



**ROBBINSVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING**

**THURSDAY, JULY 19, 2018 – 6:00 PM  
RHS STUDENT ACTIVITIES CENTER**

**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Mr. Richard Young, President**

**Mrs. Jane Luciano, Vice President**

**Ms. Leslie Dee**

**Mrs. Sharon DeVito**

**Mr. Vito Galluccio**

**Mr. Thomas Halm**

**Mr. Craig Heilman**

**Mrs. Lisa Temple**

**Mr. Scott Veisz**

**SUPERINTENDENT**

**Dr. Kathleen A. Foster**

**ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION**

**Dr. Kim Tew**

**SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR / BOARD SECRETARY**

**Ms. Beth Brooks**

**ROBBINSVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
July 19, 2018**

**I. CALL TO ORDER PUBLIC MEETING**

Board President Rich Young called the July 19, 2018 special meeting of the Robbinsville Board of Education to order at 6:10 PM. He led the read the He read *Statement of Public Meetings and Adherence to School Ethics Act* and led the flag salute.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Ms. Dee	Present	Mr. Galluccio	Present	Mrs. Temple	Present
Mrs. DeVito	Present	Mr. Heilman	Present	Mr. Veisz	Present
Mr. Halm	Present	Mrs. Luciano	Present	Mr. Young	Present

**III. MOTION TO CONVENE IN EXECUTIVE SESSION**

On motion of Ms. Dee and seconded by Mrs. DeVito, the Robbinsville Board of Education voted 9-0 to convene in Executive Session to discuss the following topics.

**A. NEGOTIATIONS**

**B. PERC UPDATE**

**C. SECURITY**

**IV. RESUME PUBLIC SESSION – 7:07 PM**

**V. BOARD PRESIDENT’S STATEMENT**

In his opening remarks, Mr. Young indicated that with the announcement of the additional \$3.5M in state aid Robbinsville has reason to celebrate. He thanked the Fair Share Committee for their volunteerism and all whose efforts and dedication have led to this point. He noted that the goal of the meeting was to determine whether a portion of the additional aid would be used to provide tax relief to the residents of Robbinsville.

**VI. SUPERINTENDENT’S UPDATE: FUNDING PRIORITIES**

Dr. Foster provided a brief presentation centered on the importance of persistence. She praised the Board, township officials, legislators and the residents of Robbinsville for their tenacity and willingness to stay the course throughout the decade long battle to secure fair funding for Robbinsville Schools. Additionally, she provided three scenarios that would provide tax relief for residents:

- **\$613,351** = 0 tax increase
- **\$860,000 (1/4 total aid)** = \$63 on average assessed value of \$375,000
- **\$1.2M (1/3 total aid)** = \$112 on average assessed value of \$375,000

**VII. BOARD MEMBER DISCUSSION**

After Dr. Foster’s presentation, Mr. Young asked each member of the Board to weigh in on where they stood on tax relief.

- **Scott Veisz:** Mr. Veisz indicated his support for nothing less than 25% tax relief (\$860,000)
- **Tom Halm:** As the longest serving Board member, Mr. Halm supported tax relief in the amount of \$860,000.
- **Sharon DeVito:** Mrs. DeVito cautioned the Board not to go to \$860,000. She indicated support of \$613,351, or no new school tax increase.

- **Jane Luciano:** Mrs. Luciano indicated that she represents kids and taxpayers and noted that the role of the Board is to provide oversight. She supported tax relief in the amount of \$860,000.
- **Leslie Dee:** In an effort to show good faith to taxpayers, Ms. Dee supported tax relief in the amount of \$613,351.
- **Craig Heilman:** As a member who ran on the premise fiscal responsibility, Mr. Heilman indicated his support of tax relief in the amount of \$1.2M.
- **Vito Galluccio:** Because high property taxes are detrimental to all, Mr. Galluccio advocated for tax relief in the amount of \$1.2M. He challenged his colleagues to think longer term and more holistically.
- **Lisa Temple:** Mrs. Temple pointed out that \$3.5M is only 56% of what the formula indicates Robbinsville should receive in aid. She supported Dr. Foster's recommendation of \$860,000 in tax relief.

