disrespect but she didn't understand why we would choose Mr. DeLosso's firm
27 when there are pre-approved firms from the state. **Mr. DeLosso** responded by
28 saying that a lot of those firms will not be able to do the audit right away; the time
29 frame and turn around is at least three to four months before they actually get in
30 and start the work and then another two to three months before you get anything
31 back. **Mrs. Morina** said she "respectfully disagrees with that". She then said
32 about a month ago, the board approved a plan for the Broad Street School. She
33 asked if this was included in that plan and why do we have to have an urgent
34 special meeting on this when we are not voting on it tonight and if this was not
35 included in the plan, why not? **Mr. DeLosso** replied that the scope of work was
36 included in the Broad Street School with the exception of the solar and a month
37 ago we were a little optimistic about state aid. **Mrs. Morina** feels the energy
38 savings is great but she is confused as to why this is coming about now when we
39 have been working through a process and you would think with the "world looking
40 to be green" that these kinds of measures would have been discussed. She said
41 she brought up to this board the New Jersey Smart Start Program and is it part of
42 the program and can it be reimbursed. We haven't discussed it as a board and
43 she isn't the only one on the board in the dark about not going out for
44 referendum in January and not getting state money. She feels this is a "band-

1 aid” approach and asked what we are doing about all the other renovations and
2 the handi-capped accessibility and all those kinds of things that were the “driving
3 urgency” to get this project run through. She is trying to justify where we are.

4 **Mr. DeLosso** said that he is recommending to the board to not have a
5 referendum in January. This is the first time he has had to inform a board of that
6 but it seems to be the rational approach to take and it is the first time all of you
7 are hearing that. **Mrs. Morina** said it isn’t about voting; it is about whether this
8 was already included in the project. **Mr. DeLosso** said that these measures
9 were already included in the referendum. Regarding the ESIP program, if you
10 hire any of those six firms that are pre-approved by the state, they can’t do the
11 engineering work so if you hired them, you would still have to hire someone else
12 to do the engineering. As your architect of record, we can do a “self-performing
13 ESIP”. **Jason Murschell** asked if we do choose to hire The Design
14 Collaborative to perform the audit, how long would it take to get everything done
15 and for you to come back with a number and get everything started and would
16 you have enough time to do the work in the summer? **Mr. DeLosso** replied,
17 “yes”. He then thanked everyone for giving him the opportunity to speak.

18
19 **Leonard Hurff**, 608 Betty Rose Avenue, Gibbstown, asked whether the new
20 boilers will be steam or low pressure water? **Mr. DeLosso** replied, “low pressure
21 water”. **Mr. Hurff** asked if a black seal will be required to run it?
22 Representatives from the Design Collaborative replied that the black seal
23 requirement comes into play depending on the input rating; if you are under four
24 million, you don’t need a black seal. “It is going to depend on the size of the
25 boilers.”

26
27 **Cathy Tortella**, 414 Swedesboro Road, Gibbstown, said she knows the goal is
28 to consolidate into Broad Street School but since we have such a low tax rate
29 here in Gibbstown, she asked why we can’t go out to bond and “energy save”
30 both buildings? We can still do the necessary things that need to be done at
31 Broad Street such as an elevator but keep both buildings open. She also asked
32 what is the ultimate goal of the Board in doing this? Is it to fix the energy at
33 Broad and forget Nehaunsey and eventually go out for bond next January and do
34 the consolidation back into Broad Street School? She hadn’t heard the ultimate
35 goal. She also wanted to know what happened to strategic planning? **Mr.**
36 **DeLosso** replied that this is all a part of the strategic planning. From what he
37 understood, the plan, as selected by the Board, was to close Nehaunsey School
38 and consolidate into Broad Street School. **Mrs. Tortella** thought there was
39 supposed to be a “strategic planning committee”. **Jason Murschell** responded
40 by saying that as far as the strategic planning committee, we have our
41 Regulatory Committee which is in charge of the building project and it goes on
42 the plans based upon the recommendations of all kinds of groups such as the
43 Superintendent and the staff to meet all the educational goals of this district and
44 move into the future. **Vincent Tarantino** said that as soon as the committee

