

SPECIAL MEETING
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE &
DEERFIELD TOWNSHIP BOARD
OF EDUCATION REGARDING
2010-2011 DEFEATED SCHOOL
BUDGET

May 5, 2010

Chairperson Spatola called to order a special meeting of the Township Committee of the Township of Deerfield, County of Cumberland and State of New Jersey, at the Municipal Building, 736 Landis Avenue, Rosenhayn, at 5:35 p.m.

Chairperson Spatola led the flag salute.

The Clerk took roll call and members present included Mr. Lauermann, Mr. Laurella is on his way, Mr. Stanzione, Ms. Musso, Mr. Spatola.

Mr. Spatola stated the reason for this meeting was to try to find ideas and suggestions to try to deal with the school's budget cuts. Mr. Spatola indicated that he would like to recognize the Business Administrator, Melanie Allen, and ask her elaborate on some of the questions the Township Committee has, and also an overview of ideas they may have.

Dr. Edythe Austermuhl stated that she was going to highlight some of the issues of what has been able to be done with the budget and what hasn't been able to be done with the budget. Dr. Austermuhl indicated that education through out the State has been cut with the funding, specifically Deerfield Township received nine point two percent (9.2%) less in State Aid, which is equivalent to two hundred thirty four thousand dollars (\$234,000.00) for the 2010-2011 school year. Dr. Austermuhl stated that a month prior to that, the Governor and Acting Commissioner of Education announced a current year cut in State aid, so for the years 2009-2010 there was a cut, and that cut affects the years to follow. Dr. Austermuhl indicated that from February to June of 2010, Deerfield Township school was not receiving the State Aid payments, which would have been one hundred eighty one thousand dollars (\$181,000.000) that the school was anticipating. Dr. Austermuhl indicated, with the Board's help and the Business Administrator's help they put together a budget, and what they were able to preserve with the current budget is:

The Preschool Program, which is a two and a half hour program, divided into a morning session and afternoon session, by statute the school is allowed to have fifteen (15) students in each session, which is a total of thirty (30) students.

Two home room session in the K-8 grades, which is two classrooms per grade, and the class size depends on population on any given year and can range from fifteen (15) to twenty six (26) students.

Special area subjects have been preserved, such as, art, music, physical education, library, technology, and Spanish have been able to keep those classes within the programs.

Dr. Austermuhl stated that not having the two hundred thirty four thousand dollars (\$234,000.00) in the budget meant that cuts needed to be made, and the three areas that cuts have been made in are:

Personnel, three staff positions will be eliminated, one is a custodial position, one is an instructional aid, and one is a teaching position.

Dr. Austermuhl stated there are unsettled contracts within the district, Assistant Principal, teaching staff, support staff, nonunion support staff, are all unsettled contracts, all open contracts for the 2010-2011 year, and are currently open contracts for the 2009-2010 year and are still in negotiations.

Dr. Austermuhl stated she personally volunteered to take a salary freeze, so she will not be accepting her increase for the 2010-2011 school year.

Dr. Austermuhl stated there was a Basic Skills in class Support Program, and a Pull Out Program, where there is a teacher that goes in and works with the entire class. One of the positions may be eliminated.

After school tutoring group to help the more needy academic students will be eliminated.

A Test Prep Course, which helps those students that may need a little extra academic help, will be eliminated.

All after school activities, extra curricular activities have been eliminated, all of the clubs, athletic teams, any thing after school that the teachers receive a stipend for have been eliminated. Also all field trips will be eliminated.

Mr. Miller stated that is for the current budget that has been defeated.

Dr. Austermuhl stated that specific supplies that are directly related to instruction such as text books, work books, papers, pencils, and specific things are being ordered. The budget for supplies was cut fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000.00) and she may be able to squeeze out another ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00), if possible.

Dr. Austermuhl indicated that for the past several years they were expanding their math series from K-5, they had expanded it up to the fourth grade but unfortunately, next year the fifth grade will be using the older text books that they had because they will not be able to expand it to the fifth graders next year.

No new technology software will be ordered, and the school is reviewing any current licenses that are already in place to see where they can be reduced or eliminate totally.