## VIII. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

- A. **Brian Johnson, Ethan Silberberg, Sharma** – RHS clubs are underfunded. Model UN received \$6K until two years ago when the amount was cut to \$4K. Membership has increased 300% over the past few years and students are forced to compete with other clubs and rely on fundraising in order to fund their club.
- B. **Kari Fox** – Advocated for funding schools rather than tax relief
- C. **Noushin Kanani** – Called for tax relief for senior citizens and noted that people will leave New Jersey, not Robbinsville in particular
- D. **Chris Kapfer** – Advocated for zero increase
- E. **Leslie Pomerantz** – If the Board votes on tax relief, what happens if the \$3.5M goes away next year?
- F. **Shaina Ciaccio** – Understands both sides of the issue and feels like Dr. Foster's recommendation to provide tax relief in the amount of \$860,000 is a reasonable compromise.
- G. **Hadri** – Advised the Board to look at all programs before deciding on tax relief. Has friends that have moved out of New Jersey (not Robbinsville) due to the high cost of living.
- H. **Brian Hayes** – Appreciates the tone of the meeting – likes that there are opportunities for all students and that parents and community are engaged.
- I. **Mohammed Zayde** – Providing tax relief sends the message that the schools do not really need the money.
- J. **Aaron Hobart** – The higher you pay teachers the better kids will perform. Recommended that the Board keep all of the aid and focus on hiring teachers.
- K. **Siva Appavado** – Home values in Robbinsville have increased because of the good schools. The higher taxes are worth it. Town Center should have busing. The online survey did not work – he indicated that he accessed it twice.
- L. **Carol Ann Blank** – Represented Jancee Sadula who advocated for no tax relief until the schools needs are met. Represented Leah Beauregard who called for more investment in school programs. Represented Scott Halpern who advocated for no tax relief and more teachers. Mrs. Blank indicated that a small decrease in taxes makes no difference to households and advocated for spending it all on schools.
- M. **Gary McCool** – Failed to provide safe transportation. Advocated for due diligence and a full market analysis before deciding how much to return to taxpayer. SALT tax deduction capped at \$10K.
- N. **Mike McGowan** – Recommended 2/3 of aid to schools for emergent projects and security and 1/3 to taxpayers.
- O. **Dana Boyle** – Indicated that the amount of tax relief is not meaningful and would be better spent toward kids and schools.
- P. **Dan Shuberth** – Indicated that Dr. Foster's proposal is reasonable and that town and schools share the responsibility of caring for the most vulnerable. \$100 makes a big difference to seniors.
- Q. **Dave Fried** – Indicated there is no spending problem but a revenue problem. Noted that he trusts Dr. Foster but Mr. Galluccio made a strong point for \$1.2M. When business community was thriving the value of the town increased but now business is not coming to Robbinsville. Concerned about senior citizens and the need for balance and fairness.

- R. Flo Gange** – Complimented the Board for making a good faith effort and recommended applying aid to faculty. Noted that Robbinsville teaching staff has always been the lowest paid in the area.
- S. Mary Cafrey** – Expressed appreciation for the efforts of the “Green Shirts.” Reminded the Board that she was part of a funding lawsuit in 2006. Agreed with Dr. Foster’s recommendation of \$860K and noted that for credibility it is important to provide some amount of tax relief.
- T. Shannon Gafgen** – Indicated that the best part of the funding fight was the unity among community members that resulted. Compliment Dr. Foster’s presentation.
- U. Molly Avery** – RHS Principal Molly Avery stated that she became principal when the first class graduated. At that time RHS enrollment was 615. It has now soared to 1,100 students. Respectfully disagrees with give back of funds because the district cannot trust that the state will continue with funding.
- V. Deb Baer** – Appreciated Dr. Foster’s presentation and urged the Board to keep all of the state aid. Indicated that security could be less of an issue if every student feels understood and cared for by the school community. Requested to be part of the Strategic Plan Committee.
- W. Michael Caputo** – Indicated that in 20 years his taxes have risen from \$6K to \$16K. Suggested that the district not expand programs until it can fund those already in place. Advocated for building repairs and stated that funds from facilities rentals should be applied to wear and tear on facilities.
- X. Ananthe Submaranian** – Noted that there are state programs in place for senior citizens and urged the Board to keep funds in reserve this year because if funding continues they can always opt for tax relief next year. Indicated that walking from town center is a security issue.
- Y. Sherry Dorwart** – Compared the different experiences of her two daughters. The phenomenal science teachers that her older daughter had at RHS have left the district. Advocated funding teachers more competitively.
- AA. Gabriel Smolares** – Noted that when he came to the meeting he wanted tax relief but after Dr. Foster’s presentation he changed his mind and agreed that the district should keep the entire amount.
- BB. Siema Sharma** – As a 15 year resident she has seen continual funding problem. Advocated for transparency and using the money for kids.
- CC. John Ruch** – Urged the Board to provide tax relief this year and then create a plan for next year.
- DD. Ron Witt** – 20 year resident, business owner and member of local government. Indicated that Dr. Foster’s plan is a good one and advocated to use some of the funds to provide a break for taxpayers.
- EE. Jody Stephens** – Said that the issue isn’t the \$100, but that residents lend money to schools every year. Advocated for tax relief.

**Note:** A few other individuals, whose names were difficult to decipher, addressed the Board and advocated for investing in our schools as a way to benefit the town for generations to come.

At the close of public comment, Board President Rich Young called for a five minute break after which he again polled board members to see where they stood on granting tax relief.

- **Scott Veisz:** \$860,000
- **Tom Halm:** \$613,351
- **Sharon DeVito:** \$613,351
- **Jane Luciano:** \$860,000
- **Leslie Dee:** \$613,351
- **Craig Heilman:** \$860,000
- **Vito Galluccio:** \$860,000
- **Lisa Temple:** \$613,351
- **Rich Young:** \$613,351

**IX. MOTION TO PROPOSE A REDUCTION IN THE GENERAL FUND TAX LEVY TO BE OFFSET BY AN INCREASE IN ADDITIONAL STATE AID**

On motion of Ms. Dee and seconded by Mrs. DeVito, the Robbinsville Board of Education, pursuant to N.J.A.C.6A:23A-13.3(d)1, and upon recommendation of the Superintendent, voted 9-0 to propose a reduction in the general fund tax levy to be offset by an increase in additional state aid in the amount of \$613,00.00 in the form of property tax relief for the residents of Robbinsville Township, Robbinsville, New Jersey.

## **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

On motion of Mr. Halm and seconded by Mrs. Luciano, the Robbinsville Board of Education voted to adjourn the July 19, 2018 special meeting at 10:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Brooks, School Business Administrator / Board Secretary