1 gets together, we can meet with the E.I.R.C. and get things rolling but we wanted
2 to see where we were with the building project. So **Mrs. Tortella** said that what
3 you are telling her is that because the board has decided to consolidation into
4 Broad Street, you would never consider putting any energy savings plans at
5 Nehaunsey and Broad Street and keeping both buildings open? **Mr. Murschell**
6 said that at this time, the board has already voted towards consolidation into
7 Broad Street School. **Mrs. Tortella** said that the public has to vote for that but
8 **Mr. Murschell** said that the public will be voting on whether they want to pay for
9 the consolidation into Broad Street School. **Mrs. Tortella** asked if the public was
10 voting for this energy saving program? **Mr. Murschell** said no. It was something
11 that the board is doing because it is "debt neutral". There is no incurred debt to
12 the town for this. **Mrs. Tortella** then asked if there was no incurred debt, than
13 why can't it be done to the Nehaunsey School? **Mr. DeLosso** said because the
14 board would have to enter into a 15-year agreement if we did it at Nehaunsey
15 which means you would be committing to keeping that building open for 15
16 years. **Mrs. Morina** said unless we sold the building and recouped the costs in
17 that sale. **Mr. DeLosso** said he would have to see how that would work.

18
19 **Lori Bass-Riley**, 612 Betty Rose Avenue, Gibbstown, said she is hearing of the
20 money that will be saved once they finish with the consolidation. She wanted to
21 know if there has been an audit done to see how much it will cost to maintain
22 Nehaunsey School before it can be sold? She went on to say that in this
23 economy, no one is looking to purchase or even rent and if we have to keep
24 Nehaunsey until it can be sold, were those costs considered in the referendum?
25 **Jason Murschell** said that was a very valid question and one that needs to be
26 looked into.

27
28 **Lee Lucas**, 361 Democrat Road, Gibbstown, asked what is wrong with the
29 boilers at Broad Street School? **Mr. DeLosso** replied that they are old and one
30 is out of commission. The newer ones are from the 1950 or 1960's. The one that
31 is not used is from 1928 or 1930. **Mr. Lucas** asked if they were steam to which
32 **Mr. DeLosso** replied, "yes". He also said that they have to remove the asbestos
33 which will take two summers to do because he doesn't want anyone in the
34 building when that work is being done.

35
36 **Jeanette Peel**, 521 Betty Rose Avenue, Gibbstown, said by her calculations, it
37 was going to cost \$500,000.00 to pay back any loans that are incurred for the
38 renovations at Broad Street School. **Mr. DeLosso** said that it the local share and
39 it does not include the 32.5% we get from the state or approximately \$340,000.00
40 so the total debt would be around \$890,000.00. **Mrs. Peel** then went on to say
41 that to maintain Nehaunsey School, Mr. DeLosso figured on \$333,000.00 a year.
42 Those were the actual costs. **Mrs. Peel** said that based on those two figures, the
43 savings wouldn't happen for 25 years because we would be putting out an extra
44 \$125,000.00 a year to pay towards the referendum as opposed to paying

1 \$333,000.00 a year to maintain Nehaunsey. **Mr. DeLosso** said it would cost \$5
2 million over 25 years to maintain Nehaunsey School. **Mrs. Peel** wanted to know if
3 we will see an immediate cost reduction? **Mr. DeLosso** replied, "no". He said it
4 would be 25 years before the district will see any savings. **Jason Murschell**
5 stated that before we reach that point, there are systems in both schools that are
6 going to break down and we are going to have to spend the money to fix them
7 anyway. **Mr. DeLosso** said at that point, if something major breaks, you have to
8 spend the money to fix it and you will not be getting any state aid to do it. So by
9 consolidating, we repair those things and we get state money to help pay for it.
10 **Mrs. Peel** then asked if we are getting a "state of the art school" or just bringing
11 the school "up to code"? **Mr. DeLosso** said the building will be up to code but
12 the educational will be brought up to the state requirements the district has for its
13 educational programs. He also said there will be no fancy atriums; we are just
14 talking about rejuvenating a building. **Mrs. Peel** asked if the doors will be hung
15 straight and if the cracks in the floor will be replaced? **Mr. DeLosso** responded
16 by saying, "yes". **Mrs. Peel** then said that the Gibbstown community has very
17 little to offer young families and our school district is our strongest valued point
18 but this "school building issue" probably is what is keeping young families from
19 moving here. She feels that this district has a "fantastic" education program and
20 she would hate to see it sidetracked because everyone is so "structured" over
21 what building we are going to teach these children in instead of focusing on the
22 children themselves. **Mr. Murschell** said that the county superintendent has
23 determined that we are \$2.1 million over adequacy which means we could see
24 cuts in our finances. We are maxed in our budget and if we have to start cutting
25 program, where is the education? We have to balance it all out. **Mrs. Peel** went
26 on record to say that you can double her taxes as long as you are giving her a
27 "state of the art school" that will make East Greenwich, Logan & Swedesboro-
28 Woolwich jealous and make people want to move here. **Mr. Murschell** said that
29 at the same time, this board answers to all the citizens in this district including the
30 60% of senior citizens who are on a fixed income-they can't say "double my
31 taxes". **Mrs. Peel** said that most of them have their taxes "frozen" anyway.