Dr. Austermuhl stated that is pretty much where the school is and she doesn't know where else she can cut at this point. Dr. Austermuhl stated she and Melanie Allen have been going through this process since January.

Mr. Spatola stated that he believes with all the collective minds in the room something can be done to help with the budget cut of the school. Mr. Spatola indicated he and the Township Committee have spent time speaking about this matter and there are some concerns that they have and would like to put some suggestions out there and maybe the School Board can enlighten the Township Committee with what would or wouldn't work.

Mr. Spatola introduced, Mr. Laurella, Chairperson of Finance to speak and share his ideas. Mr. Laurella stated that he and Ms. Musso met with the Administrator and some of the Township Committee about a month ago to review the school budget. Mr. Laurella indicated that he is upset to see only one parent attending the Meeting this evening.

Mrs. Angel Kelly stated that the night the School Board announced the budget they also had little to no participation at the budget meeting at the school when prior to the budget vote Dr. Austermuhl gave a public version of all of the cuts, and there were only five parents at the meeting and no one commented. Mrs. Kelly stated that she doesn't believe the public had an understanding of what was already cut prior to their voting.

Mr. Laurella stated that he noticed there is one child with autism, which costs forty thousand dollars (\$40,000.00) to educate this one child, out of Salem County Special Services. Mr. Laurella indicated that it is a high price to educate one special education child. Mr. Laurella indicated that in his opinion he wishes the teachers would consider freezing their salary for the coming year. Mr. Spatola stated the teachers are in negotiation, Mr. Laurella indicated the teachers should just offer to freeze their salary and that could have been presented at the meeting this evening and those numbers could have been plugged into the school budget. Mr. Laurella indicated that the no afterschool activities and the no field trips really upset him because some of the children in Deerfield Township only get out of the Township because of the field trips, and the after school activities which the children get are basketball, cheerleading, bowling, softball, soccer, and he feels this is something that gives the children incentive to keep their grades up because if not they can't participate in any after school activities.

Mr. Laurella stated that being on the School Board is a priority. Mr. Laurella indicated that the Board Secretary salary was seventy two thousand dollars (\$72,000.00) and asked what that salary entails. Mrs. Kelly stated that the salary includes her time and the shared services, covers her salary and the software and computers that are used, and the assistant is an employee of Deerfield Township and is not taken into consideration of that amount.

Mr. Bill Miller, President of the Board of Education stated that they are still under contract negotiations, and there are some clauses that the Governor has put out, under special circumstances, the one point five may not be instituted within the first couple of years, so that amount is not a definite. Mr. Laurella asked if the assistant worked eleven months of the year, he was told the assistant works twelve months of the year. Mrs. Speranza-Murphy indicated that the assistant also has several other duties besides being the Assistant Principal, she is head of the 504 Committee, head of the Child Study Team, so she is wearing several hats aside from Assistant Principal.

Mr. Laurella stated he noticed the enrollment of students is going up, Dr. Austermuhl stated that currently there are three hundred eighty four students (384) so enrollment has gone up. Mr. Laurella asked if the number of students enrolled at the end of September is what the following years State Aid is based on and Dr. Austermuhl stated yes it is.

Mr. Spatola introduced Ms. Musso, Co-Chair of Finance. Ms. Musso indicated that Mr. Laurella covered a lot of the topics, but her main concern was the increase of almost ten thousand dollars in one year for the Assistant Principal position. Dr. Austermuhl stated she was hired in August instead of July, but she is a twelve month salary, and her contract was not settled for the 2009-2010 school year and it is not settled for the 2010-2011 school year, her salary was prorated. Ms. Musso asked if there were

still two child study team teachers, and if the Assistant Principal oversees the teachers and Dr. Austermuhl stated yes she does oversee the teachers for the child study team.

Ms. Musso stated that there is a program for speech services requested for 2010-2011, which was not in the previous years budget. Ms. Musso asked if this was something that is a new program, or is it something that was broken down into another line item. It was stated that yes, it was broken down into another line item. Mrs. Speranza-Murphy stated that on their budget spread sheet they have things broken down into separate line items, where the in the audit it is just totaled as one, that is why it looks like something was added when it wasn't. Dr. Austermuhl stated that speech is required for Special Education students.

Ms. Musso asked about the line item for care and upkeep on grounds, salaries. Melanie Allen, Business Administrator stated that is a new account line from the Department of Education, in 2008-2009 that account number it didn't exist, and in 2009-2010 a portion of the maintenance salary was transferred into that line item to better explain what his duties were, this amount is a portion of his salary.

Mr. Stanzione asked if the budget did not include the teachers pay raise. Mrs. Speranza-Murphy indicated they did a projection or an estimate, but there was nothing to base the raise on. Mr. Stanzione asked if the teachers were to take a pay freeze, how that would affect the schools budget? Mrs. Speranza-Murphy stated that the freeze would be less than what was budgeted, so there would be some money in the line items. Mr. Stanzione asked if that would affect the six and a half cents, Mrs. Speranza-Murphy stated yes it would, Ms. Musso asked by how much and Mrs. Speranza-Murphy stated it depends.

Mr. Miller, Board President stated that the contract was already passed on years, so if the teachers were to get anything it would go on last year's budget. Mr. Miller indicated that in September they would be into their second year, and it is difficult to say what they would do. Mr. Stanzione stated it is disappointing to him, in the times we are in now, that the teachers just don't step up and take the wage freeze.

Mrs. Kelly, Vice President stated that the School Board has been in negotiations for several months, and a couple of months ago they came to a pass, and have gone to mediation and the Board has not been able to come to any kind of agreement with the teachers, and at this point negotiations is what it is and they continue to go to mediations. Mr. Stanzione indicated Mrs. Kelly had answered his question, and his concern is that the six and a half percent will go onto the taxpayers and he is sure that everyone is concerned with that as well.

Mr. Stanzione asked the Board to explain what a Transportation Clerk does. Mrs. Kelly stated that is one person's salary that is broken down into different line items. Mrs. Kelly stated that the position is held by the Assistant to the Superintendent, and this amount is part of her salary because she does deal with the transportation aspect to some extent. Mr. Stanzione asked what exactly her duties were, Mrs. Kelly stated she schedules buses for field trips, Dr. Austermuhl then stated that she makes sure all bus routes are accurate and that the children are where they are supposed to be, she contacts that parents if a child is brought back to the school, she works with the bus company when a new student comes in or leaves, she is the go between the school and the transportation office.

Mr. Laurella asked if the bus coordinator consists of the teacher being in the front of the building in the morning and afternoon, and asked if it was the same teacher every year and if the teacher received a stipend. Dr. Austermuhl stated that was part of a teacher's duties and was included in their salary, and what this position is, is a go between for any busing issues, such as when the bus is late, or when the bus has to bring a child, or schedule any changes of children on buses, or making sure all children of one family are not split between different buses. Dr. Austermuhl stated there are a lot of responsibilities with this position.

Mr. Stanzione stated, he is speaking as a tax payer as well as a Committee Person, when cuts are made, he feels they should be made from the top to the bottom, not from the bottom up. Mr. Stanzione stated that the people at the bottom are barely surviving anyway, so if someone needs to take a cut it should come from the top, and that is only his opinion. Mr. Stanzione indicated that he is the type of person that if he has worked with you for five years and is employed with other people, and the boss came and said to him if you take a pay raise I'm going to have to get rid of some people, but if you freeze your wages I can keep you all, he would take the wage freeze.

Mr. Miller wanted the Committee to be aware that Dr. Austermuhl from the beginning stated she would take a wage freeze, before anyone brought that suggestion to light. Mr. Stanzione stated that he was aware of that and thinks that was great, but he feels that once she did that, that the teachers should have followed suit. Mr. Stanzione stated that his concern is that once they sent the budget to the State, the State may say the school needs to cut more from it's budget and that could leave several other people without a job, but if they send a no increase budget to the State it might be fine.

Mrs. Speranza-Murphy stated she is a teacher in Vineland and before the budget cuts came about, the teachers in Vineland could not provide many things to put the school up to par with other schools, and now they are doing even less, and to the credits of the teachers, they don't get the things they need to do their jobs.

Ms. Musso asked what the process of approving the budget was, Mrs. Speranza-Murphy indicated the budget was sent to the County, once the County approved it, it was brought before the voters, and with that the budget would be approved and sent to the State, as the approved budget.