32
33 **Mr. DeLosso** thanked everyone for their time during his presentation.

34
35 **Susan Vernacchio** spoke about the budget for the 2012-2013 school year.
36 **Vincent Tarantino** also stated that the motto this year is "do more with less". He
37 spoke with the administrative staff and each administrator was asked to look at
38 their departments and come back with recommendations based on a zero-based
39 budget. He said that he wants to present to the public a budget that is "stream-
40 lined" and "cost effective" without hurting programs. He then asked Scott
41 Campbell for his input about next year's budget.

42
43 **Scott A. Campbell** started by saying that in regards to the tax situation in this
44 district, it could be severe to the taxpayers this coming year. The current

1 situation is the potential decrease in ratables and it is not "looking very
2 promising". **Susan Vernacchio** said the way we do business in this school
3 district depends greatly on the ratables and whether they do up or down. **Mr.**
4 **Campbell** reminded everyone that last year there was a \$.05 decrease in the
5 budget and at that time he said that next year was another year and it could get
6 worse or it could be better. He told everyone to "prepare for worse", hope the
7 state aid remains the same or gets better and hope we find ways to generate
8 more revenue than what we already do.
9

10 **2. PUBLIC – AGENDA/NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

11
12 This is the time when anyone from the public who wishes to speak to the Board
13 may do so. Please state your name, address and phone number. The Board will
14 hear you concerns. The Board may or may not take action this evening. You will
15 be notified either at this meeting, by letter, or telephone of any action the Board
16 does take.
17

18 **Leonard Hurff**, 608 Betty Rose Avenue, Gibbstown, said since the board is
19 talking about cutting down on costs, he wanted to know who pays for the lights at
20 the soccer fields? **Scott Campbell** answered by saying that the township takes
21 care of all that; the school board has nothing to do with that.
22

23 **Lee Lucas**, 361 Democrat Road, Gibbstown, asked if the board was going out
24 for referendum on January 24th? **Vincent Tarantino** said the board will have to
25 vote on that tonight. **Mr. Lucas** then said that he doesn't feel this district will get
26 any state aid because the state is a "fiscal basket case".
27

28 **Kathleen Hill**, 17 Troy Avenue, Gibbstown, said the truth about the ratable loss
29 is that it could be \$77 million; that is what is on the books at the assessor's office
30 in the township. She said it is not "set in stone" but that is a huge ratable loss for
31 this town. She also said it equates to over \$.20 on our rate without the
32 referendum being passed. She thinks the board should "seriously consider" the
33 impact on the taxpayers before even talking about the referendum to consolidate
34 the schools at least until we know what our ratable base is in this township.
35

36 **Lee Lucas** asked why we are losing \$77 million? **Scott Campbell** said it is
37 based off of what the refineries industry report on their PT-10 form which is their
38 personal property. **Ms. Hill** said the reality is that there are multiple long-term
39 appeals in this township. Some are over ten years old. That \$77 million is only
40 on one property. The amount could go to \$100 million. **Ms. Hill** then asked what
41 the long term plans are for the Nehaunsey Middle School building if the district
42 does consolidate? **Jason Murschell** said that the board cannot make any
43 speculations just yet because they can't commit themselves until after a decision
44 is made. **Ms. Hill** said that "collectively as a board" you recommended that we

1 consolidate so what is your recommendation for Nehaunsey? Mr. Murschell
2 replied that it could be sold to a private company, to another school district or the
3 township could take it over.
4