Mr. Laueremann stated that the School Board is about the same as what the Township Committee does and sometimes it is not an appreciated position. Mr. Laueremann indicated that people don't understand what goes on behind the scenes to try and provide a service. Mr. Laueremann stated that he and Mrs. Speranza-Murphy have spoke at length about what Deerfield Township School doesn't have that other districts do, and somehow the Deerfield K-8 district is penalized for being frugal and efficient. Mr. Laueremann indicated that he understands the School Board is not dealing with the teachers but with the Union representatives, he himself being part of a union and a shop steward he has made concessions with his last two contracts to avoid layoffs. Mr. Laueremann asked about the autistic child that is sent to Salem County for forty thousand dollars (\$40,000.00), and if there were a different County that could offer the same services for less. Mr. Laueremann asked how they would go about finding a County that offered the service for less. Melanie Allen stated that it is not actually the County but the facility, basically the Child Study Team meets with the school psychologist the learning consultant, the social worker, teacher and the parent and they decide what the instructional program for the child should be based on the child's disabilities and collectively visit a variety of places that meet the child's needs and that is how they decide where the child will go.

It was explained that it is an expensive process, and Salem County is the closest to the area and does things locally so the child can have less transportation cost also. So by law, it all has to be based on the program that is best for the child's needs and not by which school is the cheapest.

Mr. Lauermann asked if the food company becoming unionized would affect the prices the school pays. Melanie Allen stated that contract is settled so whether the company is unionized or not would not affect the school. Mr. Lauermann asked about the rising fuel costs, Mr. Miller stated that was a transportation contract and has been settled, so the company takes that costs. Mr. Lauermann stated his wife volunteers at Deerfield Township school and tells him they work with next to nothing, and near bare bones, before the cuts. Mr. Lauermann indicated he heard about a new roof for the school, Mr. Miller stated they have maintenance issues and they were looking at not a new roof but quotes for repairing above the cafeteria and gym, for the old edition that was built in 1994-95. Melanie Allen stated they applied for a State grant, but they are still waiting.

Mr. Lauermann asked about the utility bills and if there are any programs the school can apply for to help with those costs. It was stated that the new portion of the building was built in 2003 so the equipment there is fairly new and cost effective, the equipment in the older part of the building was changed two summers ago and is now very cost efficient, and Frank Manno, the maintenance person is very good in trying to regulate temperature, turning things off when there is no one in the building and turning it on before people are due to come in, they keep the temperature warmer in the summer when the building is not being used and set at a minimal temperature when the building is being used.

Mr. Miller stated that they have motion censored lights, so if you're in a conference and there is no movement the lights go off. Mr. Lauermann reiterated that from a personal standpoint he understands the school is trying to do so much with so little. Mr. Miller stated that to be at state adequacy Deerfield Township School should have asked for twelve point eight cents (12.8) which would have been far above the four percent (4%) cap they were allowed to asked for, but because of the budget they could only ask for the six point eight (6.8) and with that they were still below what they needed for adequacy. Mr. Lauermann asked if they noticed an increase in enrollment since the school in Bridgeton was closed, the Board stated yes they have noticed an increase since the school in Bridgeton closed.

Mr. Miller stated because of the cuts, they will be at a deficit when they get to Cumberland Regional because they haven't learned the skills, and when you go to College, you need those school activities on your resume to go to College. Mr. Miller stated the kids will be intimidated and not want to join clubs. Mr. Miller stated that kids that are in the Regional now are treasurers or presidents of clubs because of what they got in Deerfield Township, and Mr. Miller wants to continue bringing the kids up and not bring them down. Mr. Lauermann asked Mr. Miller if the teachers have a point person who can go to the Board and discuss their issues. Mr. Miller stated they have a Negotiations Committee which they meet with. Mrs. Kelly stated that just the fact that the teachers are still in mediations after ten, eleven months of negotiations should give the sentiments of what some feelings are coming from both sides.

Mr. Spatola thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and stated that it was obvious everyone had the same issues that came out of the budget, and the Board did a great job explaining everything to the Committee. Mr. Spatola did mention to the Board in his opinion they should take into account if school field trips are going to be cut,

the Transportation Coordinator will not have to account for that aspect of the job and maybe a percentage should be taken out of the pay for that portion of the job.

Mr. Spatola indicated that the Township is a close knit community and the economy is affecting everyone, and that a chain is only as strong as it's weakest link, and leaving the meeting this evening, every link has tried their best. Mr. Spatola stated that he had the utmost respect for the teachers, but he feels they should take the wage freeze, and even though they are in mediations, he trusts that they will make the right decision.

Mrs. Kelly, Board Vice President stated that she wanted to acknowledge the Board and being a part of it, being fiscally responsible to the taxpayers and Township, hence the reason why they are still in negotiations and why it has went to mediation, because the Board is trying to be aware of the finance and the cutting of programs. Mrs. Kelly stated that no matter where the mediations go from there the Board has been very responsible. Mr. Spatola stated the Committee is aware of the Board and their hard work and knows they are there to support the children and the district, and he feels the right thing will be done.

Mr. Spatola stated he would like the Administrator to prepare something to show where the Committee stands and have it prepared within a couple of days, so the School Board can review it at their next meeting.

Mr. Lauermann asked Mrs. Kelly if the majority of the teachers were Deerfield Township residents, Mrs. Kelly stated that less than a handful of the teachers were Deerfield Township residents.

Mr. Laurella asked if a decision was going to be made at this meeting or if a special meeting was going to be held. Mr. Spatola stated he did not want to put forth a decision but to take the information from this evening and work with it to see what can come out of it.

Mr. Laurella reiterated that it hurt him to see the after school activities being cut, and has previously asked what the stipend was for the teachers, he was told it was anywhere from five hundred to a thousand dollars (\$500.00-\$1,000.00). Mr. Laurella indicated that he discussed his next decision with no one, not even his wife, but is willing to give out of his own pocket, a donation to the Board of Education, to put towards the after school activities, of five hundred dollars (\$500.00), he understands it is not going to cover it all but it will help, and maybe they can ask business's out there to help the children of Deerfield Township.

Mr. Spatola stated that Mr. Laurella's action could not be appreciated more by anyone in the room, but who would the children play, because the cuts are being made all through the state of New Jersey. Mr. Laurella stated they will learn a sport, and how to be a team player. Mr. Lauermann asked if the activities would be just intramural, Dr. Austermuhl indicated all sports except basketball were intramural. Mr. Lauermann asked if basketball could also be intramural, Dr. Austermuhl stated yes it could. Ms. Musso stated that if they could get volunteers to run the after school activities they could have the after school activities.

Mrs. Speranza-Murphy stated as a taxpayer and Deerfield Township resident, having the Landfill right in the back yard, the CCIA should be of more assistance to the host community school, cutting so many things out of the budget but the children ride by the landfill all the time. Mrs. Speranza-Murphy stated the CCIA donated a million dollars

to Bridgeton, which is good, but as the host community school, the CCIA could donate to help out with the computer lab Mr. Spatola stated that these are things that are brought to the CCIA aggressively by the Township Liaisons.

A discussion regarding the Cumberland County Improvement Authority, and what the benefits and downfalls of the CCIA are, was held among the Township Committee and the School Board.

Mrs. Kelly asked the Committee if they did not vote on the budget this evening, when they did vote did it have to be a public meeting, that needs to be pre-advertised.

The Clerk stated that somewhere between this meeting and May 19th the vote will have to take place, so the Resolution can be ready for the May 19th meeting and sent out to the County and School Board on May 20th.

Mr. Spatola stated that the Committee would review the budget and get back to the School Board within a couple of days, and he knows something will come out of the budget because everyone is going to put their all into it.

Mr. Stanzione asked the School Board if what they are telling the Committee is that they are at bare bones with this budget. Mrs. Kelly stated yes and anything that was affected by the budget they did, and that was the last thing that anyone on the School Board wanted to touch, especially when several of the School Board members have children attending Deerfield Township School.

Mr. Stanzione made a motion, seconded by Mr. Laurella to adjourn the meeting. The Committee Approved.

Frank R. Spatola Jr., Chairperson
Township of Deerfield

ATTEST:

Karen Seifrit, RMC
Township of Deerfield