5 **Diana Taormina**, 734 Duncan Avenue, Gibbstown, said if you are trying to
6 decide what to do and where to go, isn't this a "big piece of the puzzle" to try and
7 sell this building? **Mr. Murschell** said it is a very big piece but we still cannot
8 decide anything as of yet. **Mrs. Taormina** said it seems like everything is
9 backwards. The board should know what they are doing before making the
10 decision to consolidate. **Mr. Murschell** said that if someone came forward and
11 wanted to buy this building and we agree and then the referendum to consolidate
12 into Broad Street School fails, where do we go from there? **Mrs. Taormina**
13 asked if there are any offers because if you look around, there are empty
14 buildings everywhere so the odds of this building getting sold are small? **Mr.**
15 **Murschell** said no one has come forward to him personally.
16

17 **Kathleen Hill** asked what our bond rating is? **Scott Campbell** said he did not
18 know. She asked if our ratables decrease, does our bond rating also decrease?
19 **Mr. Murschell** said it is something we can ask our bond counsel but **Mr.**
20 **Campbell** feels that it does decrease along with the ratables. **Ms. Hill** said that
21 \$77 million less in ratables will drive the interest rate up on a bond to which **Mr.**
22 **Campbell** agreed and then added that it will be because the "risk is greater".
23

24 **Terry DiSanto**, Greenwich Township employee, asked Susan Vernacchio what
25 date we would be getting the state aid figure? **Mrs. Vernacchio** replied that
26 February 21 is when the governor will be giving his address and **Mr. Campbell**
27 said it is usually the next day. **Mrs. DiSanto** asked if she has heard anything
28 about whether it will be increased or decreased? **Mr. Campbell** and **Mrs.**
29 **Vernacchio** both replied that they have heard nothing. **Mrs. DiSanto** said that
30 you then cannot count on state aid as being an assistance to our predicament?
31 **Mr. Campbell** said you will still have the decrease in ratables whether there is an
32 increase or decrease in state aid. We can only go to 2% maximum on our tax
33 levy so if everything stayed the same and we went to our maximum, the district
34 would be looking at a \$.03 increase which isn't too bad but with the potential for a
35 decrease in ratables, it "throws everything off". **Ms. Hill** wanted to remind the
36 board and everyone else that the township will be going through a town-wide
37 property reevaluation this year and no one knows where the property values are
38 "going to land" in 2013 and you are asking us to potentially support a 25-year
39 bond. She feels it is "absurd" especially in these economic times that we are in.
40 She also said, "remember the fixed incomes".
41

42 **Cathy Tortella** asked if we "energy save" Broad Street School, where does that
43 money come from? **Mr. Murschell** answered, "from the energy savings". **Mrs.**
44 **Tortella** asked if there was a maximum that you could use on that? She said her

1 example would be if you “energy-saved” Broad Street School without public
2 approval, then we get a jump in our taxes this year and the board goes out for
3 referendum and nobody votes for it because their taxes are already high and the
4 consolidation project goes down, now you have Broad Street School that is
5 energy efficient but not Nehaunsey School. Can we then go back and make
6 Nehaunsey School energy efficient and keep both buildings open? **Mr.**
7 **Murschell** said it could be done. **Mrs. Tortella** asked Mr. Murschell if he was
8 confident that the bond referendum is going to pass? **Mr. Murschell** replied that
9 he wouldn’t put it forward if he didn’t think it would pass.

10
11 **Kathleen DiBella**, 37 North Orchard Street, Gibbstown, said that along with the
12 school, her home was one that was being tested by the EPA. She said she has
13 received the results for the air quality but has not heard anything about the
14 results for the ground samples and she was wondering if the school heard back
15 from the EPA as to their results and if it was public knowledge? **Vincent**
16 **Tarantino** replied that he has heard back from them and she is welcome to come
17 into the school and look over the results.

18
19 **3. BOND REFERENDUM**

20
21 Motion: (Fabiani/Worrell) to approve the following:

- 22
23 A. The approval to table the bond referendum on January 24, 2012 until
24 further notice.

25
26 **Lisa Morina** asked Scott Campbell to get an accounting of what was spent so far
27 for the January 24th bond referendum.

28
29 Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.

30
31 **4. ADJOURNMENT**

32
33 Motion: (Fabiani/Worrell) to adjourn the meeting at 8:38 p.m.

34
35 Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

36
37
38 Respectfully Submitted,

39
40
41
42
43 _____
44 Scott A. Campbell, Board Secretary

